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## EDITORIAL

### A LOST SENSE

“AFTER ten years or so, they are apt to lose a sense of Vocation.” Such was the chance remark of a committee member, discussing the training of women for Christian service. Whether or not this is generally true of women, we ministers know how often it applies to ourselves. We enter upon our work with enthusiasm, we cherish high ideals, we have a sense of Calling, and then the fire dies down, the gold is as brass and we become the slaves of religious routine: at least, such is the danger.

One object of this fireside talk is to suggest that, instead of a monthly service for young people, we should, every man of us, announce a sermon for the middle-aged and preach on “the destruction that wasteth at noon-day.” It would strike the imagination of many and call down God’s blessing.

We make this suggestion, however, for the sake of the minister himself, feeling that the preparation for such a service would be a blessing to his own soul if he too is losing a sense of Vocation after his decade in the ministry. In the quiet of his Study as he envisaged his congregation, it might be revealed to him that the man in the pulpit was also the man in the pew and that the sermon must first be preached to himself. Now, neither the cause nor the remedy for this spiritual malady is far to seek. Perhaps the cause is physical infirmity, domestic trouble or, alas, personal sin. It may be disappointing spiritual results or disillusionment consequent upon the faults observable in his church members, or his brother ministers. Loss of faith in man and the message soon leads to doubts as to God Himself and he is faced with a terrible *cui bono* regarding his whole Vocation.

The remedy also, is near at hand. The minister can recall the happy day that fixed his choice on Christ and the Ministry. He can remember how God has used him to the eternal blessing of many, he can call to mind the fine qualities which far outweigh the failings of his fellows, he can brace his faith in God and respond to a new commission and, fortified with assurance, he may preach with a power that will impress his hearers and astonish himself.

Can it be that a Church may suffer from this middle-age spiritual blight and lose the sense of its Vocation, the real purpose

for which it was founded? Is the spirit of the Living Creature crushed within the wheels of organisation? Does the erosion of the secondary eat away the vitals of the important things? Let every minister answer for himself. If the reply be affirmative let him read again the words of W. D. Jackson in the October *Fraternal* and go and do likewise. If only a minority of his people follow his lead they shall indeed be as spiritual leaven.

Sometimes it seems that this noon-day destruction may descend upon our Nation and that post-war experiences may blunt the better faculties and Britain may lose that sense of Vocation which inspired our fathers.

In so far as this is true, it is for the church—your church—to perceive and apply the remedy. Here we call attention to two paragraphs appearing in our present issue, telling of spiritual plans fostered by the Lay Preachers under Stanley Turl and the Spiritual Welfare Group led by Henry Cook, two movements which, if taken up, must surely attain great results.

The key to the future is largely in the hands of the Minister. If he lose the vision his people may perish but, if he retain and deepen by faith and prayer his sense of Vocation, he may in these critical days be a prophet of the Most High God, a leader and commander whose voice shall inspire others to Christ-like life and service.

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#### THE RELEVANCE OF THE ETHIC OF JESUS TO THE MODERN WORLD

**I**T is sometimes contended that the modern man cannot be concerned with the ethical teaching of One who lived nearly two thousand years ago in an obscure and backward part of the Roman Empire, who had not been educated in any recognised centre of learning, who did not pursue any vocation likely to broaden His outlook, and who had no personal contact with the greater movements of the civilised world. Further, it is pointed out that Jesus addressed His teaching to lowly people, fishermen, peasants, shepherds, who lived as a subject race in a pre-capitalistic age, when economic conditions were simple and in the main, agricultural. The argument is that while what Jesus had to say may have been profoundly significant to the people of His own time and place, it cannot in the very nature of things be applicable to people living in the vastly different conditions which obtain in the Europe and America of to-day. The modern man's ethical ideals, it is con-

tended, must be suited to the present age, and it is eccentric and hopeless for him to try to glean them from ancient manuscripts. The conclusion reached is that the Christian ethic is now so old that it simply must perforce be antiquated and obsolete, and that a new ethic is required for the 20th century.

At first sight this difficulty seems formidable enough, and the objectors appear to have reason on their side. Yet on closer examination it vanishes into thin air. In this connection there are three considerations of vital importance.

(i) It must not be supposed that because Jesus spoke to the people of His own time and place in the only idiom which they could understand, He therefore spoke *only* to His compatriots and contemporaries. It is quite true that the teaching of Jesus can be understood only when it is considered in the light of local and temporal conditions. Much of it was given in reply to problems presented by the Scribes and Pharisees and current Jewish thought—legalism, ostentatious piety, Jewish nationalism and particularism, Sabbath observance, etc., and questions which were then and there the liveliest of issues are here and now as dead as Dickens' door nail. It seems, therefore, on the face of it to be almost inevitable that such teaching can have no significance for the modern man whose live issues are totally different. But has not every great teacher addressed himself to the people and the peculiar problems of his time and place, and expressed himself in the idiom of those to whom he spoke? Who can fully appreciate all that Socrates and Plato and Aristotle had to say without considerable knowledge of the local and contemporary conditions? Yet no person of any culture would think of denying that all three of these Greek teachers have a significance for all time. The tragedies of Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripides were written for people whose civilisation and mode of life and interests were vastly different from those of our modern Western world, and yet, to those who make the effort to understand them, they are as fresh now as they were to Ancient Greece. Or to come to a phenomenon much nearer home. Shakespeare's plays reflect the conditions and the interests of English people in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James I, and were written for those times. Yet to-day they have been translated into every European language and form part of the repertoire of every theatre of any standing in the world, so that it is clear that they speak to people of our time and of all places. Now surely it is impossible reasonably to deny to Jesus a significance for every time and place, when such cannot be denied to Plato, Euripides and

Shakespeare! More important still, in this connection, is the plain fact of experience that the message of Jesus is felt by at any rate some people in practically every land on the surface of the globe not only to be relevant to our time but to be the very light of life.

