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THE ANNUAL MEETING

The First Annual General Meeting of the Fellowship will be held at The Waldegrave Hall (Lower Hall), 23 Duke Street, London, W.I. (near Selfridges) on Saturday, 27th June, 1964. It is hoped that as many members as possible will be able to attend. There are ample car parking facilities at this time on a Saturday, parking meters being free of charge. Nearest tube stations: Bond Street and Marble Arch.

The programme will be as follows:

4.00 p.m.	Annual General Meeting (members only). Agenda below.
4.30 p.m.	Open Forum, for discussion of the purposes and activities of the Fellowship (members only).
5.30 p.m.	Interval for tea (readily obtainable in the vicinity).
6.30 - 8.30 p.m.	Public Meeting (open to all) with Dr. J.M. Houston in the Chair. This will take the form of two addresses of fifteen minutes each on the subject "INVOLVEMENT, NOT ENTANGLEMENT", to be followed by open discussion.

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The Agenda for the Annual General Meeting will be as follows:

1. Secretary's report on membership, etc.
2. Treasurer's report and accounts.
3. Chairman's statement.
4. Election of officers:-
   (a) Council members
   (b) Chairman
   (c) Secretary
   (d) Treasurer
   (e) Auditor.
5. Fixing of subscription.

Nominations for appointments should be sent to the Secretary not later than Saturday, 20th June, and should be counter-signed by the nominee.

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

INTRODUCTION

What is the essence of Christian Discipleship? Is it a matter of discipline, of asceticism, of giving away all our money? Or is it a matter rather of translating into our experience the fundamental significance of the Hellenic 'Know thyself' and 'In nothing too much'?

On the question of what to do with our money, Mr. Roy Coad has many perceptive things to say in his contribution. We need to recognise that in Christian conscience we must provide things needful in the sight of all, in Christian commitment we must provide for the needs of Christ's Church, and we may then know in Christian conviction - a conviction that will have practical consequences - that God supplies all our need. Perhaps we need to learn the simple lesson of taking gratefully what He gives?

The other two approaches to discipleship - self-knowledge or sweet reasonableness - would present us with a two-fold view of the call by which alone we come to discipleship at all. Are we to concentrate on the didactics or the dynamics? We preach for souls but we preach to minds. The negro preacher's method is suggestive: 'Well, fust ah splanify, den ah argufy, and den ah puts in de arousements.' What are we arousing? Mr. Dibbons' article will make us think again. How are we doing it? Mr. Martin's observations will give us further occasion for thought. Do we 'splanify' the gospel as a chance to get everything you ever hoped for or a challenge to give everything you ever possess? Again, our appreciation of the total identity of man - the proper understanding of the 'soul' - must issue in dynamic: if at some time in our preaching deep calls to deep we may have begun to establish the communication without which the technical points Mr. Dennett so rightly emphasises (see the Members' Section) will fall pretty flat.

Meanwhile, the psychological hedonists are telling us that we and those who heed our message act only from motives of self-interest; we all have <u>built-in</u> 'Hidden Persuaders'. If this is so, it gives the lie to all our preaching, chance or challenge, 'Come'

or 'Follow', for evidently

> They who fain would serve Him best
> Are conscious least of wrong within.

Mr. Martin's article gives us guidance on the dangers of our task as proclaimers of 'a full and free salvation' but also gives us an assessment of psychological hedonism.

If we can begin to find our true selves and to fulfil our proper duty, we may experience afresh the wonder of

> '... coming to ourselves
> When, Lord, we come to Thee'

and those to whom we witness may begin to see the true Christian manhood we have so sadly left behind:

> '... as we are Thy children true
> We are more truly men.'

There are many lessons to be learned, and perhaps the most helpful view of discipleship is that which regards it as a process of learning; here Mr. Dibbons' article can again give us guidance and Mr. Coad's will help us a great deal. We must be careful that we do not give others the impression that this learning is a matter of putting on the L-plates and holding on for dear life. Too easily we let men think Christianity is primarily careful living. Yet if self-knowledge can reach higher than the egocentricity of humanism, moderation can rise to more than a state of perpetual caution, discipline can be ennobled with truly Christian ideals, and our gospel can be preached out of full manhood, we may hope to make an impact on our generation.

K.N.S. Counter.

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There is no benediction on those who present the gospel insipidly; nor does God mean any Christian to be a sanctimonious bore.

A.M. Hunter on Col.4:6.

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF MAN

by Hugh Dibbons

As Evangelical Christians we are committed to some sort of Biblical Theology. Many query whether it is possible to compile a Biblical Theology as such, and suggest that we ought rather to talk about Biblical Theologies, e.g. The Theology of St. Paul or The Theology of Ezekiel, etc. But if we believe in the common inspiration of all the books in the canon of Scripture and that they reveal the one true God then we must also believe that it is possible to construct a Biblical Theology, though we may also acknowledge that different Biblical writers have their own special emphases. After all the differences have been taken away there is always left a common residuum of truth which may be called 'Biblical Theology'. This is not to suggest that the differences are not as important as the residuum. For a true understanding of concepts and doctrines found in the Bible the teaching of all the Canonical books must be considered. But for the purposes of this paper I wish to distinguish between 'Biblical Theology' and Biblical Theologies as defined above, and I wish to discuss the Doctrine of Man as a doctrine of 'Biblical Theology'.

When trying to formulate a residuum of Biblical teaching there are two governing principles: that the Bible alone provides our data and categories, and that consistency with the emphasis and tenor of the Bible is the criterion for deciding between any conflicting formulations.

The Failure of Traditional Statements in the Doctrine of Man.

I contend that traditional statements of the doctrine of Man are not Biblical and therefore cannot be regarded as formulations of revealed truth, that discussions about 'man who has a soul' or 'man's immortal soul' are likewise non-Biblical, and that the controversy whether or not man is 'bipartite' or 'tripartite' is a mistake. In the face of these assertions the questions at once arise: 'What are the traditional statements?' and 'Where did the doctrines of the soul come from if not from the Bible?'

May I offer three statements. The first is from 'The Institutes of The Christian Religion', Book I Chap.15.

'That man consists of soul and body ought not to be controverted. By soul I understand an immortal yet created essence, which is the nobler part of him ..... The agility of the human mind, looking through heaven and earth and the secrets of nature ..... clearly demonstrates that there is concealed within man something distinct from the body. The soul ..... is an incorporeal substance ..... it is not properly contained in any place, yet being put into the body it inhabits it as its dwelling, not only to animate all its parts ..... but also to hold the supremacy in the government of human life.'

The key categories that Calvin uses in the exposition of this doctrine are 'essence' and 'substance', and these are the categories of Greek and Scholastic Philosophy, not of the Bible. It may be argued that Calvin was not writing Biblical Theology but Systematic Theology, i.e. he was presenting the Mediaeval World of his day with a system of Christian doctrine expressed in the accepted philosophic categories. Calvin was no doubt justified in doing this on the grounds of making himself understood by the intelligentsia of his time, but the simple fact that it is dated in this way is good reason why we should be critical of his formulation.

The second quotation comes from another master of Evangelical Systematic Theology - Charles Hodge, Vol.2 Chap 2: 'The Nature of Man'.

'The Scriptures teach that God formed the body of man out of the dust of the earth, and breathed into him the breath of life and he became "a living soul". According to this account man consists of two distinct principles, a body and a soul: the one material, the other immaterial; the one corporeal, the other spiritual. It is involved in this statement that the soul of man is a substance; and secondly, that it is a substance distinct from the body. So that in the constitution of man two distinct substances are involved ..... The soul is not a mere series of acts; nor is it a form of the life of God, nor is it a mere unsubstantial force but a real subsistence. Whatever acts is, and whatever is is an entity. A non-entity is nothing, and nothing can neither have power nor produce effects. The soul of man, therefore, is an essence or entity or substance.'

This is just a sample of a longer passage of argumentation. Had we progressed at all from Calvin's Aristotelian-Mediaeval ways of thinking by the end of the 19th Century?

The third quotation is from Professor E.L. Mascall, who is ranked as one of the greatest of contemporary Anglican theologians. In his book The Importance of Being Human (1958) he devotes a chapter to 'Body and Soul'.

> 'Why, it will no doubt be asked, do we need to hold that in man there is a distinct spiritual component which is not found in any sub-human creature and which is able to survive ..... the death of the body? I think the answer ..... is to be seen if we ask another question ..... Is there any difference of kind between man and the lower animals? That is, what is the significance of the Bible's assertion that God made man in His own image? If we believe that God is pure Spirit and at the same time recognise that man is not pure spirit but has a body which is continuous with the rest of the material creation, have we any real alternative, believing as we do that man is made in the image of God, than to hold that the way in which God made man was by uniting a physical organism - which did not differ in kind from other physical organisms - with a created spirit which, without suppressing the animal and vegetal functions of the physical organism, could subsume them into and make them subservient to its own supraphysical life? ..... The authentic Christian doctrine of man ..... is the view that man is a unique and highly complicated being composed of a body ..... and a soul, which, although it is itself a purely spiritual entity, is not the kind of spirit that can function fully and freely on its own, since it is made for the express purpose of animating a material body with which it is united.'

