

American Baptists, North and South, and Swedish and other Baptists, have joined in the ministration of relief to the suffering millions of Europe, and we have now appointed a Commissioner, Dr. Rushbrooke, who is giving guidance and help to the struggling Baptist Societies in those parts of Europe where it is needed. On this the Baptists of the world must concentrate, and if they have understanding of the times, they will see that Ireland is a part of Europe, and ought to be included within the range of their endeavour.

Altogether, the future is bright with promise. There is no cause for despondency. The fires of God are cleansing the thought and life of the world. Consequences are opening our eyes to causes. A new interest in evangelism and an active spirit of propagandism is seizing our Churches, and there is every reason for faith in God and in the unmeasurable values of truth and goodness.

Personal Evangelism.

THE call to personal evangelism has already been widely published, eagerly endorsed, and evidently taken to heart. It has stirred ministers and members to interrogate anew the assumptions which lie behind accepted methods, to face their own reluctances, and to seek to supply what is lacking in spirit and experience. It has led to a deeper concern about the state of our Church life, the state of the country, the widespread challenge to the ethics of Christianity. It has compelled more careful study of the mind of our day, often dulled by sensationalism into spiritual insensibility, yet restless and unsatisfied; without faith, yet credulous to the last degree; superficial in thought, yet apparently eager for a moral realism which it does not always find in our sermons. In some quarters there is a feeling that time enough has been given to preparation, and that the need now is for action. It would certainly be a mistake to defer action where the time seems ripe for extensive work; yet, if we are to realize the fulness of blessing from this movement, a good deal of earnest prayer and courageous thinking will be necessary.

Anything like a general acceptance of the principle of personal witness will depend on a far-reaching change in current conceptions of discipleship. The Church as a whole needs to reinterpret the lordship of Christ, and to face anew its implications in personal, social, economic, national, and international relations.

Especially does it seem necessary to make an effort to overcome the strange and baffling aloofness which is shown by so many men of cultured and broad-minded faith towards anything of the nature of aggressive work. So far as we fail to enlist them in our campaign, we seriously weaken our resources for a general advance. Men of this type are found among our most earnest leaders, and we ought to use this campaign to call for a far more general dedication of such gifts to the service of the Kingdom of Christ.

Another line of intensive work that is called for is an effort to develop an interest in doctrinal, historical, and ethical thinking among that large class of Church members who are now content with a vague theism for their foundation and a vague spirituality in place of active obedience. Cowper-Templeism may be necessary in our schools; it is the ruin of a Church.

Yet another is the call for a new puritanism. This is not the place to discuss that formidable moral revolt which is developing out of the so-called new psychology, and fits in so notably with the self-indulgent spirit of the age. It is a more serious danger than the moral laxity of the Restoration period, because it has a reasoned system at the back of it, and thinkers who take their study and the expression of its conclusions very seriously. There is no more fear of Christ's being dethroned by this sinister group of realistic upheavals than there was of His defeat by materialism; sooner or later the one will go the way of the other. But materialism, dead in the schools, it still working out its deadly legacy to the third and fourth generation of those who believed and lived it; and who can tell what depths of sordidness we may have to wade through unless we can quickly bring a more effective witness to bear against this recrudescence of materialism? The need will not be met by argument alone; it calls for a consistent witness of Christian people to the authority of the Divine Law.

The older puritanism was, perhaps, arbitrary in its selection of the laws which it imposed; but our age is ready to grasp a new conception of the laws of God: that they are not in any way arbitrary, but simply a vital interpretation of the nature of man, of the way in which he can find his true life, of the inwrought conditions which govern the welfare of the soul and of society. The law of God is the way of life; blessedness consists not in some mystic state, but in that enlargement and enrichment of life which comes through obedience. This conception can be enforced on the world without, only as we who are under law to Christ show that enlargement and enrichment of power and sympathy, of character and service. It would therefore seem that the call to personal-witness is a call to complete reformation; to carry out the true implications of the doctrine of justification by faith. The discipleship that corresponds to that doctrine must be presented in all the directness of its inspiration and in all the extent and detail of its obedience.

A friend of the writer's recently said that it would be a good thing to speak less of Christianity, and more of the Christian life; for the former word has been beaten out thin to cover things and persons whose relation to Christ is admittedly indirect. There is much truth in the saying; it recalls that dangerous tendency of the human mind to arrest itself at the symbol or the institution, leaving their meanings unsought and unrealised. Even we who ought to know better are not free from the charge of resting content with something short of a Christian life. It gives food for thought that, after 1,800 years of Christian teaching, the Christian ideal still seems to a large section of our fellow-countrymen to be vitiated by a certain remoteness from life, a lack of effectiveness and reality. We shall not get the note of reality into our conduct until we are less afraid of what life might become if we were altogether obedient to Christ.