(ii) It must not be overlooked that Man is timeless, and it is to Man that the ethical teaching of Jesus is addressed. As Professor A. E. Taylor reminds us, it is foolish to "forget that, after all, our precursors, ourselves, and our distant successors— if we leave any—in the course of history, are all alike in being *men*; we have all the same ground-pattern, are all variations on one theme. A philosophy which ignores the reality of 'universal human nature' . . . is a philosophy which does not look 'under the skin'."<sup>1</sup> The main problems of life are ever the same. The progress of civilisation affects, in the main, only the externals and accidentals of life; it adds to the comforts and amenities of existence; it supplies better houses, swifter means of communication, new forms of entertainment and amusement. But the *real stuff* of human life is ever the same. The birth of a baby in a nomad's tent thousands of years ago meant to its parents precisely what the birth of a baby in a suburban villa means to parents to-day. The news of the death in battle of a dearly loved son is no less painful to a father to-day because it is brought by telegram than it was to David three thousand years ago when a courier reported the death of Absalom. When Isaac "took Rebekah and she became his wife and he loved her," the bridegroom's joy was just what it is to-day—the fact that the ancient bride arrived on a camel, while the modern bride arrives in a Daimler car makes no essential difference. The idea that because the external trappings of life are now so vastly different from what they were in the ancient world, life itself is vastly different, is a complete fallacy. The main features of human life abide the same through all economic and political changes:

Further, in his internal constitution man is much the same in all ages and in every clime and coast. Human impulses and passions are free from all the limitations of time and space. Love and hatred, selfishness and self-sacrifice, never change their nature. There were cheating tradesmen in the days of Amos as in the black markets to-day. The weapons of warfare vary from age to age, but war itself still brings with it what it always brought—suffering, sorrow, death, devastation, economic strain and stress. The tendency of man to exploit his fellows takes many different forms according as the oppressed are slaves or serfs or factory-workers or

<sup>1</sup> *The Faith of a Moralist*, II, p. 78.

charwomen, but in its essence it is eternally the same, the more it changes the more it remains the same thing. Man's inhumanity to man is like the fabulous hydra—as soon as one head is cut off, another appears, but the nature of the beast does not vary.

So the idea that human life is a very different thing from what it was at the beginning of our era, and that human problems are very different now from what they were then, can be dismissed as an idle fancy. Just as the tiny dewdrop reflects the vast heavens, so any civilised man, whatever the age in which he lives and whatever his habitat, is an epitome of mankind. Jesus spoke to MAN and, therefore, to the entire human race.

(iii) It is no less true that the ethical teaching of Jesus is timeless. The temporal and local conditions in which the teaching was given are a transparent garment; the Jewish-Palestinian-first-century dress cannot conceal its eternal content. His teaching on the sacredness of human personality, on the brotherhood of man, on the duties of kindness and unselfishness is not only not out of date but is the very message which is now being proclaimed in the name of science! Not only is such a message relevant to the modern world, but civilisation will go down "in hideous ruin and combustion" if it ignores it. It will always be part of the ethical ideal for man to show compassion to the needy and the suffering as the Kind Samaritan did; to be merciful to repentant prodigals as the father in the parable was; to check vindictive feeling instead of insanely demanding eye for eye and tooth for tooth; to stifle in the heart the first motions of sullen hatred and unbridled lust; to do to others as he wishes to be done by; to subdue inordinate self-love; to honour his word so that men may know that his yea means yea and his nay nay; to temper justice with understanding and charity in all his judgments; to spurn vanity and display and self-complacency; to be ready to forgive in great-hearted fashion; to find more joy in giving than in getting, and to recognise that true greatness consists in high service. It will always be true, as Aristotle in his way recognised, that moral and spiritual insight comes to a man according as his heart is cleansed from evil. If such, in broad outline, is the Ethic of Jesus, those who suggest that in the very nature of things it is impossible for anyone who lived in an obscure corner of the world many centuries ago to supply an ethical ideal for the modern man are talking the sheerest balderdash, and their slick theory is refuted by indubitable fact.

There are many utterances of Jesus which, in spite of their immediate reference to purely local and contemporary conditions,

nevertheless have eternal significance. Jesus was thinking of the spiritual obtuseness of Jewish religious leaders who had been trained in the rabbinical schools when he cried: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding and didst reveal them unto babes." But He might just as appropriately have uttered them on Mar's Hill as a rebuke to the intellectual arrogance of many Athenians. He might give the same rebuke to multitudes in the great University centres to-day, for while nobody but a fool depreciates the intellect or despises scholarship, the fact remains that intellectual pride and arrogance have a blighting and blasting effect upon the soul and make the very ablest man spiritually purblind. It is eternally true that without humility and receptiveness no man can have spiritual vision, and that the greatest scholar can enter the Kingdom of God only on the same terms as the common man, namely, as a little child! Jesus was dealing with a very trifling issue, the petty wrangling of a few Galilean fishermen as to who of them was greatest, when He cried: "You know that they who aspire to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not to be so among you." But there is a message here for all to the very end of time. It would have been just as much to the point at a Nazi Party Meeting at Nuremberg or at a Grand Fascist Council at Rome, and it would be just as apposite in all places where commercial and industrial magnates forgather to-day. The words "You cannot serve God and mammon" were addressed to a simple Palestinian audience long ago, but they would be no less pertinent to-day to any assembly of business men in Pittsburg, London, Paris or Tokyo.