Before commenting in general upon the passages quoted something must be said about Professor Mascall's argument. He sets out to answer the question - 'Why do we need to hold that there is a distinct spiritual entity in man?', and then he begins by assuming that man is made up of two entities, body and soul. His argument from Gen.1:26 is likewise fallacious. The bones of it run: God is pure Spirit; Man is made in the image of God; Therefore the respect in which Man resembles God is that a part of him is pure spirit. The conclusion does not follow from the premisses and by a similar argument one could show that man resembled God in almost

any respect. Why chose this particular characteristic?

We may briefly summarise the above quotations as the view that man is conceived as having at least two parts - body and soul, that the soul is a non-spatial entity capable of surviving physical death, but until death this metaphysical entity dwells within the body.

The contention of this paper is that this doctrine is non-Biblical but rather derives from Greek philosophy. To make this point let us look at a few lines from one of Plato's dialogues:- Phaedo 79 ff.

Socrates: 'Is not one part of us body, another part soul?'

Cebes: 'To be sure .....'

Socrates: 'And is the soul seen or not seen?'

Cebes: 'Not by man, Socrates.'

Socrates: 'What we mean by "seen" and "not seen" is that which is or is not visible to the eye of man? Then the soul is more like to the unseen, and the body to the seen? ..... When the soul and the body are united, then nature orders the soul to rule and govern, and the body to obey and serve. Now which of these two is akin to the divine and which to the mortal?'

Cebes: 'The soul resembles the divine, and the body the mortal, there can be no doubt of that, Socrates.'

Socrates: 'Then reflect, Cebes: of all that has been said is not this the conclusion? - that the soul is in the very likeness of the Divine, and Immortal, and intellectual, and uniform, and indissoluable, and unchangeable; and the body is the very likeness of the human, and mortal, and unintellectual, and dissoluable, and changeable ..... will the soul, if her nature be as we describe, be blown away and destroyed immediately on quitting the body as many say? The truth is rather ..... that the soul, herself invisible, departs to the invisible world - to the divine, immortal and rational: thither arriving she is secure of bliss and released from the error and folly of men, their fears and wild passions and all other human ills .....'

This is one short extract from one of the Dialogues in which Plato discusses the soul. It is true that there are significant differences between the traditional Christian Doctrine of the soul

and the Greek view. The differences are due to a Christianising of the Greek doctrine, but the close similarities are due to derivation.

The Biblical Doctrine of Man.

We must now proceed to the main part of this paper. The method of investigation will be first to survey what the Old Testament understood by the words 'nephesh' and 'ruach' (usually translated 'soul' and 'spirit' respectively by the Authorised Version). Then we shall illustrate New Testament usage by reference to St. Paul, and after answering some objections to the main conclusions of the study we shall consider some consequences of accepting the Biblical view of man's constitution.

The task of investigating Old Testament concepts is complicated by the Hebrew use of Synechdoche (a part standing for the whole) and of poetic parallelism (two phrases identical in meaning standing side by side). These phenomena will become obvious as the study proceeds.

'Nephesh' (754 references in the Old Testament)

This word can have a strictly physical connotation, and has etymological associations with the Accadian 'Napistu' which means 'throat' or 'neck'. In fact it is used ten times in this sense in the Old Testament, e.g. Ps.105:18 - "His neck was put in a collar of iron" (RSV).

Another almost physical usage occurs in those verses that seem to identify 'nephesh' and 'blood', e.g. Gen.9:4 - "You shall not eat flesh with its life (nephesh), that is, its blood." Deut.12:33 - "The blood is the life (nephesh) and you shall not eat the life (nephesh) with the flesh." (Note: it is probably at this physical level that Gen.35:18 is to be understood, i.e. "as her soul (nephesh) was departing ..... she called his name Benoni" perhaps means that Rachel died of a haemorrage.

The Hebrew conceived the world dynamically, and the difference, essentially, between someone living and a corpse was that the living did things and the dead did not. A living man was a centre of power, a being who fought battles, ploughed fields, made love, propagated children, etc. But how was the Hebrew to express the living man's essential activity in words? He did it by extending the use of 'nephesh' and our next term 'ruach'. A man who had lost a lot of blood was less active than someone with his full quota, so why not extend the use of 'nephesh' to indicate man's vitality? Whether

or not this represents a true account of the development of the term, 'nephesh' generally means man's vitality in the Old Testament. This may be summarised more precisely under the following four headings (used by Professor A.R. Johnson in The Vitality of the Individual):-

'Nephesh' meaning 'Principle of Life': e.g. 1 Kings 3:11 - "the life of your enemies"; Gen.37:21 - "Let us not take his life".

'Nephesh' meaning Physical Vitality: e.g. Lam.2:12 - "While they swoon ..... in the city ..... their soul (nephesh) doth drain away ..... they say where is corn and wine"; Num.11:6 - "We remember the fish we ate in Egypt ..... the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks ..... but now our soul (nephesh) is dried up".

'Nephesh' can mean Emotional Vitality: e.g. Ps.42:6 - "My soul is cast down within me"; Job 30:16 - "My soul is poured out within me", i.e. I'm losing the will to live.

'Nephesh' can mean Volitional Vitality: e.g. Deut.21:14 - "If you have no delight in her you shall let her go where her soul determines"; 2 Kings 9:15 - "Jehu said, If this is your soul (i.e. what you have decided) then let no-one slip out of the city'".

Now that the general usage of the Old Testament has been surveyed, we are in a position to look at Gen.2:6 - "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul". The phrase 'living soul' which includes the word 'nephesh' does not indicate anything distinctive about man compared with the rest of the animal kingdom, for the same words are used to refer to other living members of the creation in Gen.1:20, 21, 24; Gen.2:19, etc. A 'living soul' is a being which has vitality.

(Note: Deut.8:3 - "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" probably means that for maximum vitality a man needs much more than just physical sustenance, he needs also to be in the will of God.)

'Ruach'

C.A. Briggs reckons that 117 out of a possible 378 occurrences of this term in the Old Testament refer to the wind or air with no spiritual overtones, e.g. Jer.2:24 - "a wild ass ..... sniffing the wind"; Ps.107:25 - "He raised the stormy wind which lifted up the waves of the sea".

Since man depends on air for life, and since wind easily conveys the idea of power and activity, it is not hard to see how it became a synonym for man's essential vitality. Any unusual manifestation of energy or mental alertness came to be described as having more or less spirit; and as an individual may display this energy in the service of God, the energy was attributed to God and it was said that the spirit of the Lord was upon him, e.g. Gen.41:38,39 "And Pharoah said to his servants, 'Can we find a man such as this, in whom is the spirit of God?' And Pharoah said to Joseph, 'Since God has shown you this there is none so wise and discreet as thou art.'" Jud.15:14 - "And the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him .... and he found a fresh jaw bone of an ass, and with it he slew a thousand men". To be filled with the spirit and not to be doing anything is a contradiction in terms.

In such verses as Isa.42:5 - "The Lord .... who gives breath (ruach) to the people upon it, and life (ruach) to them who walk therein", there is very little to distinguish it from 'nephesh'. And again we find that other creatures have the breath of life in common with man, e.g. Gen.6:17 - "I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life."

If one had to distinguish different types of vitality indicated by 'nephesh' and 'ruach' respectively, then one would say that 'nephesh' refers rather to physical vitality and 'ruach' to psychical. An example of the latter would be Isa.9:2 - "There shall rest upon him the spirit of the Lord, a spirit of wisdom and discernment, a spirit of counsel and might, a spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord." In ordinary English usage this would mean that the servant will be wise and discerning, mighty, knowledgeable, and will fear God, and that all these characteristics will be attributable to the fact that God is with him. We may all pray to God to help us to develop good characteristics and attitudes, so that we may act in accordance with His will; thus Ps.51:12 -

> "Create for me a clean heart, O God.
> And produce a new and steadfast spirit within me ....
> Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation
> And sustain me with a willing spirit ....
> A broken and a contrite spirit thou wilt not despise."

<u>The Body in the Old Testament</u>.

The Hebrews have no term which is equivalent to the Greek 'soma'. Thus the Hebrew language has not the vocabulary to make the Greek distinction between 'soma' and 'psuche' (body and soul), and the

reason is that they did not think in these terms. In the LXX the Greek word 'soma' translates no less than eleven different Hebrew words, and for none is it a true equivalent. In some contexts it is even used to translate 'nephesh'! (e.g. Gen.36:6)

Summary of the Old Testament View of Man.

The Old Testament regards man not as a union of parts but as a unity. Man is a being capable of a wide variety of activity whose nature consists in doing things.