We live in an age in which the scientific spirit influences not only those whose occupation is with some form of science, but a great many who know little or nothing of it. Science has brought us a new test of reality. Things are held to be true only as they can be shown to take their place in an ordered system of thought. A scientific man can get almost unlimited

credence not only for his theories but also for pronouncements which he is not qualified to make, simply because the world believes that he takes pains to get at the real facts. It is, unfortunately, not persuaded that the Churches are equally concerned with reality. We are suspected of being more anxious to maintain the traditions of the past than to deal with present realities of life and thought. How great the need, therefore, for proof that the past traditions with which we are concerned embody living truths and powers! What original research and laboratory experiment are to the man of science, prayer and meditation and daily obedience to our intuitions of God are to the Christian. Only where these are, can we speak clearly of things our hands have handled concerning the word of life. It is little use knowing, as the scribes knew, what others have said, and what the accepted doctrines are; we must know God for ourselves as doing and making us do.

The Christian life is, in its very nature, a matter of personal experience, personal conviction, personal loyalty, and personal verification. Men and women sought to live it because it was already being lived before their eyes. Without going so far as those who speak of our Lord as if He were simply the first Christian, a fellow-traveller of ours on a common way rather than the Way itself, we do well to remember that behind all His words there lay a real experience, tested by Him as man for men. His life as well as His death was for us. He was made perfectly a Saviour by the things which as man He suffered. His aim was to win disciples who would put to the test of life the truth by which He Himself lived.

Two types of religion run throughout the Old Testament—the priestly and the prophetic. It was the prophetic outlook that our Lord especially accepted and carried forward. The essence of prophetism is found in the promise, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren." Human eyes look for truth to come in mystic ways and from far off lands. But God leads us through truth that has come to one of our brethren, to one whose life and problems are like ours and in touch with ours. When a false reverence had made God so remote, so that the world through its wisdom knew Him not, God gave the full revelation of Himself; and it was

in One like to His brethren in all things, sin apart, that He came. The Word was made flesh. Our faith is a religion of incarnation. The Word made flesh is its source; the Word made flesh is the law of its life and growth. When God would reveal His Saviourhood, He left on one side the speculations of the wise and the ordered systems of the ecclesiastic, and the Son of God walked the common roads with lowly men, and spoke the great truth in the language of the home and of the nursery and of the broken heart. This fact may indicate the truth that the first sphere where personal evangelism is needed is that in which of late we have suffered our greatest loss—in the home.

The faith which men caught from Christ spread along lines of personal sympathy and response. It made its way along channels of home life and friendship. Probably some of the twelve were cousins of our Lord; it is certain that brother brought brother to the truth. As we pass through the pages of the New Testament, we are naturally less able to trace these steps through love to Life; but there are many indications that home love was then, as now, the forecourt of the Holy Place. The Broken Bread that the Lord has blessed is still distributed by the hands of His disciples.

There are in the gospels many incidents which reveal what our Lord sought as a qualification for discipleship. John indicates one requirement in his account of his own introduction to Jesus: Stirred by what John the Baptist had felt and said of Him, drawn by some unanalysed attraction, John and Andrew vaguely followed Christ, till they were arrested by His question, "What is it that you seek?" His first requirement from men who would follow Him is that they should know their own minds. As Vinet says, a man, if he would become a Christian, must first of all become himself. Are we, in our vague following, seeking something that Christ can give? Is our real demand on life such that it can find fulfillment only in His service and fellowship? Do we follow because of what others have said of Him, or are we really seeking a Master for ourselves? The incident at Caesarea Philippi has much the same teaching. Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ called forth from him a joyous declaration of a great thing done and great issues made safe. Rome says that the Rock

on which the Church is to be built is Peter; Geneva contends that it is the confession.

It seems less abstract to say that the Rock is Peter confessing, the fact that his words reveal an experience of his own, in virtue of which he finds courage to say something that is not a mere echo of current religious phraseology, but a personal commitment and a personal venture. Because our Lord had found a man who gave evidence of personal touch with the Father who is the reality of the spiritual life, He knew that His cause was safe and the gates of hell should not prevail against it.

Space does not admit of a discussion of other calls recorded in the gospels. There seems to be one element common to them all. Matthew, Zacchæus, the woman who was a sinner, the blind man healed at Siloam: each one seems to have felt that they could read in the eyes of Jesus a demand that could be met in one way only. "They arose and left all, and followed Him." Their eyes had seen the King in His beauty, and the land of far horizons; only a glimpse, it may be, but that which they had seen became from that moment the supreme thing in life. Isaiah went into the temple expecting to see all the familiar symbols of worship. But for once he saw *through them* to the reality: "I saw the Lord." There do come to men moments when they see through all the stage scenery of life, and reach its inner meanings; and such moments have their abiding effect. They look out on a new world, and their souls realize in that moment that this is life, and that they are made for that life and it for them.