So there is nothing that is purely local or transient in the ethical teaching of Jesus. It transcends all the limits of space and time. It is adaptable to all nations, to all types of civilisation, to all conditions. It can never be out of date until man himself is out of date. As Goethe said: "However much intellectual culture advances, let the human mind expand as it will, beyond the sublimity and the moral culture of Christianity, as it gleams and glitters in the gospels, it will never go."<sup>2</sup> Or in the words of another: "The morality which Christianity inspires and demands is never left behind by the developing race, but ever moves in front of it like the fabled pillar of Israel's guidance through the wilderness, an ideal and a prophecy . . . A perfect civilisation and a rightly apprehended Christianity would harmonise, for the kind of social conduct

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, p. 3.

required by Christianity is identical with that which the health and permanence of civilisation demands."<sup>3</sup> L. H. MARSHALL.

(This article is an extract from a forthcoming book by the writer, contributed to the *Fraternal* by request).

### A WORD FOR OUR TIME

IN one of his essays, De Quincey speaks of the fallacy of supposing that any word in any language has an exact equivalent in every other language. Whoever reads the Greek New Testament thoughtfully (not merely using it to stimulate his memory of the Authorised Version or Moffatt's translation) will readily agree. In this article, the attempt is made to look at one such word—*koinonia*.

This is more than an academic exercise, because the word, and still more the reality it seeks to express, is vital, and closely related to our condition to-day. The word "*koinonia*," is generally translated "fellowship" or "communion." The first has back-slapping associations that are misleading, while the second is too specifically ecclesiastical. Yet no other word can replace these two, though in particular examples other words may throw a light on their meaning—for example, when we render Philippians 3-10 "that I may know Him . . . and the *sharing* of His sufferings," or 1 Corinthians 1-9 "you were called into the *community* of His Son." Not that these are necessarily exact reproductions of the mind of the Apostle; the whole point is that "*koinonia*" carries the suggestions of "fellowship, communion, partnership, sharing, participation, community" because it does not mean any one of these, but a deeper reality that lies at the heart of them all.

The word comes from *koinos* which means "common" in both senses—"public" as opposed to "private," and "profane" as opposed to "holy." (Contrast Acts 2-44 with Acts 10-14. Does the phrase "the *koinonia* of the Holy Spirit" conceal a paradox—the paradox of the Incarnation, that the Holy God becomes "common" in Christ; in Studdert Kennedy's phrase "God in a workman's jacket?"). From *koinos* comes a number of words; *koinonos*, *koinoneo* and *koinonia* are the most frequently used. *Koinonos* (companion, partner) is used in Classical Greek for partners in business, in marriage, for comrades in an enterprise. In the New Testament it is variously translated a "partaker, partner, companion."

<sup>3</sup> Hensley Henson, *Christian Morality*, pp. 27 and 151.

Many of the examples call for no comment, but one or two deserve a special mention. Thus in 1 Peter 5-1, the writer calls himself "a koinonos of the glory about to be revealed;" and in 2 Corinthians 1-7, the Apostle Paul writes: "as you are koinonoi of his sufferings." Here the sense apparently is the sharing of an experience. "Koinoneo" also conveys a similar meaning, and is translated "communicate" or "be partaker of."

The general idea of a possession or experience shared by a number of persons runs through all these shades of meaning. The word koinonia also expresses that idea; it is used by the Apostle Paul, but its meaning is most explicit in 1 John 1, where it is set before us as the goal aimed at in witnessing to Christ. "What we have seen and heard we declare unto you, so that you may have koinonia with us; and indeed our koinonia is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." The Greek phrase "he koinonia de he hemetera" is elaborate, and seems to suggest more than the simpler "he koinonia hemon." We have fellowship with God, with Jesus Christ, with other Christians, and yet, to adapt the Athanasian Creed, "there are not three koinoniai, but only one koinonia." The individualism of the last two centuries has produced a mental blind spot, which we find it hard to remove. The New Testament does not speak of an inward communion with God which may have as one possible result the fellowship of believers, but of one living whole. The bond which unites us to Christ in our inmost hearts is the same bond which links our lives with others who are also united with Christ.\*

In *Christ in the Silence*, C. F. Andrews tells how an Indian friend asked him, "What does Christ's presence mean for you each day?" His reply was, "In Christ, love to God and love to my fellow-men become . . . inseparably one. Thus the spiritual life . . . finds its true goal. It becomes a unity where Christ is the centre." In further talk, he quoted the opening chapter of John's epistle.