It may be objected that the Bible tends to departmentalise man on a physical level; thus different parts of the body, e.g. arm, hand, heart, bones, flesh, foot, mouth, etc. are isolated as if they performed their functions on their own initiative. But it is just in such contexts that the device of synechdoche is used, e.g. Job 23:11 - "My foot hath held fast to his steps, his way have I kept, and not turned aside." Eccl.2:11 - "Then I contemplated all my works that my hands had wrought, and the labour that I had laboured to do."

The New Testament Doctrine of Man.

Both Old Testament and New Testament are basically Hebrew in their thinking, and the New Testament stands within the Old Testament in its anthropology. The key concepts are 'soma', 'psuche', 'pneuma' (spirit), and again there is the phenomenon of synechdoche. These points will be briefly illustrated from the Epistles.

'Soma'. Though this word is used to mean what we would ordinarily understand by 'body', its use is generally more akin to the Hebrew 'basar' (flesh, i.e. as opposed to kidneys, heart, etc.) e.g. Gal.6:17 - "I bear branded in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Then by synechdoche and parallelism it is equivalent to the whole man or person, e.g. 1 Cor.9:27 - "I buffet my body and bring it into bondage lest by any means after I have preached to others I myself should be a castaway."; Rom.6:12 - "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, that you should obey the lusts thereof, neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves unto God as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." One can easily see the parallelism of the two halves of the verse, and hence the failure to distinguish between 'body' and 'person'.

'Psuche'. This is roughly equivalent to the Old Testament 'nephesh'. Thus it can mean the principle of life, e.g. Phil.2:30 - "Epaphroditus nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life

(psuche) to complete your service to me." And it can mean 'the whole man', e.g. Rom.13:1 - "Let every life (psuche) be subject to the governing authorities."

'Pneuma' (Old Testament equivalent of 'ruach'). The doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament makes it necessary to distinguish carefully between 'pneuma' when applied to God and 'pneuma' referring to man. However, in the latter case it is used to refer to man acting, often to psychic activity, e.g. 2 Cor.2:13 - "I found no rest in my spirit."

Possible Objections to this Interpretation.

1. One could apply the same method of argument to the doctrine of God, and one would conclude that there was no doctrine of the Trinity in Scripture. This invalidates the method.

Reply. It seems axiomatic that in Biblical Theology one's attention must be confined to the data of the Bible, and one must use Biblical categories of interpretation. If this leads to a denial of the Trinity, as it does to a denial of Bi-partite and Tri-partite Doctrines of man, then the doctrine of the Trinity must be excluded from a Biblical Theology. But the Christ-event and Christ's own prophecy of the coming of the Holy Spirit are sufficient for the distinctness of the Persons of the Trinity (c.f. John 14).

2. The case has been rigged, and unfavourable texts have been excluded! What about texts like 1 Thess.5:23 - "I pray that your whole body, soul and spirit be preserved ...."?

Reply. One's conclusions will depend on the presuppositions that one brings to that study. Thus if one starts with an isolated text like the one quoted, and one assumes that whenever nouns are used side by side then each must refer to a distinct entity, then one will conclude that man is Tri-partite. This sort of approach is part of a scientific heritage of thought. But if we take our categories of thinking from the Bible then we conclude that if any distinction is intended in the above verse it is a distinction of activity, and not of parts.

3. If there is no immortal soul then there can be no life after death.

Reply. The answer is in the Resurrection of the Body (1 Cor.15: 12-14, 17-19, 51). The argument may crudely be summarised as: Man without a body is a contradiction in terms. Therefore if man is to live after death he must live as a body. Therefore he

must be resurrected, as Christ has been resurrected.

But this raises great problems, e.g. What happens when you die? If the resurrection is a future event and the body ceases to exist as such does that mean that at death I cease to exist? Is there any relation between my present body and my resurrection body; if not, then how can I be the same person then as now?

No-one would dispute that the doctrine of the Resurrection has difficulties, but most of these are intrinsic and are not solved by postulating a 'soul', which has its own special problems anyway (e.g. its relation to the body). But what sort of questions are those that have been raised? They are philosophical questions and depend to some extent on a spatio-temporal way of thinking. Perhaps we should not expect revealed truth to be philosophically defensible, and perhaps the New Creation of which the Resurrection Body is part is non-spatio-temporal.

Conclusions.

The traditional doctrine of the Soul is non-Biblical and even contra-Biblical and therefore it must be omitted from Biblical Theology. As the word itself always carries Platonic overtones, I suggest that we abandon the use of it altogether.

The Biblical doctrine has many practical consequences. If we realise that Christ died to save men instead of immortal souls, then our praying and evangelism will concern themselves more with people, as such. Our social conscience will be sharper, and perhaps we shall see the feeding of the hungry as one dimension of the message preached. Also we shall be able to answer such questions as, 'Why do I find it difficult to pray when I am sick?'

Finally, the Biblical doctrine puts us in a position to benefit from modern psychology. Man as man is conceived as a unity in the Bible. A man at variance with himself is to that extent the less enjoying full manhood. Modern psychology helps us to appreciate in detail this Biblical truth.

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"..... MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS"

by C.G. Martin

"We have piped to you and you have not danced; we have mourned to you and you have not lamented." There was no pleasing the opponents of our Lord. And there is no pleasing many of our own contemporaries. We are accused of 'pedalling sectional interests' (to quote John Redfern's introduction to CBRF 3) if we try to tackle pressing social problems in a truly Christian spirit; by those unconcerned we are dismissed along with other 'do-gooders'. If we fail in this involvement we are accused of isolation and leaving the world to men of business and the devil. Nor do we fare less roughly at the hands of fellow-believers. We are on the one hand told to get on and 'save souls from the wreck' and not mess about with jobs the welfare state does anyway; on the other we are adjured to pay attention to the true meaning of the parable of the good Samaritan. We are exhorted alternately to show the love of God to the world, and to be unworldly; to 'go where the fish are', but not to get wet.

Mercifully it is not our concern to please men but God. There is, however, no reason why we should confuse men into the bargain. Yet I feel that much of our language and thought form must strike the uninitiated as paradoxical, face-saving, or just incomprehensible. "You don't begin to LIVE," says the evangelist, "till you're a Christian", and to his occasional unconverted hearer he appears to be drawing up a profit and loss account between the blessings of the Gospel and the pleasures of sin, between 'the whole world' and some part of him referred to as 'soul'. Even if the hearer heavily discounts the 'pie in the sky when you die', he gets the impression that he is being sold Christianity because it pays. Personal testimonies so often run the same line. The dialogue might run:-

"So you think you enjoy your church service more than the fellowship of the pub?"

"Certainly - so would you if you were a Christian."

"Well, I'm not. So you go ahead and enjoy yours, and I'll enjoy mine."

"But it's not right to ignore Christ in your life."

"Who said anything about 'right'? You're arguing from enjoyment, and I'm enjoying myself fine."

No wonder the hearer is bewildered when next week he hears a sermon about the cost of discipleship. "It's a hard break, but it's got to be made." He is exhorted to face the challenge, to give up all if need be. How does this fit in with the enjoyment? "Oh, well, you see, it's hard to give up x, y and z, but since you afterwards find they're no good to you anyway, you find the sacrifice is worth it." "Worth it!" - so we're back again at what we get out of it. And, further, when he analyses closely our way of life, he may come to the conclusion that it gives us just as much ease, self-satisfaction and pleasure as he gets from his, and dismisses the 'challenge' and 'giving up' as so much histrionics. The third week he is bombarded with theological propositions about sin, atonement, and faith, which he is asked to believe and endorse. It sounds a perfectly valid scheme whereby the past can be forgotten, guilt complex removed, mental integration achieved. This, too, would seem to be something one 'gets out of it'. Also it seems to suggest a division in personality - a lower part that is renounced, and a higher part that sees what is good for it.

This is not dragged in to debunk modern preaching (though I welcome anything that makes my own or others' attempts at preaching more soundly Biblical and more readily comprehensible). It is an illustration of the problem we face in meeting the argument 'Everyone only acts for themselves really'. "Doth Job serve God for nought?" There appears to be a distressing revival of this cynical approach, particularly among sixth-form and student folk, who use it to insulate themselves from any serious thinking about the Gospel. Its label in the philosophical archives is 'psychological hedonism' and some outline of it will be found in most primers on ethics, or from an encyclopedia article or biography of Bentham. Every case of self-sacrifice you quote is side-tracked with "Well, he enjoys doing it". Alice becomes an almoner in Altrincham, Peter a probation officer in Poplar, Dick a doctor in Dacca, because it gives them pleasure, a sense of fulfilment, and so on. If this seems trivial to you, try arguing with a mod. who knows a bit of the jargon. In case anyone has not given this much serious thought, it might be in order to point out one logical deficiency in the system.

He: Your Bible-translator in Borneo in fact does it because it gives him pleasure.

