

THE THRESHOLD OF ETHICS. By Kenneth E. Kirk, D.D. Skeffington.  
3s. 6d.

This admirable little book deliberately avoids confusing the reader by discussing the problems which fascinate academic moral philosophers. It may, therefore, be in danger of giving a false impression of simplicity. But this is a risk which must be taken whenever an author wishes to write a "Threshold" book, and Dr. Kirk is well entitled to state his conclusions and to omit such parts of his preliminary approach to them as would only appeal to specialists. He begins by a careful statement of what "conscience" and "ethics" mean, and then goes on to meet and rebut the widespread notion that psychology and evolutionary science have rendered them obsolete. This lesson is driven home by a brilliant criticism of Lippmann's *Preface to Morals*, which shows that it only achieves its end by unconsciously relying on the "obsolete" ideas, and the ground is thus cleared for Dr. Kirk's fuller statement of his own position, with its recognition of the distinction between the objective rightness of actions and the subjective praiseworthiness of motives.

In the last chapter a fresh problem is raised, arising out of the contrast between the "conscientious" life on the one hand, and the "virtuous" or "saintly" life on the other. The latter is the expression of the love of goodness, and is free from the moral struggle involved in the former. The cultivation of conscientiousness is psychologically and spiritually undesirable, but how can a man pass from conscientiousness to virtue or sanctity? He cannot by any effort of his own. The transformation can only be made through the spirit of worship; and thus it is that the Christian religion can solve the ultimate problem of practical ethics. In this chapter, more than elsewhere, one feels that Dr. Kirk's treatment is too brief to be satisfying. While I think I understand his main thesis, and appreciate the force of his contention, I have a doubt whether the mutual exclusiveness of conscientiousness and virtue has not been exaggerated. I should like to ask Dr. Kirk whether he would deny the description "conscientious" to the human life of Christ, and how on the basis of his scheme of things he would interpret St. Paul's saying that "even Christ pleased not Himself," or the language in the Epistle to the Hebrews about our Lord being "in all points tempted like as we are"?

On p. 99 there seem to be two slips in the analysis of Lippmann's book. Lippmann may be inconsistent, but if in one mood he regards the moral distinction between right and wrong as a "stubborn fact of life," the inconsistency does not lie precisely where Dr. Kirk suggests. And in his paraphrase of the sentence "ideals are an imaginative understanding of that which is desirable in that which is possible," Dr. Kirk has exactly inverted its meaning.

It would be interesting to know the authority on which Dr. Kirk on p. 157 ascribes to Richard Baxter the saying more commonly attributed to John Bradford.

L. HODGSON.

---

THE HOLY GHOST: THE COMFORTER. A study of the Nature and Work of God the Holy Spirit. By the Rev. Peter Green. Longmans. Cloth, 4s. 6d.; paper, 3s.

Canon Peter Green writes this little book out of a conviction that the greatest need of the world to-day is a revival of a really spiritual religion.

But as far as our Communion is concerned, how is such a revival to come about? Canon Green suggests a more extensive use of parochial missions, and of clear and intelligent teaching—about the Sacraments, about the duty of worship, about sanctification as the will of God for every man. He has some useful words of counsel on all these matters, and much to say that will be of value to both clergy and layfolk. The truth of the matter seems to be that even after 100 years of revived spiritual life a large part of our Church is in a state of spiritual slumber. The key to the situation lies in the hands of the clergy. Do we sufficiently instruct our people in the ways of the Spirit? Do we show them how they can live the spiritual life? Are we training the young? Have we a real love for souls? Are we careful students of ascetical theology and trying ourselves to live a life of prayer? A golden opportunity came with the Way of Renewal, which has become unfortunately little more than a series of study circles, valuable in their way, but quite unlikely to lead to a revival of spiritual life.

We feel doubtful about some of Canon Green's sacramental teaching—the ideas, *e.g.*, expressed on p. 104 (note) seem to lead to the slippery slope that ends in non-sacramentalism. We do not think that the contents of this excellent little book quite justify its title.

R. D. MIDDLETON.

---

LAWN SLEEVES. A Short Life of Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford.  
By J. C. Hardwick, B.Sc. Basil Blackwell. 5s.

Why do Modernists always display a fervent attachment to the slightly out-of-date? Mr. Hardwick is no exception. At a time when the Lytton Strachey type of biography is becoming old-fashioned he selects that model for his life of Bishop Wilberforce. As we should expect from its author, the work has considerable intellectual ability. It displays more sympathy with its subject than we should perhaps expect. It may be argued that when we are being flooded with books commending the Oxford Movement, it is a good thing to hear the other side. But on the whole we do not think that this manner of approach forwards the cause of either truth or religion. In his chapter on "Cuddesdon Squalls" it is interesting to observe the only alternative to the alleged pious "attitudinizing" that the author is able to suggest. "If" the young men "had not been on their knees in the chapel, they would probably have had girls perched upon them as they sat drinking beer in the public-house." Does this dilemma represent the wish to be smart or the author's theological college experience?

E. J. BICKNELL.