When Paul writes to the Corinthians "God is faithful, who has called us into the koinonia of His Son Jesus Christ," "fellowship" is too subjective, and "community" too objective to bring out his meaning. We might paraphrase "God has called us to share a common mind and life and experience, and this is the mind and life and experience of His Son Jesus Christ." We are participants in Christ, members of His Body; and the whole of 1 Corinthians

\* This thought has been expressed by S. F. Winward in an article in the *Fraternal* of July, 1944, in rather different words.



may be considered as the exposition of this text. The Body and the members, the attacks on a party-spirit and cliques at the Lord's Table, the great Hymn to Agape (the inward Spirit of koinonia), even the great Resurrection chapter, all remind us of a Churchmanship which is no "extra," but the very essence of Christian living.

Marcus Aurelius has an interesting parallel to the Pauline phrase "members of the body." Having spoken of the principle of co-operation that rules rational beings, he goes on, "The perception of this will more strongly strike thy mind, if thou say often to thyself, 'I am a member (melos) of the system of rational beings.' But if thou say, 'I am a part (meros), though thou change but one letter of the Greek, thou dost not yet love men from thy heart.'" Here a sharp contrast is drawn between a "mechanical" assemblage of parts and a "vital" unity of members.

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul asks two rhetorical questions: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a koinonia of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a koinonia of the body of Christ?" We share in His life, His spirit of self-sacrifice; we are identified with Him as He once identified Himself with sinners on the Cross. In the *Expository Times*, Dr. C. Anderson Scott calls attention to the word "habura" used in 1st century Judaism for a society or group of comrades, and suggests that the disciples might have been called the "habura" of Jesus of Nazareth. He adds that one special use of the word is for a company united to partake of the paschal lamb. Our Passover cup makes us the "habura" of the Crucified. Such a comradeship involves a break with sin, a real sharing of Our Lord's Passion. We must crucify our lusts and our self-will, and by the grace of God shut out whatever conflicts with the mind of Christ. "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons."

There are similar words in other languages—"gemeinde, gemeinschaft" in German, which is more inward than "Kameradschaft;" and particularly the Russian "sobornost, soborny" used to translate "Catholic" in the Creed. These words describe "the unity of a common life in which each member finds his fulfilment in the whole, and the whole does not obliterate, but enhances the individuality of each member." (E. L. Allen).

The translator of Berdyaev's "Freedom and the Spirit" refers to the "symphonic character" of the life it expresses. Russian Communism has secularised this quality by seeking to realise it on a materialistic basis.

Koinonia—is not this the word which speaks to our condition? The way of life it expresses is the synthesis arising out of the antithesis between 19th century individualism with its isolated self-sufficiency, and 20th century collectivism (Fascist or Marxist) with its mass-man who has lost his individuality.

The Nazis offered to Germany racial unity on the basis of blood and soil; the Marxist aims to create a spiritual community on a material foundation. Both are reflections in distorting mirrors of this reality which liberal democracy also aims at achieving by stringing together isolated individuals.

The Christian can say, "In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female," and find in the Family of God this True Community for which all the world is hungry. As the Spirit of Christ governs our personal decisions and actions, and re-fashions our social relationships, the New Community will come down to earth. In our homes, the clash of rival wills will go when husbands and wives, parents and children accept the Will of God as sovereign. In commerce and industry, there are already pioneers who in the spirit of the first Trade Unionists are achieving a real partnership between Labour and Management.

Here the Church must and can be both teacher and example, but how about the actual churches we know? Remember what the Apostle Paul himself wrote to the Corinthians, "What koinonia has light with darkness?" Koinonia can abide only where there is likeness of character. John, in his epistle, gives us the word that shows alike our need and how we can put ourselves in the way of its satisfaction. "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all . . . If we say that we have koinonia with Him and walk in darkness, we lie . . . But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have koinonia with Him and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son is cleansing us from every sin."

By a radical and complete frankness, we must put away all shams and pretences, being willing to be known and seen by our brethren as we really are. As in this way the barriers go down, the power of Christ's love floods in.

On the day war broke out in Europe in 1939, Bishop Berggrav sat in his study. The thought came to him, "There is war in Europe. There is also war between you and Hallesby. Go and see him and make peace for Norway's sake." Hallesby, fundamentalist and conservative, had attacked the Bishop, and the rift between the two men was deep and wide. But Berggrav pocketed his pride

and obeyed the voice of God; and from that simple action was forged the unity of the Norwegian churches that made them the spearhead of the resistance to the Nazi invader.

*De te fabula narratur.* This magazine is the *Fraternal*; it is the organ of the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship. Can we bring to life the great reality implied in such words and so become equipped and prepared for our great opportunity in this chaotic time?

C. E. BAYLIS.

### ANABAPTIST TENDENCIES IN ENGLAND DURING XVIth CENTURY

ANY study of the origins of English Baptist belief and practice must be preceded by a consideration of the activities of the Continental Anabaptists in England, their similarities of doctrine and polity are too great to be accidental.<sup>1</sup> It seems probable that the activity of the Anabaptists who were compelled to flee to England about 1535, and their influence upon the Reformation then taking place in this country, was far greater than is often supposed. At the outset we must remember that the use of the term "Anabaptist" during this century is not a safe guide to who was and who was not an Anabaptist. It was used as a general term of opprobrium, which persisted for over a century.<sup>2</sup> Hence men always called their opponents Anabaptists and no Englishman of this period would willingly call himself one, even if his beliefs warranted the title. It is the purpose of this essay to show that there was considerable activity during the XVIth century which cannot be written off as negligible and unimportant.