You: Pleasure! He's given up a comfortable home to live in a log-house: given up a good career for mere sustenance: left cultured company for primitive illiterates . . . . .

He: But he thinks the thrill of giving them the 'word of God' in their own language is worth all this. It's the pleasure that counts - only he rates spiritual pleasure above physical ease.

You: But he says he felt it his duty. He did it for the love of God.

He: That's his rationalisation. Of course he isn't going to admit he's selfish.

You: He's wrong in his statement, then?

He: Yes - but not necessarily consciously, of course.

You: But how can you prove that in face of his evidence?

He: By the facts. He went, didn't he? He's given up a lot, hasn't he? Well, he wouldn't do that if he wasn't going to get more satisfaction by going than staying, would he?

Which is what he is trying to prove. His thesis to be proved becomes an a priori postulate.

This will not of course convince your protagonist, but we may as well try to demonstrate that he has not got a necessary logical refutation of Romans 15:1-3.

Well, then, if argument will not convince, what are we to do? We must say something, as Augustine pointed out, because we cannot keep silence. But this will never be more than part of our duty. I suggest the situation calls for a reassessment of our concept of Christian discipleship. Men heard the sayings of Christ: they also saw His living demonstration of the self-giving of God: they were not all pleased, but they all saw: and, whether convinced by argument or stung to awareness by personal encounter with such a life, some followed. He intends that the pattern should be the same, only now the revelation is of His word through the mouths of His people, and His life through their living.

The church's job is not to proselytise or gain converts, but to make disciples. The verb 'to disciple' occurs twice in the active voice - once (Matt.28:19) in the command to do it, and once (Acts 14:21) in the record of its being done. It is one of the many tragedies of translation that Jerome chose docete (teach) for this verb in his Vulgate. We do not exhaust this command of Christ by imparting information. Our task is not complete when we have 'told them'. This 'making disciples' is a more comprehensive duty of which 'teaching' (v.20) is only a part. Nor is the 'baptising' just a

ceremonial duty. To 'disciple' is to obtain for Christ the serious, diligent and informed allegiance of those we deal with. The subject clearly warrants close and more detailed examination.

BECOMING A DISCIPLE. From the sayings of our Lord, this clearly is a total commitment, involving the whole man. It is not paying attention to one part - getting one's 'soul' saved, much as one might get one's hair cut. Clearly the immediate incentive may differ from case to case: "I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad", "I bring my sins to Jesus", "Open mine eyes, O Lord, to see", and many others are genuine expressions of the different attitudes of heart and mind in which people start their discipleship. But unless the whole person is involved, we may justly doubt the reality of Christian profession.

This is well illustrated in Matt.11:28. The invitation is not to give a part, but to make a personal encounter: "Come". "Take my yoke" suggests the forging of a permanent link with the lord and teacher. If we lag behind or push ahead, the yoke will chafe. If we progress steadily with Him, we find it 'easy'. A major part of being yoked to Him is the 'learning of Him' (not only ABOUT Him) the cardinal virtues of the disciple, meekness and lowliness. These are not propositions of the intellect, nor even isolated acts of will, 'decisions'; rather they are the steady disposition and attitude of the whole life: and they form the hall-mark of Christianity in Gospels and Epistles alike (2 Cor.10:1; Gal.5:23, 6:1; 1 Tim.6:11; 2 Tim.2:25; Titus 3:2; Luke 1:52; Rom.12:16; Jas.1:9, 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5; Phil.2:8 - and a concordance will furnish many more). The idea that humility is a virtue - let alone one of the major virtues - is original in Christianity. The Greeks appear to have regarded it as weak and unworthy of a cultured person; to them this would indeed involve repentance (ie. change of entire attitude).

THE MARKS OF DISCIPLESHIP. If 'salvation' is mainly propositional, then it is easy to ascertain by suitable questioning whether a man is 'saved', and we are prone both to accept and reject people very easily on the basis of the adequacy of their mental response to the 'plan of salvation'. But for discipleship, there is no such easy yardstick. Christ Himself gives three major marks of the disciple:-

Continuance (John 8:31). Whatever other factors are involved in a doctrine of assurance, this is one reason for the confidence of the individual believer (Acts 26:22) as it is a powerful evidence to the outside observer.

Love to other disciples (John 13:35). This does not involve uniformity or universal agreement, but the settled disposition of the will to seek the other's good. It was to be the distinguishing mark of the Christian community, following the example of His loyalty, reproof, forbearance, encouragement, to the twelve: "As I have loved you".

Fruitfulness (John 15:8). The reality of the inward joining to Christ becomes obvious in the outward orientation and activity of the whole person. "Ye are the branches" and life of the Vine flows through every twig, perhaps in differing volume, "as God has dealt to every man", but not differing in character. The life of Christ in my prayer is not a super-octane version of the same life in my business decisions or relations at home. The fruit is of many kinds (Gal.5:22-23) appropriate to the different spheres, but it is the one fruit of a unified commitment.

All these marks of discipleship shout loudly that our duty is to relate Christ to the whole man, his thinking, loving, private, social, business, leisure and all other activities. Mr. Blamires in his stimulating book 'The Christian Mind' argues that there are wide areas where Christians accept a non-Christian account of life simply in default of any serious relation of Biblical doctrine to that field. If our preaching leaves large areas of human activity unmentioned, our hearers may well feel that we offer only some other society to add to their present connections with the Rotary Club, the Chess Club and the Morris Dancing Group. We tend to react strongly against such comparisons and so stress the

COST OF DISCIPLESHIP. His Chess Club costs him only a few guineas a year, and he gets much enjoyment from it. We will show him that Christianity is of sterner stuff. We will read him Matt.10:5-27 and tell him of places where this is painfully true - Eastern Germany, South America, where many Christians indeed "endure to the end" in their confession of Christ before men. Our hearer blandly asks what this has to do with him and us in Britain. Most of the Christians, he finds, who claim to be persecuted for righteousness' sake, bring it upon themselves. We are to endure persecution if it comes: we are nowhere commended to seek it. A second century writing celebrates the bravery of the aged Polycarp, who, dragged from his hiding place, refused to renounce Christ. The writer adds however that one Quintus "forced himself and some others to come forward .. we praise not those who deliver themselves up since the gospel doth not so teach us." There is a sort of glamour attaching to this type of opposition which may even tempt us away

from meekness and lowliness. We may put our necks under the yoke of Christ, but not stick them out unnecessarily otherwise. This passage does, however, contain a deeper statement. "It is enough for the disciple that he be as His Lord". In our affluent, sophisticated Western society we may well ask ourselves what sort of house in what sort of district Jesus would live in; what sort of car he would run; what sort of record library, bookshelf, colour photography equipment or tape-recorder he would have. Do the common people "hear us gladly"? He received sinners and outcasts and shared His meals with them. Luke 9:23 makes the same point even more powerfully. It was said "to all" - this is not an 'upper-stream Christianity for Loyola and Francis of Assissi. It is arguable that such extreme asceticism itself springs from a forcing of the Greek body-soul antithesis into a Gnostic dualism, rather than a true subordination of every part and activity of the personality to the interests of God. "Let him deny himself". It is here that our malformed doctrines of man may lead us into linguistic dead-ends. What is the self to be denied, and who is to deny it? Are we to postulate a regenerate 'soul' which says 'no' to the enticements of the devil acting upon unregenerate 'flesh'? Is Christ adumbrating the Pauline teaching of Gal.5:17; Rom.6:13? Do we postulate a 'responsible I' as a third party arbitrating between flesh and spirit - and how does this differ from the psychologist's super-ego? Do we dispose of our 'members' as the foreman deploys his men, and who are "we" that do the disposing? Mercifully Christ's listeners were Hebrews, with minds clear of the subtleties of Greek analysis. Paul was later inspired to give whatever expression is possible to non-Hebrew minds nurtured in the Platonic mould. (Even so we may note he does not follow the Greek soma-psuche (body-soul) antithesis but sets them both against pneuma (spirit), e.g. 1 Cor.2:14). But Peter and his friends knew without doubt what Christ meant. To them it was a simple reflexive verb. Similar constructions in Matt.4:6, 8:4; Luke 4:23; Acts 16:28 present no difficulty. In the action, the distinction between subject and object has no relevance. What Christ is insisting upon is not the repudiation of this or that part of our existence, but the taking up of an attitude by the whole. It is not 'self-denial' in the sense of going without sugar in Lent, or giving up smoking: not even the repression of our cultural 'selves' because of the evil associations of the theatre or concert. It is rather a true 'repentance', a change of attitude so complete, so unrestrained, that we take up the cross and follow Him. In the language of Rom.12 we offer our 'bodies' (Mr. Dibbons will point out another example of synecdoche) a living sacrifice to God.

