

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