1. It seems clearly enough established that some Hoffmanite Anabaptists came to England as exiles from the Continent about 1535. They were persecuted with a fair amount of consistency, and it is generally assumed by historians, that, in the words of Burrage ". . . Anabaptism during the XVIth century never appealed strongly to the English mind."<sup>3</sup> It is certain, however, that they were active in England during the whole period from about 1530 onwards; the constant persecutions which are recorded in the State Papers are evidence of their persistence. Some of their

<sup>1</sup> For an interesting account of the beliefs of the Anabaptists, see E.R.E. Article *Anabaptists*, by W. J. McGlothlin.

<sup>2</sup> Cromwell to St. John (1646): "I have a lovely company. . . They are no Anabaptists; they are honest, sober Christians."

<sup>3</sup> Burrage, *Early English Dissenters*, I, p. 64.

tenets, notably their Christology, may not have been acceptable to many English minds, yet in their polity and their doctrine of grace they were but continuing to water the seeds that had been sown on English soil by earlier prophets of a free, spiritual religion. In view of the subsequent development of much English religion along lines of dissent and independency, it seems a hasty judgment to write off the Anabaptist movement as a mere foreign importation which had no effect on indigenous religious life. The way in which Anabaptist tendencies were present, although unacknowledged, may be seen from the case of I (ohn) B (ale). I.B. who wrote in 1546 expressly denies that he is an Anabaptist, yet logically he should have been, for he writes: ". . . fayth must go before baptyisme"<sup>1</sup> one of the cardinal tenets of Baptist belief then as now. It may well be that the influence of these unknown and unhonoured Christians is incalculable, but that does not render it negligible.

2. About 1549 there appeared a congregation of conventiclers at Faversham in Kent. At some time in 1550-1, this congregation moved to Bocking in Essex for fear of persecution, because some "nonconformist" interest was already known to exist there. There are extant some sixty names of persons who were members of this congregation, and it is worthy of note that they are English names. Now, was this an Anabaptist congregation? Burrage<sup>2</sup> denies that they were, contenting himself with calling them "early nonconformists of a peculiar type." A more recent authority<sup>3</sup> speaks of them as "a group of English sectaries who may be called half-way Anabaptists." There is no evidence that they had any particular views on baptism, but they were strongly Pelagian, vigourously denying anything in the nature of original sin, and they spoke of the Calvinistic doctrine of Predestination as a damnable doctrine. Perhaps one of the most important things was their attitude to ritual in worship. A discussion as to the propriety of kneeling or standing in prayer, and about the covering of the head during devotion, was concluded by the decision that all such externals are unimportant. That is a decision which links them with the Spiritual Reformers of the continent, among whom were Anabaptists like Hans Denck and Basil Hubmaier. The likenesses between these tenets and those of the Anabaptists are great enough for us to wonder whether the exiled Anabaptists had not influenced them. It is worth noting, too, that this congregation was one of the

<sup>1</sup> I.B. "A Brife and Faythfull declaration. . ." Marburg, 1546.

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit. pp. 50-2.

<sup>3</sup> M. M. Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism*" (Chicago, 1939), p. 149.

first to anticipate the later Puritan rigour with regard to amusements.<sup>1</sup>

3. The literature of the period is of great interest. No works by English Anabaptists, nor English translations of works by foreign Anabaptists, are known before about 1550. We must beware of thinking for that reason that Anabaptist views were unknown in England before that date. They could quite easily be spread by itinerant preachers, and there are very good reasons why such views should not be committed to paper. Indeed, the fact that the Anabaptist views with which we meet vary from place to place, is good evidence that they were spreading in underground ways.

From 1548 onwards there began to appear refutations of Anabaptist doctrine and practice. These refutations are sufficiently numerous, and sufficiently strong in language to make us feel that their authors had a practical aim to serve—that of warning the English mind against accepting so dangerous a doctrine. Even Burrage<sup>2</sup> is prepared to admit that the appearance of these books may point to a growing Anabaptist influence in England, especially round about 1550, when the Faversham and Bocking congregations were in their full strength. It was in 1550, also, that the first known pro-Anabaptist work was produced in English, written by Robert Cooche, whose Pelagian tendencies are clearly to be seen. In short, the literature that is extant from 1548 onwards is sufficient to give us warrant for believing that there was, and had been for some time, considerable Anabaptist activity in England, and that it was sufficiently widespread to be regarded as dangerous by the orthodox.

4. In 1553 Mary ascended the throne of England. During the Catholic reaction which followed, there is no direct evidence of the particular suffering of any Anabaptist, but it is certain that they did not escape. Many Protestants went into exile to the Continent. They set up their headquarters at Frankfort, but in 1555 a split occurred in their ranks. The Anglican, national, party, under Robert Cox, ousted the Puritan party, under Whittingham. The latter found refuge in Geneva, where they were compelled by circumstances, and probably against their will, to organise on Congregational lines. This party had always approximated to the "sect type," for in Frankfort they had insisted on a declaration of faith before the minister before acceptance for membership.<sup>3</sup> There is

<sup>1</sup> Knappen: *op. cit.* p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 57.

<sup>3</sup> Knappen: *op. cit.* p. 120.

nothing to show that they came under the direct influence of the Anabaptists, but they could hardly be thrown into the melting-pot of international theology which was Frankfort in the 1550's and come out uninfluenced by radical, Anabaptist tendencies. When they eventually returned to England, these Puritans had had experience of a practice which, whether consciously or not, they had received from the Anabaptists—a separated church, congregationally governed, which was to be the goal of later Puritans.