Here is the true cost of discipleship: the end of the 'sinful quest for intellectual autonomy', the end of comfortable insulation from the sorrows and pressures of 'other men', the end of fancied superiority or self-sufficiency, the beginning of the learning of Him who is meek and lowly in heart. And yet this will provide no glamour, no aura of piety and sacrifice. It may be our Christian duty to maintain a certain standard of table and living. It may be our Christian duty to exercise authority, to recognise that we know more than those we teach, see further than those we direct. We may have to declare the word of God with authority, to "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and patience". 'My station and my duty' must be determined in an attitude of openness to the mind of Christ. Having found his will in these respects I am to live within them with humble grace, without apology, without embarrassment, because I follow Him who went His way with supreme grace, conviction and unembarrassed ease.

But how to convey this 'cost' to our hearers. Perhaps it cannot be fully done in words. And yet we are to "make disciples". How? By the combined influence of word and life: the whole word of God related to all human situations - not a selective 'salvation of the soul' as if it were a technical operation that happened to a part, but a 'making whole of the entire life'. And not only with our lips but in our lives - not saying without going, nor going without saying. This calls for discipline indeed.

PRIVILEGES OF DISCIPLESHIP may be mentioned. You will find them, for example, in Psalm 25; John 8:31; Luke 6;40 Luke 22:28; 1 Cor.13:12 and elsewhere. Perhaps the most thrilling is Luke 6:40 - when he is fully trained he will be like His Lord. Also Matt.13:52 draws the splendid picture of the steward 'disciplined to the kingdom of heaven' who can meet every emergency because he has built up a treasure from which he brings the right thing for each situation.

Is it then 'worth it' after all? Have I arrived back where my hedonist objector said I would? Certainly not. This putting of oneself at the divine disposal is not a 'paying proposition' but a 'reasonable service'. The 'reasonable' (logikos), we might almost say 'logical outcome',of the theology and world view of Romans 1-8 and 9-11 is the dedication of 12:1. It is by such dedicated living, as much as by sharp argument, that we may in our own day meet the resurgence of the psychological hedonist.

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DISCIPLESHIP IN THE AFFLUENT SOCIETY

by F.R. Coad

That our title should seem to contain in it something paradoxical is itself an excellent illustration of the two quirks of modern evangelical thought, with which this article will be largely concerned.

In the first place, there is the curiously inverted materialism of our thinking. The discipleship of the man or woman who has made some obvious material renunciation for the sake of Christian witness and service is so taken for granted (although 1 Cor.13: 3 suggests that Paul may not have wholly agreed with us), that the majority who find their calling in normal secular life are left on one side as 'second bests', debarred from the place of real discipleship. This might be good for our souls if it were not that as a result we are too often left defenceless before mammon. Too rarely have we sufficient points of reference within our vision of life to enable us to comprehend such prosperity as the affluent society brings with it, within the circle of our Christian service and witness. We may hoard our prosperity, or waste it, or give it away; but each alternative is irresponsible: our Lord told us to make to ourselves friends of it, for the everlasting habitations (Luke 16: 9-14).

We allow the business man to be successful - provided only he ploughs his profits back into the Church. That the whole gamut of his activity, the contribution which he makes to the economy, his relationships with workers and other businesses, with consumers and the state, the quality of his product and the efficiency of his organisation: that all these and more are an integral part of his Christian witness, often escapes our view.

A young preacher was heard to put forward as evidence of his Christian commitment the fact that he had become a trainee teacher, destined to a life of comparative penury when he could have been earning "two or three times as much" elsewhere. On such an unproven and inherently improbable thesis he built his spiritual self-respect: yet strictly such a consideration was totally irrelevant, the only true criterion being whether he was truly fulfilling the grace which had been given him. It is from such an outlook as that which we have been describing that there can derive

such an obviously distorted statement as the following:-

> ".... a believer should not spend his life doing what the unregenerate could do as well, if not better; .... the function of a job is merely to provide for current necessities while the main vocation of the Christian is to preach the kingdom of God."
>
> (True Discipleship, p.18)

(It depends, of course, on what we mean by the kingdom of God).

Is it possible that, by destroying every other pathway to a dramatic expression of commitment, evangelicalism has destroyed much more than appeared: much more than superficial and wearisome observances, fastings and self-denials?

The second quirk concerns the very meaning of the word discipleship. It has become encrusted with layers of meaning that serve only to conceal its essential simplicity. This second quirk can provide the starting point for our re-appraisal of discipleship today.

Essentially and simply, a 'disciple' is a 'learner', just that: one who accepts and grows into the teachings of another. We shall begin to detect some of the encrustations if we perform the simple exercise of substituting the word 'learner' whenever we wish to use the word 'disciple'. Our Lord's invitation to learn of Him is couched in the most winsome and humane of terms:

> " Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."
>
> (Matt. 11:28-30)

For proof of this learnership, our Lord laid down three tokens or signs:-

1. Continuance in His word - characterised by the royal freedom of truth (John 8:31,32).
2. Love to one another (John 13:35).
3. The bearing of much fruit (John 15:8).

When our Lord indicated that those of His hearers who were to become learners must sever dearest ties of kinship, and forsake all that they possessed (Luke 14:25-33), He stated something which for them was simple fact. That fact has been repeated countless times in the history of His Church. It is the potential consequence of every learnership: this is the whole point of the exhortation to count the cost, even as the builder plans and costs his tower, or the king his war. It is the potential cost: it is not the distinguishing sign of discipleship.

The history of the early Church makes this clear. Through the New Testament (and, indeed, throughout Christian doctrine) there run two threads, complementary by nature, though superficially contradictory. On the one hand there is the catastrophic, the dramatic: that element which overturns and revolutionises, and is related directly in prospect to the apocalyptic coming of the kingdom of God in the end times. On the other hand, there is the regular, the normal, that which works quietly within the everyday and the regular order, and which is related to those present aspects of a kingdom which is within or among us (Luke 17:20,21), to be received quietly like a little child (Luke 18:17), and which is characterised by righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost (Rom.14:17).

So, on the one hand, we have such as the apostles - "as the filth of the world, ... the offscouring of all things" (1 Cor.4:13): on the other, such as Erastus, city treasurer of Corinth, and Gaius mine host (Rom.16:23), Philemon, and others "rich in this world" (1 Tim.6:17-19). To some who wished unjustifiably to pass from the second category to the first, and thus to contract out of the ordinary economic life of the community in which they lived, in order to live apart in the light of the parousia, Paul had strong words to say (1 Thess.4:11,12. 2 Thess.3:6-11). The church, indeed, was exhorted to withdraw from such! 'Faith lines', in the wrong place, may be seriously wrong.

There is, then, no economic or occupational norm for discipleship. It is to be worked out by each in the context of his own calling. But there is one tension which learnership must produce. To learn of Christ is to see new things, and to think new thoughts: to receive disturbing conceptions, and to shatter accepted codes. The royal freedom of truth exposes too brutally the fetters of mere conformity.

"Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?" (Matt.9:14). (Yet fast they would! v.15).

"Thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day." (Matt.12:2)

"Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands ..." (Matt.15:2)

So the shocked complaints ring out. To learn of Christ is to see beneath the surface of things, to challenge glib standards, to evaluate our environment in relation to Him, to penetrate beneath the outward form to the true humanitarianism beneath, to reach for the inner truth, and when its temporary clothing has become its bondage to discard the encumbering package. It does not make us catastrophics, if we are called to be regulars; nor does it bind the catastrophic by the swaddling bands of the regular. To both, it imparts a new vision in the calling in which they are called.

The call of discipleship, therefore, is to learn. To learn of Christ requires us to be radical in our thinking: to probe and to challenge and to question that which we might call 'the conventional wisdom', to borrow the phrase of J.K. Galbraith (The Affluent Society). It is more than that. It is a growing into the practical likeness of Christ Himself. That likeness involves meekness (if we remember that meekness is humanity, not a recessive personality; for even Moses, that tempestuous leader of men, was "very meek" (Num.12:3)). That likeness involves humility, for Jesus was lowly of heart. That likeness involves rest for our souls in the turmoil of the world.

Perhaps these thoughts will be relevant to the debate which has been proceeding in this journal. Does our discipleship bear upon our attitude to the social structure of which we are part, and how? Our answer will depend in part upon our doctrine of the nature of man himself: a matter dealt with elsewhere in this issue. To what extent may we divide man into separate departments, and set soul in opposition to body, and perhaps to spirit? The question of our attitude to society becomes particularly acute if we are 'regulars': for then our calling is among the ordinary stuff of life. We are then essentially part of the social and economic framework of society; in what manner, then, and in what places does our learnership bear upon each part of our living?

The question shows that those three tokens of discipleship already noted are not as straightforward as they may at first have appeared. As to the first, is not Jesus' word relevant to our whole

life? Can we accept any limitation upon the jurisdiction of His Word; and is any of life outside the royal freedom of truth? As to the second, is love to one another inward looking, concerned only with the community of the disciples: or can it be a true love to our fellow disciples if it does not also embrace our neighbour (in the sense of the parable of the good Samaritan)? As to the third, what is included in the 'much fruit'?

