

"If 'Christianity' is to mean the taking of the Gospel as our rule of life, then we none of us are Christians, and, no matter what we say, we all know we ought not to be."

It (the morality of the New Testament) implies that the development of the individual and the state is worthless.

The rights of property are denied or suspected, the ties of the family are broken, there is no longer any nation or patriotism, and the union of the sexes becomes a second-rate means against sin. Universal love doubtless is a virtue, but tameness and baseness to turn the cheek to every rascal who smites it, to suffer the robbery of villains and the contumely of the oppressor, to stand by idly when the helpless are violated and the land of one's birth is in its death struggle, and to leave honour and justice to God above—are qualities that deserve some other epithet. The morality of the primitive Christians is that of a religious sect; it is homeless, sexless and nationless. The morality of to-day rests on the family, on property, and the nation. Our duty is to be members of the world we are in; to be in the world and not of it was their type of perfection."

One knows not what to say to such rant as this. Its own extravagance and absurdity would be its best refutation were it not that there is a shallow plausibility about it which is sure to be eagerly accepted by many, to their own lasting moral injury. Has the writer ever read history? Does he know anything of the great ethical forces which have, all through the centuries, been the most potent and effective civilizing agencies? What but Christianity has given the world its sublimest examples of moral heroism, in the individual and in the nation? What has been the mightiest inspiration of those who have fought and won the great battles for national and racial and personal freedom—freedom of action, of thought, of conscience? What has been the source of the invisible energy which has redeemed woman in all Christian countries from the lowest degradation and made her man's companion and helpmeet, and the light and joy of myriads of peaceful and happy homes, such as the world without the New Testament never knew? Did Mr. Bradley ever honestly set himself to imagine the result, could all the knowledge and all the moral influence of those Gospels be swept out of the world to-day so effectively that whatever of elevating thought, of pure motive, of lofty aspiration, of ennobling inspiration to good deeds of every kind, is, directly or indirectly, the outcome of that knowledge and that influence, should suddenly disappear with them? What would be the effect upon the world, upon his own country, nay, upon his own mental and moral character, could every vestige of thought and sentiment, of motive and impulse, of mental and moral habit, which have been directly or indirectly derived from Christianity, be instantly blotted out?

The mode of interpretation by which such writers as Mr. Bradley reach their conclusions with regard to Christian ethics is such,

A Short-sighted Interpretation.

we make hold to say, as would be scouted if applied to any other book or teaching. It is literalism pushed to the most absurd and self-contradictory extreme. A single example will illustrate this. Mr. Bradley implies that Christians are taught "to turn the cheek to every rascal who smites it, to suffer the robbery of villains, to stand by idly when the helpless are violated, etc." These tremendous conclusions are, no doubt, drawn from the grandest, the most sublime of all moral precepts—a precept which, if universally acted on, would make the world a restored paradise—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," and its interpretative maxim "Whatsoever ye would, etc." If we ask "Who is my neighbour?" the Great Teacher answers by an illustration which clearly means that one's neighbour is any and every man or woman to whom one can do a good turn. And yet this strange interpreter would have us believe that the fulfilment of this great, all-comprehensive, ethical law would

require that one should stand by idle while the grossest and cruellest wrong was being perpetrated upon one or many fellow-creatures, simply because he is told to recognize in the perpetrator of the outrage a neighbour whom he is bound to love! Are those suffering the injury, be they strangers or his dearest relatives, not his neighbours, also, in the Christian sense? That were doing unto them as he would have them do to him with a vengeance! Then, again, a second assumption involved, which is scarcely less absurd, is that the true way to exhibit love to the aggressor is to stand idly by and permit him to perpetrate any crime to which he may be impelled by the passion of the moment, instead of saving him, if possible, from the consequences of his own depravity or madness, even by striking him, if necessary, senseless to the ground. One wonders is that such transparent nonsense should be admitted to a journal of standing, another that any thoughtful person can fail to see that the ethical law which is thus shallowly misinterpreted is manifestly adapted to constrain everyone who accepts it to do his very best, according to the clearest light and highest wisdom he can attain, to promote the true welfare of the individual as a member of the family and the nation, and in every relation of life.

Religion versus Ethics.

Before THE WEEK can plead to the charge of seeking the solution of the question of religious instruction in the schools in the direction of secularism (*vide* Mr. Burton's letter in last number), it is evident that we shall have to ask for an independent commission to lay down the boundary line between ethics and religion. If the system which Mr. Burton describes, with approval, in his last letter, is really a system of religious instruction, we can gladly lay down our pencil and admit that there is no longer any difference between us on the point worth mentioning. If our readers have done us the honour to note our views and arguments whenever the question has come up, they will remember that we have always strongly insisted on the necessity of distinct and positive ethical teaching in the schools. We have deplored the utter lack of anything like definite moral teaching under the present system. Nay, we have, unless our memory is strangely at fault, distinctly referred to the great moral law which the founder of Christianity quoted as the sum of his system on its man-ward side, together with the simple "Golden Rule" which he gave to guide in the application of that law, as constituting an ethical system, so complete, so far-reaching, so simple, that even an Agnostic could scarcely object to making it the basis of moral training for children in the schools. On this point, therefore, we are in hearty agreement with our contributor. The difference so far is that what we call ethics he regards as religion. The only question remaining is that of the daily repetition of the Lord's Prayer. To this few would take exception, so long as no notes or comments were permitted. The chief objection from either the educational or the religious point of view would be that which lies against unintelligent rote-work. Genuine education demands the development of the intelligence. It begins only when the child begins to ask questions, and a child of active mind could ask many questions based upon the foundations and implications of that sublime prayer, which nothing less than a certificate of theological qualification granted by the Educational Department after searching examination could guarantee the teacher's fitness to answer. Perhaps some might hesitate to accept even that. But by all means let us agree upon the teaching in every school of the great law of conduct, whether we call it religion or ethics, which requires right feeling as the basis and self-application as the test, of conduct in all our relations to others,