5. This tendency towards separatism was to be carried to its logical conclusion by Robert Browne 25 years later. About 1579 Browne went to Norwich where independent views were prevalent, and with Robert Harrison, set up an independent congregation. It is not an insignificant circumstance that many years before, Norfolk had been a centre of considerable Anabaptist activity, and there is at least one name among Browne's congregation which has an un-English flavour about it—Tatsel.<sup>1</sup> How far are we justified in suggesting that the number of independents at Norwich in 1580 was due to the remnants of the Anabaptist faith that had been preached there earlier? More important, however, is the fact that Browne's church was organised on the basis of a covenant—a method that was very popular among the Continental Anabaptists, and which we may be sure they brought with them to England. It is incredible that Browne, arriving as he did, at the goal of independency and a church covenant, should have been uninfluenced by the Anabaptist tendencies that had been abroad in the world for the last half-century.

It seems to the present writer that the activities of the Anabaptists in England during the XVIth century should not be ignored, nor their influence on later English developments be neglected. In England the Reformation took a line of its own. Towards the end of the XVIth and during the XVIIth centuries, the spear-head of that Reformation was the "separatist" churches—those English representatives of that sectarian, prophetic type of religion, of which the Anabaptists were the Continental representatives. The comings and goings of the XVIth century, between England and the Continent, both by Englishmen and foreigners, could not have been without its effect, and behind the ultimate flowering of English Dissent, we may discern the root of Anabaptism—and no one is concerned to maintain the identity of root and flower. Neither may we deny the root. J. C. WHITNEY.

<sup>1</sup> Burrage: *op. cit.* p. 97.

## A MISSIONARY'S IMPRESSIONS OF BRITISH RELIGIOUS LIFE

AFTER living for twenty years amidst the spiritual awakening of the East one is sadly aware of the decline of religion in the West. Christianity has lost its dynamic power, and is a waning force in our national life. The Church has emerged from the war, tired and weary and with impaired virtue. Re-visiting a hundred churches in England, Scotland and Wales, I notice diminished congregations, smaller Sunday schools, fewer weekly Bible-classes and prayer meetings. Stalwart laymen are passing on and there are few to succeed them. Old Baptist families are breaking up, the educated sons and daughters having thrown over the faith of their fathers because they feel "the Bible is not true" and "organised religion is dead." Youth is growing up without God.

This decline in public worship is a symptom of deeper decay in the life of the Church. It has become old in membership and outlook. Conservative in thought and cautious in action, it lacks the adventurous faith, the flaming enthusiasm and daring originality of its Founder. Timid and apologetic, it speaks to men with little confidence that the gospel it preaches is "the power of God unto salvation." Complacent and lukewarm, it has no burning passion to save the souls of men. Its heart does not ache with compassion for poor and hungry, sick and suffering humanity. The glowing purity and love of Christ has become dim because the Church has lost the art of prayer and spiritual discipline. Solitary communion with God and with the saints, contemplation of the Cross, meditation on the Word, abasement before the throne—these are fading realities. No wonder we have no prophets!

Appalling too is the ignorance of the Bible. Modern criticism which has brought us so much enlightenment has also ruined the faith of many in the inspiration of the Bible as the Living Word of God. The Bible is not known, its promises are not believed, its commands not obeyed by God's children; though I find the Scots know their Bibles better than the English and Welsh! Russian Baptists are setting us an example in the aggressive power of simple Bible Christianity.

Failure to wield the Sword of the Spirit has let the enemy into the Church. Worldliness has weakened the witness of the Church in the world. Love of money, power and prestige has destroyed that clear-cut witness of "light and salt"—Christians in a pagan society. How few are real practising Christians! How few Chris-

tian business-men run their businesses on Christian principles! In China one can often recognise a Christian by his radiantly happy face. Gaiety is not the mark of the religious in Britain. The rapture has gone out of our religion because we have lost the sense of eternity. Few believe in heaven and Christians are not exactly exultant pilgrims marching to Zion. Few preachers preach on the central theme of Christ—the Kingdom of Heaven. Few believers look forward expectantly to the coming of Christ and His Kingdom.

The outstanding lack of the British Churches is a vital belief in the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit. For lack of Him Christians cannot pray and witness, God is not glorified, the Church is not edified, the sheep are not fed, sinners are not saved, saints are not sanctified. His life-giving power can raise the Church to life and transform it from an institution into a Spirit-filled community.

This decline in real Christianity has produced a terrible deterioration in the moral life of our people. Chinese students who come here soon discover that this is no longer "Christian England." In travelling about the country I notice an increase in drinking, gambling, sexual immorality, hooliganism, divorce, destruction of home life, black-marketing, money-making and a general emptiness and superficiality of living. Britain has become a mission field. Ministers must become missionaries.

All this is true, but it is not the whole truth. The Chinese have a proverb—"It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness." I want to light a candle of hopeful signs.

There is a widespread longing for revival. Many are burdened by the powerlessness of the Church and are praying for a mighty Holy Spirit revival. Live churches and keen associations are preparing for revival. In the terribly bombed cities of London, Bristol, etc., I notice the keenest churches, where there is a stirring of God's Spirit in many hearts. An increasing volume of private and corporate prayer is ascending to God. Is not this the beginning of God's mighty coming? Let us prepare a people for the Holy Spirit to work upon by mobilising an army of united prayer-partners to pray for a mighty revival that will go deep in cleansing the heart, and wide in transforming the social and economic life of our people. Let us create the spirit of expectancy. We are at the dawn of a new age. Our Lord Christ is about to come in a new manifestation of His glorious power. Expect great things.