The question was raised in our last issue by Drs. Packer and Howard. Dr. Packer cast a spotlight on the cruel paradox that the affluent man often seems the more indifferent to spiritual issues. (A sociological study to ascertain whether in fact this is so might be valuable: after all, a major plaint is that the Christian faith has always been stronger among middle class and more prosperous elements of society than among working class elements. We might suspect that other factors, such as the inherent ability to think in abstract terms, affect the issue.) Accepting the assumption, however, does it invalidate, as true expressions of Christian concern, the attempts which were made to remedy the conditions which he described? If it does not, then those attempts were, after all, for the Christian, part of his discipleship. If it does, then we have no logical resting place short of the repulsive suggestion that men should be kept in such conditions in order to make them the more receptive to the Gospel.

The answer to the dilemmas of time and effort presented by Dr. Packer must surely lie within a true understanding of the koinōnia of the Church, the common participation and sharing in the one universal work of God. Within that fellowship, each has his own individual part to play, and that part may be secular as well as religious. True discipleship therefore is related directly to wide unity of the Church. This brings us to Dr. Howard's emphasis on limits to the Church's commitment. We might well ask here what precisely is meant by 'the Church' in this context. There must clearly be limits to the possible commitment of any local church, or of the Church as a worshipping community - but can there be any such limit on the Church as the unity of all believers in all their activities?

In references to the example of Jesus Himself, we must also be careful lest we build upon anachronisms, or lest we demand anachronisms before we ourselves act. We must not overlook the deliberate self-limitation of His incarnation: the truth of the kenōsis. "Greater works than these shall he do", said our Lord Himself (John 14:12). If Jesus Himself commenced no programme of

social action, there has nevertheless been many a great programme which has derived directly from the 'learning' of the things which He taught. Again and again we are brought back to this fundamental question for our discipleship. Can we divide man into these two separate elements of soul and body in such a manner as to separate so completely the two? Can we separate between personal and social morality? Can there be true personal morality without social justice? We say truly that we must change man, rather than his circumstances: but can we distinguish so clearly between them, when man is inextricably part of his circumstances, both making them and being made by them? Can this not be an excuse for avoiding the issue? If Jesus came presenting no new ethic, is not this to say that the ethic is the same as that which was already there, and which the prophets show so plainly to have been social in its outworking? (see Amos 5:11-12; 8:4-7; Mic.2:1-2; 3:1-3,9-11; 7:2-6; Hos.4:1-2; etc.).

The three occasions when the disciples laid aside mere conformism, which we have quoted, yield some interesting thoughts for the development of these enquiries. Behind each of the occasions there lies a new standard of judgment, which Jesus Himself endorsed. On the first occasion, it was the standard of absolute loyalty to Himself: indeed, of deep love toward Him (Matt.9:14-15). Here is something which the world cannot understand, where the Gospel needs to be stated in practical terms to become meaningful for the man in the world:-

> "An' I says: 'It's love. I love people so much I'm fit to bust, sometimes.' An' I says: 'Don't you love Jesus?' Well, I thought an'thought, an' finally I says: 'No, I don't know nobody name' Jesus. I know a bunch of stories, but I only love people. An' sometimes I love 'em fit to bust, an' I want to make 'em happy, so I been preachin' somepin I thought would make 'em happy'".
> (Steinbeck. The Grapes of Wrath)

On the second occasion, there was the standard of true humanism: but it was a humanism related to that fulfilment of humanity which is summed up in the Son of Man Himself (Matt.12:1-8 with Mk.2:27,28). On the third occasion it was the standard of discernment: the power to recognise when the outward form had become the enemy of truth, and to discard it that the truth itself might be preserved (Matt.15:1-20).

Do these three standards give us some foundation for our discipleship? Love to God, as revealed in Christ. Love to our

fellow man. Discernment, to see the true reality of things. They are trite enough, and attract lip service enough. How are we to work them out? Our callings will differ; whatever the potential cost of discipleship, at any one moment there will be disciples in circumstances which differ from the extreme of the 'catastrophic' to the settled quietness of the 'regular'. Until we recognise our essential unity transcending those differences, we cannot begin to understand the fullness of discipleship. Within it, in our own individual circumstances, there must always be the cutting edge of the Word of Christ:-

> "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

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When we Christians behave badly, or fail to behave well, we are making Christianity unbelievable to the outside world. The wartime posters told us that Careless Talk costs Lives. It is equally true that Careless Lives cost Talk.

C.S. Lewis.

There cannot be anything imagined more absurd in itself than wise, and sublime, and heavenly prayers, added to a life of vanity and folly, where neither labour nor diversions, neither time nor money are under the direction of the wisdom and heavenly tempers of our prayers.

William Law.

MEMBERS' SECTION

Contributions and Correspondence on matters raised in the Journal should reach the Correspondence Editor, 229 Village Way, Beckenham, Kent, within four weeks of the Journal being received.

CONTRIBUTION

THE NEW LOOK IN CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATIONS

by Herbert Dennett

The children of this world are sometimes wiser than the children of light, and in certain directions Christians can profit by ideas developed in the business and commercial worlds. The Science of Communications is an example of such a development.

The use of spoken and written words to convey messages from person to person is so fundamental to nearly all the human race that for long centuries ideas on the subject have been almost completely static. The relatively recent rise of huge industrial organizations, linking thousands of people in common and intricate enterprises, has forced the problem of human communications into new prominence. Those at the head of great organizations made the alarming discovery that instructions and information from the top were not penetrating satisfactorily to the lower levels of the hierarchy. Communication was in fact breaking down.

The discovery that the same thing in principle has been happening in Christian communications is of even more recent date. In some quarters it is still not realized that there is any breakdown at all. Thousands of 'beautiful' addresses are given and articles written to be wasted on arid soil, for the simple reason that few speakers and writers take the trouble to find out how much is understood. There would be many humbled hearts if it were realized how much in fact does go in.

When a move is made in a branch of knowledge which has long been dormant, the move is apt to be a violent one, and accompanied by a reversal of many traditional ideas. So it is with the Science of Communications. On the theoretical side there has been an upheaval in the linguistic world. The age-long ideas about eight parts of speech and the meaning of words have been thoroughly shaken up. Everything about a language, English or any other, is now being described in

terms of its own structure, not by the labels grammarians were pleased to provide.

On the practical side there has also been a thorough-going volte-face, a dramatic switch in the focus of interest. In the past the stress has been on the speaker or writer, the 'transmitter' as he is now called. The pundits laid down rules for the niceties of syntax, elegance of diction and so on. But nobody bothered much about the unfortunate listener or reader. If he did not understand what it was all about, that was just too bad - he was simply a dimwit.

The strange thing about this setting-forth of new ideas concerning human communications (as with more than one development in this arrogant modern world) is that it is but the re-discovery of truth and principles known to the ancient world, and certainly indicated in the Scriptures. The pity is that the secular world was so far ahead of the Christian in the re-discovery.

To understand the position it is necessary to have a definition of human communications. It is the transfer of an idea from the mind of one person to the minds of others. The success or otherwise of the process may be judged by the extent to which the idea formed in the minds of the 'receivers' (hearers or readers) resembles the idea originally in the mind of the 'transmitter' (speaker or writer). Too often there is little resemblance at all. The words 'transmitter' and 'receiver' are used in the above senses throughout this article.

Transmission of ideas is usually accomplished by the use of words, spoken or printed, and the process of gathering the meaning of the words is called understanding. The job falls largely on the receiver. That the importance of this final link in the communication chain was known centuries ago to the writers of Scripture is evident from the following passages:

Neh.8:8 And they read in the book of the law distinctly and they explained the meaning, so that they (the hearers) understood the meaning.

Matt.13:19 When a man hears the word that tells of the Kingdom, but fails to understand it, the evil one comes and carries off what has been sown in his heart. (N.E.B.)

Matt.13:23 But the seed that fell into good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it . . . . . (N.E.B.)

Acts 8:30 (Philip to Eunuch) Do you understand what you are reading? How can I understand unless someone will give me the clue? (N.E.B.)

The fact that less than a century ago in this country most instruction was given parrot-fashion with little or no regard to what was understood is testimony to the need for a re-discovery of the true implication of human communications. The statement made above that ideas are conveyed from mind to mind by means of words is the obvious and traditional way of putting it. The modern approach is to regard words used in either speaking or writing as an agreed code of communication. This word 'code' is in fact the key to all modern thinking on the subject.

The truth of the above becomes the more evident when the words so universally used are examined more critically. First of all they are arbitrary in form and (echo or onomatopoeiac words apart) bear no relation whatever to the realities they are used to symbolize. 'Whale' is a short word for a huge creature; 'micro-organism' a long word for a tiny object. This arbitrary character of words is even more evident when it is considered that peoples of other nations use an entirely different word-coding to convey an identical idea. The familiar 'Our Father which art in heaven' becomes 'Notre Pere qui es aux cieux' for the Frenchman and 'Vater unser in dem Himmel', or, traditionally 'Vater unser in Himmelreich' for the German. There are three or four thousand different forms of word-coding used throughout the world, the imprint of the curse of Babel.

