Editorial

THE leading article, Bishop Stephen Neill's C.M.S. sermon, is of compelling importance, for with the pattern of international affairs steadily changing it is vital that intelligent Christians should be aware of the issues facing the Church in the world to-day.

Some recent pronouncements may provide background reading. One is Sir Kenneth Grubb's Burge Memorial Lecture for 1957, *Co-existence and the Conditions of Peace.*[1] Sir Kenneth describes coexistence as " not so much a quality which nations ought to strive for, as a condition of affairs which they must accept ", and points out that though it may contribute to peace it " does nothing to secure justice ". Moreover, " there is a terrible lie in the soul of coexistence, namely that it almost seems to sanctify evil and condone the effects of tyranny ". From this shrewd assessment of the uneasy equilibrium in which the world is at present hovering, Sir Kenneth goes on to seek a positive answer.

He offers, as a goal, the concept of " peaceful partnership ", and suggests steps which we may take towards its attainment. One is to work for the abatement of fear. Sir Kenneth avoids easy, airy pacifist arguments and admits limited war (" the limiting of war implies a strong international police force ") as a possibility we must accept, since universal and just peace is not at present attainable. He urges progressive disarmament, though total disarmament is far in the future. By encouraging the meeting of peoples, and stressing the importance of peoples rather than states, and particularly by urging the ending of international abuse—" neither the nations nor the peoples can readily understand one another if the tone of the press, radio and film is constantly abusive whenever a grievance, real or imaginary, against a neighbouring state is aired "—Sir Kenneth Grubb believes that peaceful partnership will be brought nearer.

More especially, " there must be a serious attempt to recover, restate and proclaim anew the principles of a common international ethos, Christian in its inspiration and source ". And this where his argument, admirable as it is, fades away. For so long as the troubles of the world spring primarily from the Communist bloc, all talk of Christian ethos is entirely unilateral. It will not even chip the walls of the Kremlin. Something more positive is required.

Dr. George Macleod, in his recent Moderatorial Address, now published as a pamphlet,[2] offers a more practical suggestion. In his inimitable, racy and yet deeply sincere way he sums up the need as Fusion or Fission : " One Church or there will be no Church . . . one world or there will be no world ". Fresh from his visit to South East Asia he sees that there will be little progress, either in world peace or (and the two closely interlock) in the expansion of Christianity, unless " the Church of the West moves quicker about Church Union and nuclear weapons ". As for the latter, Dr. Macleod hints that personally he advocates banning nuclear weapons and stopping all tests ; every

[1] *Coexistence and the Conditions of Peace*, by Sir Kenneth Grubb, S.C.M.Press, pp. 24, 2/- *paper.*

[2] *Bombs and Bishops*, by the Rt. Rev. George F. Macleod, Iona Community Publishing Dept., pp. 23, 1/- *paper.*

Christian, closely watching the London Disarmament Conference, will sympathize with this total view, even if a *caveat* must be entered, and will certainly agree in the absurdity of dismissing all protest against the tests as Communist inspired. But there is much danger in urging suspension of tests or the banning of the bomb by the West unless there is change of heart at Moscow.

Where Dr. Macleod is practical is in his emphasis on Church Union. Wisely, he lifts the discussion from the limited sphere of Church of Scotland union with Church of England, to the whole scope of the drawing together, the re-membering, of the Body of Christ.

Yet here again, stirring pronouncements, however much they mould the climate of opinion, leave the problem almost untapped. Church Union—as contrasted with loose federation, or platitudes by delegates —will only come by the bringing together of the Body, member by member, by successive acts of Union which will indeed be acts of faith. And all the while there is danger that we may be too late. That by accident or design the Communist bloc will plunge us into a third world war. Are we, then, to sit back in despair?

At heart the problem is theological. And the surest way forward is for each of us individually, and thus later, collectively, to deepen our theological foundations. In this context a recent paper by Alan Stibbs should be widely circulated and pondered. *God Became Man*[1] discusses very adequately the concept about which, more perhaps than any other, we need right thinking. A right understanding of the Godhead of Christ brings a healthy theological outlook, and excludes hazy optimism about man and a softening down of the stark truth of the need of Redemption by the Blood of the Cross.

Mr. Stibbs emphasizes that " the distinctive truth of Christianity concerns the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Christians believe that Jesus is God Himself become Man . . . to save mankind." His monograph, with its frank discussion of how and why Jesus became Man, will help us to " accept with no compromising qualifications the full Deity of Jesus, and acknowledge without evasive speculation the atoning purpose and the finished character of His sacrificial death ".

Kenotic theories have certainly done much damage. It should not be forgotten that theology greatly influences the lives of nations. German liberalism in the nineteenth century is now generally accepted as at least one of the causes of Hitler. Moreover, we owe much of our present international problem to President Roosevelt's optimistic insistence that if Stalin was treated as a gentleman (almost, in Roosevelt's sense of the term, as a Christian) he would become one. Roosevelt was a child of his age, conditioned more than he knew by the optimistic theological climate.

As Roosevelt, so we, who in our lesser ways are entrusted with leadership in parishes or other ministries. The valve of that leadership depends on the clarity of our thought as much as on our courage, determination and faith. Do not, therefore, let us divorce our thinking about coexistence, or about fusion and fission, from right thinking about the needs of men, and of God's provision for that need.

[1] *God Became Man*, by Alan M. Stibbs, Tyndale Press, pp. 36, 1/6 *paper*.