There is a growing keenness for evangelism. To-day ministers are more evangelistic in their preaching. Twenty years ago it was



thought that any fool could be an evangelist; now it is recognised that evangelism is the primary task of the Church, and that every minister must be his own evangelist. The union of evangelical zeal with sound scholarship in the younger ministers of our denomination is producing a healthier evangelism which seeks the salvation of the whole man—mind, body, and soul. I notice too that British churches, like the Chinese Church, are coming to realise that denominational differences are as nothing compared with the urgent need to unite against the common enemy. The united Evangelistic Crusades to save Britain are hopeful signs of our times.

Ministers have moved to the centre in theology; away from religious humanism with its secular view of God and its optimistic view of man, to Biblical theology with its realistic view of man's sin and God's grace. Their sermons deal with fundamental doctrines of an omnipotent and righteous God, of a unique and all-sufficient Saviour, warning men of the refusal of God's love and the sober fact of judgment. It is encouraging to note an increase of Bible schools in city churches, where the minister expounds Bible truths.

Modern youth is responsive to the challenge of Christ. Recently in the *News Chronicle* a startling heading appeared—"Wanted: Six men who are ready to risk Death." It told the story of an Oxford graduate, George Hogg, who came to Shensi to "live the simple devoted life of the Sermon on the Mount" amongst the Chinese and who died of tetanus at the age of 31. It was an appeal for recruits. What was the response? Not six, but six hundred applications were received. Youth is ready to face risks, ready to make sacrifices. Here are the recruits for the adventurous service of Christ.

The whole world is waiting for redemption. This is a different world from 1918. Despair and cynicism have supplanted man's self confidence. An evil spirit is abroad. A great fear possesses men. There is a great sickness of soul. For the past thirty years the world has been moving at an ever increasing pace towards social, economic and international disaster. Now men know as never before that only a mighty intervention of God can save it from utter destruction.

This is the day of the Church's last opportunity. The desperate need of this perishing world, its agony, its pain, its sickness call us to action. This is not a time to sit at ease in Zion. The call of God sounds to battle; His call to a new Crusade to build and not destroy; to heal and not kill; to teach and feed and save.

The task before us is a hard one, and the way is uphill even to Calvary. Much patience as well as energy is required of us. Too much ground has been lost over the years for it to be regained suddenly by some demagogue or some kind of religious "stunt." Let us work and pray and plan with a resoluteness of will and tenacity of purpose, confident because "the battle is not yours, but God's," because the grand strategy and the illimitable resources are His, because our Commander has already overcome the world. This is our confidence.

"Not by might, nor by natural ability, but by my Spirit alone will the task be finished, said the Lord of Hosts." (Translation of Chinese version).  
 GEORGE YOUNG.

### THE ŒCUMENISM OF PRAYER

THE Œcumenical movement of the past 150 years can be looked at from many points of view. Its outstanding personalities may be catalogued and their work assessed, or its leading events and successive stages marked and described. The purpose of this article, however, is to seek to show the relation of prayer to the Œcumenical movement, not indeed from its historical side but rather as arising from the nature of prayer itself. There are consequences which inevitably follow when prayer is addressed to the Christian's God, when communion is sought, adoration is offered, confession and intercession are made in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Father of all mankind.

There are three questions that should be asked, and here is the first. When a Christian prays, to whom does he pray? Surely, he prays to the only God there is; the universal God. The God he seeks is the "total" God, beside whom there is no other. However local the situation, for example, in Germany, India, Africa, or the British Isles, and however particular and personal the problem, whether of a displaced person or an Indian outcaste, it is because God is universal that the matter may be brought to Him, nay, *must* be brought to Him. Isaiah's complaint, "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord?" is preceded by the majestic declaration concerning the Creator, "Lift up your eyes on high and behold who hath created these things." The failure of the Jews to live up to their tremendous theology is seen in the divided walls of the Temple itself. The Court of the Gentiles was an expression of nationalistic prejudice, and the Women's Court

an instance of sex discrimination, while the Court of the Priests revealed the existence of a professional religious class. The worship of the Temple, instead of being a river flowing strongly to the ends of the earth, churned round and round ineffectively within Jerusalem itself and its immediate vicinity. But how much greater is the failure of the Christian when he fails to live out to its fullest range his far more universal theology. It has been said of Rossini, the composer, that he had a genius for triviality, and, unfortunately, this is true of much Christian prayer. Prayer itself may "miss the mark;" its sin being that of reducing the Great Object of all adoration and the Giver of all good gifts to a tribal god, a national deity, or a divine being whose interests are partial, restricted and temporary. Andrew Fuller's was a truly Christian gesture when he shattered the theology which strait-jacketed the Almighty. God must be sought in prayer in the fullness of the blessed Trinity, each of whose Persons is universal, involving the totality of the whole Godhead. Great œcumenical movements arise only when the prayers of the Church are addressed to the universal Father, offered in the name of Jesus Christ, and inspired by the Holy Spirit.