The next point about words is even more important. They do not have exact values as do coins. So far from having rigid meanings words can and do change their meanings in two different ways. The first is according to the context in which they are used. Two illustrations from the New Testament will make this point clear. In the Authorized Version (and a number of others too for that matter) the word 'bear' is variously used to mean 'carry or support' (for Greek 'bastazo' as Matt.3:11) 'give birth to' (for 'tikto' - Gal.4:27) 'endure or put up with' (for 'anechomai' - 2 Cor.11:1) 'to move or turn' (for 'antophthalmeo' - Acts 27:15). In addition there are such senses as 'bear down on' (press) 'bear on the subject' (refer to) and so on. The existence of the homonym 'bear' (the animal) and the homophone 'bare' (naked) makes confusion worse confounded, and further evidences the slipperiness of this word.

The second illustration works the other way round. The Greek 'diakonia' is rendered with reasonable accuracy in the Authorized Version as 'serving' (Luke 10:40) 'relief' (Acts 11: 29) 'office' (Rom.11:13) 'ministration' (2 Cor.3:7) 'ministry' (1 Tim.1:12) 'service' (Rev.2:19). The general use of the word 'deacon' and 'the minister' also gives a false colour to the entire idea-cluster, and adds yet more to the confusion of meaning. Some of the so-called literal versions of the New Testament, such as Young's and Darby's,

try to find a uniform rendering of the Greek 'diakonia', but the result is strained and certainly not idiomatic English. Such versions attempt to imitate the Latin Vulgate which has a variant of 'ministerium' in all the above passages. All who have learned another language will readily see the point of this second illustration.

The second way in which a word can vary in meaning is according to the person who uses it. Consider what the simple word 'dog' can mean to the following: (a) the ardent animal lover (b) the owner of pampered yapping pekinese (c) a person who has been badly bitten by a savage dog (d) the zoologist - who will prefer the technical label 'canis familiaris'. The 'dog' of the New Testament would be a stranger to all the above, for it was a filthy verminous scavenger of the streets. Hence the bad sense in which the word was used in Phil.3:2 ('beware of dogs') and Rev.22:15 ('outside are the dogs'). (Note: Matt.15:27 should read 'puppies', which alone were allowed in a house.)

Every individual person's understanding of the meaning of a word is 'coloured' by all his previous experiences of the reality which the word symbolizes. The original meaning of certain words is degraded out of all recognition in the minds of some people. The key word 'justification' in the New Testament, with its precise background of legal righteousness, is used by some solely in such contexts as 'there is no justification whatever for this rise in the price of potatoes'.

The importance of this to the Christian speaker and writer is obvious. He may use a certain word in the sense of 'x', hoping that his audience will understand it in the same sense. Unless he is very fortunate indeed some of his listeners or readers will take the word in the sense 'y' or even 'z', and so miss the point altogether.

The modern Science of Communication makes much use of telegraphic and radio problems to illustrate its own. A telegram or radiogram starts with a message 'in the clear' (normal English). It is then coded, either in the dots and dashes of Morse, or in the perforations of teleprinter paper tape. Note that these forms of coding are completely unambiguous. A dot and a dash in Morse symbolizes the letter 'a' and none other. The code is then transmitted by wire or radio in the form of electrical impulses, picked up by the receiving apparatus, which decodes the impulses and reproduces the original message in clear English - accurately it is hoped.

Human communications do not start with words but with an idea in the mind, which is then 'coded' in the form of words. In contrast to the telegraphic symbols, these words are far from having fixed values, as has already been demonstrated. The transmission of the word-code is effected either by sound-waves or by a further 'code of a code' in the form of marks on paper. The listener through his ears or the reader through his eyes 'decodes' the words and so has transmitted to his brain some representation of the idea originally in the mind of the transmitter. This process of human communication is much less likely to be accurate than the telegraphic one, though in spite of all care even the telegraphic message may be distorted in the course of transmission. This may be caused by faulty terminals, bad leads, electrical or magnetic interference. Communication engineers group all such trouble sources under the comprehensive term 'noise'.

In human communications anything which hinders the clear understanding of the spoken or written message is regarded as a parallel of the telegraphic 'noise'. The number of barriers to effective communication occasioned by such 'noise' is so formidable that the Christian speaker or writer might well despair of ever being able to make his hearers or readers understand what he is getting at. To an extent such a state of mind is a healthy one, and in line with modern thinking. One of the greatest of secular copy-writers said: "The good writer is always nervous that at any moment the reader may stop reading!" That goes for the speaker and listener too!

The 'noise' in human communications may be of two kinds: external and internal. The first includes bad acoustics (affecting the listener), poor or indistinct print (affecting the reader), tiredness or pre-occupation on the part of the receivers (affecting both listeners and readers). Internal 'noise' chiefly concerns the transmitter. It may be caused by his own ideas being vague, or that the subject proposed is unsuitable for the particular receivers. If the construction is badly planned only a confused impression will be received.

Then there is the question of the language used, the choice of the 'code-words', and their arrangement into sentences. If the sentences are long and involved the receivers will weary of trying to follow; a wrong choice of words will cause 'fog' or misunderstanding. A florid or abstract diction, which is generally also obscure and ambiguous will result in no clear image being formed at all. Sir Ernest Gowers in his 'Plain Words' delightfully dubs this

sort of thing 'Gobbledegook'. Too much padding will obviously weary, so will lack of imagination.

One barrier in which both transmitter and receiver may be involved is the use of figures of speech. With the best will in the world the receiver may take literally what is meant figuratively and vice versa. A term detached from its normal connection with the real world is called a 'fiction'. The words 'cut finger' symbolize a condition evident to the physical senses, but 'cut prices' are a figment of the imagination; the expression is a verbal spook, though everyone understands the meaning of such a simple fiction as this. It is the 'deep' speakers and writers who get further and further from reality and so erect barriers to effective communication.

The most serious of all barriers is the failure to take account of cultural differences between transmitter and receivers. Though this difficulty is particularly acute on the foreign field, between missionaries and natives, it can utterly disrupt the communication of the Christian message between people of the same nationality.

One aspect of the Science of Communication is known as Information Theory, using the word 'information' in the special sense of impact made on the receiver. It is not quite the same as understanding the meaning intended. One of the principles of Information Theory is that the less predictable a statement is, the more information (in this special sense) it carries, or the greater is its impact. Conversely when the receiver knows most of what is coming, little information is conveyed at all. This principle applies particularly to those pet phrases and words so often used. After the first time or so they lose all impact, and become what Stuart Chase in his 'Tyranny of Words' so graphically terms 'blah words'.

One of the values of modern translations of the New Testament such as J.B. Phillips or the New English Bible is that these versions have new and often startling expressions in place of the so familiar ones of the Authorized Version. With an audience brought up on the common version a string of quotations makes little impact at all - almost every word is anticipated.

Another recent class of Bible translation is thoroughly in line with modern linguistic trends - the versions which use a deliberately simplified vocabulary. 'The New Testament in Plain English' is a British example (K. Williams - S.P.C.K.) and 'The Simplified New Testament' an American one (Olaf Norlie - Zondervan). That this trend is not confined to English is evident from the

appearance of simplified translations in other languages, notably 'Le Version Populaire' in French.

A great deal of research on Word-Lists for Simplified English has been going on, and it has been demonstrated that a carefully selected vocabulary of one thousand words can cover up to 95% of the requirements of speakers and writers on all normal Christian subjects. The use of such a vocabulary greatly lightens the load on the receiver, who today is rightly regarded as the centre of interest. Unless he understands what is transmitted all is lost.

So here is the New Look for Christian Communications. It affects every aspect of Christian work: short messages in the open air, perhaps the hardest of all to 'communicate'; lessons in the Sunday School, where the Age Barrier is prominent; talks to young people inside and outside the church, when the receivers are often conditioned to the primeval rhythm and diction of the 'pops'; the indoor Gospel meeting, and finally ministry to Christians of vastly differing experience both in the faith and in knowledge of the Scriptures.

The problem is to communicate the Christian message to such a range of minds, and to get some assurance that right ideas about the message are formed in the minds of the receivers. Well might the Christian speaker or writer echo Paul's words in a new context: "Who is sufficient for these things?".

As a suggestion, re-read the Gospel narratives slowly and prayerfully in a good but <u>deliberately unfamiliar</u> modern version, say the English of the British and Foreign Bible Society Diglot. Savour the straightforward but idiomatic presentation of the text, as modern to us as the original Greek was to its first readers. Then wonder at the marvellous economy of words with which the narrative is told, the optimum presentation of 'information' in each parable and the almost complete absence of abstractions. Finally wonder at the miraculous simplicity of those closing chapters which lead us to the darkness and horror of the Cross. Here is Christian communication at its most sublime.