Jesus does not seem to have given His new-made disciples anything that could be called "a rule"; yet He sent them forth to live the new life and witness for Him with perfect confidence. "This is salvation," he said of Zacchæus; "go in peace," He said to the sinful woman whose love told how much she had been forgiven. Surely He did not think that in a sudden minute all was accomplished? He knew to a certainty how they would be tempted and sifted again and again; yet He sent them forth, fortified only by His concern for them and their faith in Him, to live the new life as being sure of victory. He sent them into dangerous ways, he called on them for a difficult service, yet He did not fear for them or

for His work through them. There is nothing more wonderful than His faith in His own power to keep those who are in vital contact with Him. There are critics who will not allow us to believe that He inspired His disciples by a great commission to evangelise the world, and encouraged them by the great promise, "Lo, I am with you always." But it is a painfully unimaginative reading of the gospels that does not see the necessity of those words. If He did not use them at that particular moment, He must often have said in effect all that they mean. The same truth comes out in the words of institution at the Last Supper: "This do in remembrance of Me." On His side, discipleship meant no less than that He was with them all the days. That was why He could send them forth to face fearful things without fear for them. One of our modern poets pictures a father speaking to his son in the chapel of his old school:

This is the Chapel; here, my son,
Your father thought the thoughts of youth,
And heard *the words that one by one*
The touch of life has turned to truth.

There is no better way of expressing what discipleship in its mutual obligations implies. Our Lord has made exceeding great and precious promises to His people; and He sends us forth into life, to live by His interpretation of God and destiny, knowing that as we live the life of which we have caught a far-off glimpse, the touch of life will turn promises to truth and reality. He gave men His own vision of God and then sent them forth to interpret all events in the light of it.

That seems to be the essence of discipleship as it appeared to the New Testament disciples. It was so even after the Lord had passed from human sight. Paul sets forth as his credentials, "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me." He had seen Christ, and in the light of that vision he set forth to live his life. Men were timid and doubtful whether such a principle could safely be preached to new-won converts from heathenism; but Paul's answer is, "For freedom did Christ set us free." As Seeley says, Christ came to bring into being a new race of law-makers. The Church has not yet realised the full glory of Christian freedom from the law. Nietzsche, curiously enough, has caught some aspects of this great

Christian paradox. His call to "live dangerously," and his insistence on a state "beyond good and evil" both find a place in a true conception of discipleship.

The age that followed the Apostles showed a decline from the height of Paul's doctrine and a lowering of his conception of freedom. Experience of the problems of the mission-field, and the experience in our own land of licence that follows every impulse to freedom, may explain some causes of that decline. Paul's view of the Christian life is a safe one only when the Lordship and love of Christ are the commanding forces in the life. Even in Paul's lifetime, his system was challenged; after his death it was effectually shelved. The rise of sacerdotalism involved a demand for a new form of obedience. The growth of the practice of infant baptism required a shifting of the centre of gravity in the doctrine of redemption with the inevitable consequence that the gift of the Spirit had to be explained metaphysically, not morally—a fact which still remains the strongest argument for our principles and practice. A Church centred in a clerical caste, with its faith authoritatively defined in creeds, had plainly moved far from the simplicities of the primitive Church. Many historians contend that the Church could not have lived had it not developed on these lines. We may admit that development and an element of institutionalism were necessary, for the Spirit is life, and life must be embodied somehow. But to say that the state connection, the worldly affiliations of the Papacy, the policy of mass-conversion, the lowering of the standard of discipleship, were necessary to its life, is simply to beg the question. The Church lived, not by reason of its compromises but in spite of them, and that its true life was preserved by the devotion and sincerity of men and women who had no part in governing or transforming it. Perhaps even now we concede too much to the need for organisation. We may recall the fable of the Indian sages, that the earth is supported by a gigantic tortoise which again rests on the back of an elephant; and only so could it be safe. But we know that it is safer when it floats free amid the invisible forces of God's appointing.

The need of the world to-day is for men who have put Christ's truth to the test of life; men who can declare from

their own experience in various spheres something that they have seen and heard and their hands have handled concerning the word of life. It needs Churches which are far more deeply concerned to make their fellowship an embodiment of the spirit of the Kingdom of God; a proof that here at least the Sermon on the Mount is workable. Till this conception of Church life lays hold of us, we shall not be able to convince the world that we have in our fellowship something that cannot be found outside. The individual Christian is called to venture on Christ's word and let the touch of life turn those words to verified truth; the Church is called to a corporate venture of the same kind, and show on the largest scale open to it the possibility and blessedness, through individually experienced grace and mutual helpfulness, of a truly Christian order of society. Further, it is called to assert the Lordship of Christ intensively and extensively; in all relations of the individual—personal, occupational, national, and international—and in all lands where there are men who, like ourselves, have need of His salvation. We know ourselves redeemed by One who is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the whole world; we cannot do Him true homage while our resistance to evil is confined to its manifestations in ourselves. We are called to take up arms against the kingdom of evil as a whole; and any smaller outlook is in effect a denial of the universality of Christ and the finality of His work. There have been many keen criticisms passed on the Church of late; but its keenest critic is always the gospel which it proclaims; and there are few of us to-day who do not feel the pungency of our Lord's own question, "Why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?"

It is often said that the figure of Christ stands more clearly before our eyes to-day than in any century since the first. If so, the reflection of Christ in His people should be correspondingly clearer. It is all a question of the unveiled face.

J. A. STUART.