

BEGINNING LIFE IN CHRIST, by Rosemary Haughton. *Burns and Oates*, 12s 6d.

There has been so much said and written by so many about getting down to the grass roots of Christianity, to try and discover why the churches stay empty, why Christians don't love one another as they should, why humanists feel justified in being humanists . . . why . . . why . . . why . . .

The sort of thinking that Rosemary Haughton has done in her latest book is exactly what is needed. The ambiguity of the title is misleading at first – until it is realised from the subtitle and the list of chapters, that what the author has done is to go back to the beginning – to Christ – and get her bearings from him, in order to get back to him. In her own words – 'the beginning and end of Christianity is Christ'.

Mrs Haughton has taken bearings from different stages in Christ's earthly life – the incarnation, his infancy, education, his approach to manhood, his baptism, his temptations, and various aspects of his teaching, and studied them with an astonishing insight, in order to see what light they cast on the problems that confront christian educators of today.

This is no manual of instruction which will help the educator to give a complete christian foundation in fifteen easy lessons – rather are the lessons for the parents and educators themselves.

She bluntly states in her introduction – 'if I can persuade christian parents to think about them' (christian ideas) 'once more, and to feel baffled by them, then that is some indication that we are trying to deal with christianity as something real, and – like all reality – impossible to enclose, explain completely, or tidy up'. Later on in the book she twice admits that she herself has 'conscientiously taught nonsense' – and even published it! This honest admission gives added weight to her argument that real knowledge only grows out of experience – that 'a christian who does not know himself to be, in the end, humbly and confidently, an agnostic, is a very inadequate and conceited christian'. In a nutshell: she has posited the second commandment, and laid the accent fairly heavily on the real meaning of loving ourselves.

It is difficult to single out individual chapters in this veritable compendium of modern theology. A few examples in her own words will perhaps show how urgent it is for us to share what is, plainly, her deep desire to see the whole of christian living today become a 'clearing of the obstacles to love'.

'The work of temptation is to make us aware of what we are really like . . . As long as we preserve and believe in a false image of ourselves we have, in a sense, nothing real to give.' This is positive theology, and not just seeing life as an arena where we are tempted by an omnipotent God.

'To the experience of living and loving the moral law is merely the scaffolding . . . when work is in progress scaffolding is necessary.' 'let early moral training be related to other people and their needs.'

She sees the development of the awareness of responsibility in the teen-ager as a golden opportunity to make a telling point about undesirable friendships – 'The question needs to be discussed in a way that stresses the teen-agers' responsibility to the undesirable acquaintance (for a christian, this is surely inescapable) as well as to himself and to his parents. To drop the acquaintance may well NOT be the most christian thing to do.' And yet another piece of excellent positive, moral theology – 'Trust is a very good test of love' . . . but he warned 'of the unchristian nature of the desire to give trust only to the trustworthy'.

This is all most inadequate in its attempt to describe the lasting value of this book. I would like to think it will become a well-worn handbook in every home, school, seminary or theological college and, indeed, in all public libraries. And here I have one big criticism – of the publishers. How valuable this book would be to so many parents and educators of *any* denomination! What a best-seller, if it could be made available in the same way as a book like 'Honest to God' and at about the same price.

MADELEINE JUDD

ETHICS AND EDUCATION, by R. S. Peters. *George Allen & Unwin Ltd.*, London, 1966 40s. 333 pp.

Professor Peters' new book is designed to fulfil two functions: 'Firstly it is meant to serve as an elementary textbook in the philosophy of education in the field of ethics and social philosophy; secondly it presents a distinctive point of view

both about education and about ethical theory'. The author goes on, in the preface, to disarm much of the more immediately obvious criticism to which such an attempt is open by acknowledging its justification and offering a

defence. Whether the defence is judged sound or not will depend largely on the needs of individual readers but in general he has probably served his textbook readers better than his philosophers.

In the first part of the book Peters discusses the concept of education. He finds inadequate both the traditional view, with its emphasis on content, and the 'child-centred' approach, with its concern for method, and attempts a synthesis. Content is necessary but insufficient; from the beginning the teacher should encourage insight. 'The cardinal function of the teacher, in the early stages, is to get the pupil on the inside of the form of thought or awareness with which he is concerned'. Education, therefore, is described as 'initiation into activities or modes of thought and conduct that are worth while'. To see education as 'initiation' is to do justice to the three criteria that are built into it: it is the introduction of the young, by experienced persons, to 'what is essentially independent of persons', it is concerned with fostering some depth of understanding and it involves some sort of consciousness and consent on the part of the pupil.

This is very sound but one would hardly have thought of it as being a distinctive account. Indeed one feels that Professor Peters would very largely agree with Vatican II's account of the role of the school, and agree not only with the ends proposed but with the order in which they are set out: 'While unremittingly concerned with the development of the mental faculties, its (the school's) object is to bring out a child's capacity to make right judgements, introduce him to the cultural heritage acquired from past generations, enlarge his sense of values, prepare him for a career'. ('De Educatione Christiana', CTS Translation, p.8).

In the first part of the book Peters establishes that educational issues necessarily give rise to ethical questions and in the second part he examines the ethical foundations of education. Throughout he approaches ethical matters in a very practical way on the basis of the questions 'What ought I to do?' and 'Why ought I to do this rather than that?'. In fact it is precisely with the presuppositions of asking and trying to answer these questions that the middle section of the book is concerned. He begins by examining classical attempts to justify moral choices; Naturalism, Intuitionism and Emotivism, and finding them wanting ends the chapter with a rather weak section 'Towards a positive theory of justification'. He has argued much the same case more clearly and persuasively in his contribution to 'Moral Education in a Changing

Society' (Ed. W. R. Niblett) published three years ago.

The rest of the chapters in the middle section examine the concepts of 'Interest', 'Freedom', 'Equality', 'Worthwhile Activities' and 'Respect for Persons'. The author writes as a humanist and bases his justification of ethical judgements on humanistic principles but one of the weaknesses of his book is that it does not give sufficient attention to an assessment of the historical contribution of Christianity to Western moral ideas. The chapters on 'Equality' and 'Respect for Persons' particularly are weakened by this omission.

The last section deals with education and social control. The chapter on 'Authority and Education' maintains and develops the author's views on the role and status of the teacher. He sets a noble and refreshing ideal of the teacher as 'an authority' in the academic sense and makes this the basis for any other authority he may have. In his treatment of the role of punishment in the school Peters ventures further into the practical field than elsewhere and in so doing brings out a further weakness of the book, a general failure to discuss the possible consequences of conflict between school, home and peer-group values and practices. And there is a more serious flaw. Although the theory of education outlined implicitly involves the emotions there is little explicit reference to emotional education and the use of the emotions in education: the emphasis tends to be on intellectual development.

Each chapter follows roughly the same pattern, opening with a general discussion of the concepts involved in the topic under review and fining down to an examination of their application to educational issues. Thus each mirrors the twofold function of the book itself. It is always difficult to address two audiences at once and Peters has not been entirely successful in his attempt; the statement of his 'distinctive' position is probably too elusive for non-philosophers and too lightly argued for philosophers. But this is the sort of criticism that was anticipated and, as he rightly says, the philosophy of education is in too undeveloped a state to wait a lifetime before committing perfected arguments to paper; 'It will only develop as a rigorous field of study if a few philosophers are prepared to plough premature furrows which run more or less in the right direction'. Professor Peters' furrows do and his book is to be welcomed.

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