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CORRESPONDENCE

"Go Out and Multiply or Stay In and Divide"

(A modern parable by Geoffrey Simmons)

The Anytown Deep-Sea Angling Club was a luxurious place - thick pile carpets, a large log fire, and sumptuous armchairs.

The waiters were excellent, the food beyond compare, and the wine list the best in town. But unfortunately the members were few and always arguing; the Committee fewer and always resigning; and the Officials (or rather Official, for there was only a Secretary) had never been out in a boat.

The Club looked all right; it was financially sound, if only because of a successful sweepstake and an annual increase in the membership fees. The older members were prone to talk about "the good old days" and "the one that got away". But new members did not seem to stay very long, and one modern young miss was heard to exclaim that it was "all too, too terribly dull", and her escort agreed that the Commodore was "a terrible old bore".

At the Annual General Meeting the main item for discussion was "Membership", and it was generally agreed that there were too many other attractions in the town these days. "We used to be the only Club in the town, and look at it now! They all go to the Cinemas and Dance Halls. And of course there's television! Ah, yes, that's it! TELEVISION! And we don't want those Teddy Boy types who lounge in the coffee-bars, do we?"

After the meeting, two of the members, who were more dissatisfied than the rest, were talking about the problem. "I'm fed up", said the younger of them, "Why don't we do something?" "What can we do?" asked the older one. "Well, at least we could go fishing." "But no-one has done that for years!" "Well, I'm going to start." "Then I'll come with you."

It took a long time to overhaul their tackle and prepare the boat, but at long last they were ready to launch out. Surprisingly enough they worked well together; the older member knew the ropes, and the younger had the energy to haul the boat over the shingle.

Once at sea there was no room in the boat for fighting, and no time for arguing, and working together they got to know each other far better in an hour at sea than in all the hours at the Club. And it was not long before other members joined them - for, you see, they caught some fish!

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After a period of fifteen years or so we can just about begin to say that at last no man is now a Christian because of government compulsion, or because it is the way to procure favour at court, or because it is necessary in order to qualify for public office, or because public opinion demands conformity, or because he would lose customers if he did not go to church, or even because habit and intellectual indolence keep the mind in the appointed groove. This fact makes the present day the most important and the most exhilarating period in the history of Christianity for fifteen hundred years. We are back for the first time in something like the earliest centuries of Christianity.

Herbert Butterfield.

"People like frequent laughter", said Father Brown, "but I don't think they like a permanent smile. Cheerfulness without humour is a very trying thing."

G.K. Chesterton.

Do small things as though they were great, because of the majesty of Jesus Christ, who does them in us, and who lives our lives; and do great things as if they were small and easy, because of His omnipotence.

Pascal.

On Being a New Testament Church.

By A. David Edwards.

Dr. William Barclay of Glasgow University tells of a church which he passes regularly on his way to the University. Its notice board reads "First Century Christianity practised here". This sounds very impressive, but Dr. Barclay comments, "What would we think of a doctor who claimed to practise first century surgery?"

The story makes us smile, and ask maybe whether they are in fact first century or just Victorian! However, in all fairness to such a church, unknown to the writer and perhaps to Dr. Barclay, it appears to be sincerely attempting to be a New Testament Church, and the parallel of medical surgery is not really apt. Medical surgery makes advances in each generation of its war against the ills of the body, and one remedy takes the place of another. This is not so with the cure of the disease of sin. The remedy in A.D. 1964 is the same as in A.D. 64. The theology of redemption never changes in essence. This century like the first belongs to the day of grace. We are in the last days, even as the first Christians. We are those "upon whom the end of the ages has come". The way of salvation is still the same, and therefore the vital doctrines and principles of the early church must remain. Otherwise the church is no longer the church of Jesus Christ, and the gates of hell will begin to prevail against her.

Many Christians in the nineteenth century and today would say that the professing church has departed from some of the important first century doctrines and principles. We ourselves would agree with the leading principles of the Reformation and not be opposed to being considered as standing in the reformed tradition. We would accept the historic confessions of faith (e.g. in the 39 Articles) as being essentially New Testament. But even with those who agree on these matters, we would still discover differences. We might be prepared to differ on tribulational views and The Millennium, but anything more important such as Baptism and Church Government would bring serious divergence.

Two questions seem to be raised here. (i) How vital are these things in Christian fellowship and (ii) How far can we be on a limb from what we call Christendom? As I see it, we can only expect to have fellowship with other churches which is deep and lasting, if it is based on the principle of the autonomous local church, answerable first of all to her Lord. The logical alternative to such a local church is the Roman Catholic conception of the church as one organised body. As Troeltsch has pointed out, there is the "sect" type and

there is the "church" type. The Roman conception eventually leads to clear cut division as 1054 and the Reformation have shown. Darby's mistake is along the same line and the sad results of schism can still be seen in our own time. Local churches on the other hand can differ considerably from one another and yet have a measure of fellowship. It is natural that this fellowship is sought more often with churches of identical outlook - the churches of our own faith and order - but why should it stop there? The churches of God will differ according to their needs and opportunities. Some may see fit that one of their elders should be in full-time work among them, others would feel happier if this were not so. In some churches the emphasis may seem to be on the preaching of the Word, in others gathering round the table. Diversity there will be, but on the local church principle fellowship will remain.

Turning to the second question we ask, How far can we be on a limb from what we call Christendom? We just cannot say we are a New Testament Church and ignore the past 1900 years. We are debtors to the past, e.g. The Brethren movement sprang from a high conception of the church and from British Christianity. As one Brethren full-time worker said to me concerning Assembly work in America, "There is not the progress there, it is too British". Bearing our heritage in mind, we can't be dishonest and adapt the past to our own taste and desire. We must not be like Christian Scientists for example, who adapt Christian hymns for themselves. No! We have vital connections with Christians who have gone before. "We are encompassed with a great cloud of witnesses".

It is doubtless clear to us that we are debtors to the past. But we must not be slaves. The latter is the tragedy of Rome and can be of ourselves. We can claim great men of the past as our own, but in all probability if they were with us today they would not be among us, but pioneers of new movements of the Spirit of God. Wesley, Darby, and men of like mind were not tied by the past, and we must be untied too. We must only follow those who have gone before us inasmuch as they followed Christ.

What I have tried to say in this article is this. If we emphasise the fellowship of the local church seeking fellowship with other local churches, we shall avoid many shackles, and the Lord will be free to speak wherever two or three are gathered together in His Name, and to raise up men of God to serve Him as He will.

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Training for Service

The following reaches us from a member, and may be of practical interest to our readers.

CHRISTIAN TEAMWORK INSTITUTE

Fifth and Sixth Introductory Training Courses, Autumn 1964

SERVING CHRIST IN THE WORLD TODAY

The purpose of these courses is to equip Christians to serve Christ more effectively in the world, by providing opportunities to develop these three capacities:

Knowledge of the Bible and of different areas of service

Sensitivity to the needs of men and women

Awareness of what God is doing in concrete situations

Introductory Courses are based upon the training manual "Preparing for Service - A Pattern of Training". Those who have completed an Introductory Course are eligible to join a Stage I Course, to study service in industry, in the community, in the local church, or amongst young people, in more detail. Courses are open to members of all denominations.

Fifth Introductory Course

BIRMINGHAM and COVENTRY

Conference: October 2nd - 4th. Followed by six weekly training meetings in Birmingham and/or Leamington Spa (for Coventry). In both centres only if there are sufficient applicants to form a training group in each.

Course will be either comprehensive or industrial, depending upon the interests of the applicants.

Sixth Introductory Course

LONDON AREA

Conference: October 16th - 18th Followed by six weekly training meetings.

Course specially designed for those who are concerned to study the implications of serving Christ at work.

For copies of "Preparing for Service" (2/6 including postage) and for further information, write to:- The Training Director, Christian Teamwork, 1 Whitehall Place, London, S.W.1. (Phone: WHItehall 6364)

THE BOOKSHELF

The Secretary has received details of two new publishing houses which will interest all concerned with the problems facing the Anglican Church in this ecumenical age, and also with the history of the Reformation.

The Marcham Manor Press will publish new works dealing with the present church scene, e.g. the Paul Report, Anglican-Methodist talks, and the controversial Canon B15 (admission to Communion). The first titles, which are on these subjects, are paperbacks at about 3/6.

The Sutton Courtenay Press is devoted to publishing new editions of Reformation writings, starting with Tyndale and Cranmer, 36/- each. Further volumes are planned to deal with Calvin, Bucer, etc. Many of these will cover works long out of print, or which have had no edition for over 100 years.

Details may be obtained from Gervase Duffield, Marcham Manor Press, Marcham, Abingdon, Berkshire.

(Mr. David Alexander's contributions will be resumed in the next issue).