

THE WORLD, THE FLESH AND THE DEVIL

INTRODUCTION

'It is for us to be ready to find God not within the cosiness of our own piety but within the agony of the world and the meeting of person with person every day.' A.M. Ramsey.

'This Master Hyde, if he were studied,' thought he, 'must have secrets of his own; black secrets by the look of him; secrets compared to which poor Jekyll's worst would be like sunshine. Things cannot continue as they are....' R.L. Stevenson.

Glorious uselessness! This, I suggest, marks the two who, in the parable of the good Samaritan, passed by on the other side. These two saw no connection between the temple services in which they assisted and the pitiful bundle of damaged humanity roasting there on the roadside 'neath an Eastern sun; but the Samaritan recognised the need immediately and did all in his power to meet it. In such he was acting as neighbour. The first two failed to recognise the need and also to connect their spiritual exercises with the real, deep need of their fellow man.

Glorious uselessness! Do we divorce our Christian experience from the pressing turmoil of today? Does our behaviour on Monday belie the worship and service of the Sunday? Too easily we adopt a double standard in our lives and we set up our lives into a series of watertight compartments, in some of which God has no evident place. In fact each of us is something of a Jekyll and Hyde. Confronted with the problems presented by this challenging and vibrant age we react by taking the easy way out and brush them aside with the comforting thought that we have better things to do - to go into our 'holy huddles' and to nourish ourselves on our 'splendid holy thoughts'.

Both Randle Manwaring and Derek Warren challenge us to become involved in the affairs of the world, to attempt to influence the moral climate of our day. Such involvement brings its problems and it is so much easier to wash our hands of our responsibilities in the world. We must find a balance in our activities; we must be aware of the possibility of being lured away from our devotion and to pass from being involved to becoming entangled in the affairs of this life. Then there is the likelihood of being misunderstood by the world who will accuse us of peddling sectional interests, and there is also the possibility of Christians carping and criticising our actions.

Why are we so ineffective? Anthony Weston suggests that we have lost the vision of the expected return of our Lord. 'Abound in love to all men and to the saints - that we might have a settled, firm foundation for life viewed in the context of the return of Christ.' Again, is it that we are no longer living a life of discipline? With thoughts such as these we must search our hearts and our actions.

John Redfern.