But there is a further question. When a Christian prays, who is beside him in the presence of Almighty God? This is the thought that was in the mind of William Law when, in his "Serious call" he is commending intercessory prayer of universal range. The exact quotation is: "The greatest idea that we can frame of God is, when we conceive Him to be a Being of infinite love and goodness; using an infinite wisdom and power, for the common good and happiness of all His creatures." The great mystic here draws out the logic of the situation, a Divine Situation. Given a God who is the Creator of all, a God who sent His Son to save the world, prayer addressed to such a Being can never limit itself to local or particular concerns except in so far as the answer that may be received will contribute to the general good. Intercession brings what is mentioned by the one who prays into relation with the total situation. It is the Abraham in whom all families of the earth are to be blessed who is the Friend of God. The devotional spirit sees everything, including its own hunger and material needs, not only sub-specie æternitatis but sub-specie humanitatis. "Whom do you love best of all, Grandpa?" said a young lad. The answer came at once, "Myself." "Who next, Grandpa?" persisted the boy. "Thee, lad, and nobody else" was the reply, and it crushed all further enquiry. Isaiah's call to his countrymen to be "a light unto the Gentiles" was an attempt to break through the narrow circle of the national vocation, and to

win his people to a universal mission. The strenuous ethical monotheism of the prophets was a double universalism; God was Creator of all in the very nature of His Being, while, by virtue of His character, He confronted all men, Hebrews and Canaanites, Jews and Gentiles, with the same great moral demands. It was right that Aaron's breastplate should carry the names of the Twelve Tribes into the sanctuary of the Most High, but how much better if, on his shoulder-straps, there might have been, not the names of the same Twelve Tribes repeated again, but such other names as Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites. It is said of William Carey that, after having read "Captain Cook's Voyages" in 1783, and noted his dismal prophecy that it was hardly likely any church would send a Mission to the South Sea Islands, he was never heard to pray without a word of intercession for Captain Cook's Islands. It is an offence against Christianity to imagine that the universal God is concerned only with a part of mankind and even with them for only part of the time. How different is the real truth about God. The only truly uniting situation in which men may ever find themselves, is His presence. As is said in "The Church surveys its task," the Church offers not an ideal but a fact, "man united not by his aspiration but by the love of God," that is, God's love for man, first of all, not man's love for God. We can never withdraw ourselves from God's totality, nor can we exclude other human beings. All mankind is with us at the Throne of Grace, whether we see them or not; whether we wish them to be there or not, and whether we include them or not in the scope of our prayer. Prayers which fail to achieve the reach and range of our Christian theology cannot deny the facts of the case. The prayers that God is waiting to hear are those we offer for all men everywhere, without any exclusions of any kind, religious, political, social, or cultural. Petitions which by their answers bring "leanness of heart" are most often those which have denied the brotherhood of man, circumscribed the family of God, or affirmed as universal relationships which are incomplete or limited. In the presence of God, our consciousness should be sensitively aware of the masses of mankind. As we address God as Father in the name of Christ, how can we close our ears to the cry of the Muezzin, or to the noise of the bells of heathen temples. No one, not even the Christian, can make a "corner" in God. His presence is the most public place in all the world, and provincialism in prayer is an offence against His very Being, nature and purpose.

There is, however, a third question that must be asked, and

it is: When a Christian prays, what line of action should be the issue? Communion with God brings realisation not only of His universal Being, but of His universal purpose. As John Woolman wrote in the earlier days of the movement of his mind towards the abolition of slavery: "A deep attention to the Divine Counsellor . . . (means) . . . an ardent engagement to promote, as far as we may be enabled, the happiness of mankind universally." The burning bush, the call in the night, the vision in the temple, meant for Moses, Samuel, and Isaiah a call to action, action which has benefited all mankind in the realm of ultimate good. So, in the same way, the formation of the B.M.S. in 1792 was the logical and necessary issue of The Prayer Call of 1784. It could not have been otherwise, even if it had taken not eight years but eighty. Prayer which seeks to share the redemptive purpose of the universal God will, at all times, be representative and intercessory. Every situation, whether it is local, national, or world-wide will be the situation that is prayed for. How fitting it was that the recent United Nations Assembly met in London in a place where prayer and worship were accustomed to be made. But whole prayer should engage itself with the problems of mankind, food supply, for example, and the identity, rights, and freedom of the individual as a human being, and State and inter-State relationships, it has as its grand and primary subject of intercession the evangelisation of the world. Without the resources of prayer, this purpose will never reach fulfilment, as equally without the continuous help of intercession all efforts will flag and fail. No wonder Wilberforce discovered that, while the debate was taking place in the House of Commons on freedom for missionaries in India, "Many good men had been praying for us all night." Carey also, outlining in his "Enquiry" the qualifications of missionaries, added as the crowning need that they should be "instant in prayer," and then only would it be seen that the work in which they were to be engaged was "not impracticable." The heart of the true evangelist, with all its ache and passion, is laid truly bare in the words of the Apostle Paul when, writing to the Gentile City of Rome, in the midst of an ever-widening campaign of evangelism, he declares that his "heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved."

Œcumenism then is the natural and inevitable outcome of Christian prayer. The inner chambers of the holy of holies are seen to lead through opening doors to the ends of the earth. The presence of God turns out to be the market-place, the busy thoroughfare, the tropical scene, the outcaste village, and the back of beyond. Prayer

universalises Christianity itself in all its relationships, and only prayer can sufficiently evangelise the Christian Church and the Christian man, so that with desire and dynamic they will seek in all the world the extension of God's great Kingdom.

J. B. MIDDLEBROOK.

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