

'disorderly brother', and forbade him to break bread with them again. For a time he continued some of the work he had been doing in connection with the assembly; but gradually he drifted away. Soon afterwards he and his wife were confirmed at Clapham Parish Church, and devoted their spare time to youth work at Holy Trinity, Richmond.

At a night school at Richmond his chief helper was a Miss Elmslie, who did wonders in handling the lads until an unknown medical man, just starting similar work, came along and carried her off as his wife. That man, too, had also 'began with Brethren': Thomas John Barnardo.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Source: A. E. Reffold, *Wilson Carlile and the Church Army* (Church Army Bookshop) 1956, 5th ed. The whole book is worth reading; only pp. 26-39 are specifically relevant to Brethrenism. Carlile entered the London College of Divinity in 1878, aged 31, became ordained in 1880, and served an assistant curacy in Kensington. In 1882 he founded the Church Army in the slums of Westminster on the model of the Salvation Army and against similar mob opposition. He took part in its administration until a few weeks before his death in 1942.

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## HOW CAN WE IMPROVE OUR EVANGELISM?

### DEDUCTIONS FROM A SURVEY OF ASSEMBLIES

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#### I—INTRODUCTION

THE survey asked church leaders to assess which of their evangelistic activities had been effective and which were for the most part ineffective.

One of the objectives of the survey was to locate those churches which were having more success than the average in evangelism. Having done this, their evangelistic activities were examined to see if particularly fruitful areas of opportunity could be isolated.

The only common thread in the more successful assemblies was the enthusiastic concern on the part of those responsible for the effective activities. In some cases it might be difficult to separate cause and effect, but this cannot be true of all churches. On the other hand success will not come if enthusiasm is the only asset we bring to revitalise our evangelism. It will not necessarily bring in new contacts nor make our message relevant of itself.

#### II—GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON REPLIES

There are two extremes in the spectrum of response to the question 'What should we do to become more effective'. The first is to rely entirely on prayer. Several assembly leaders said 'more prayer is required', another said:

'Unless the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of both saved and sinner alike the work will not prosper!'

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But both of these answers prove of little help to those who want to know what to do about their situation, since often they have been praying hard for the guidance and action of the Holy Spirit for years.

On the other hand a mere change in activities will not prove effective unless the whole spirit behind the change is motivated by a genuine concern for others. As one leader put it:

‘In our assembly we blamed our lack of effectiveness on a rather reactionary and tight “oversight”. Since then the “stick-in-the-mud” elders have moved or died and two young brethren have recently been recognised as elders. We have therefore in the last eighteen months been able to reconsider our methods, plan and organise different activities, but I don’t think planning and organisation of special meetings with titled talks and named speakers are the answer to the problem; as ten years ago we imagined they would be. Much as some of us have liked to use our minds and thinking in God’s work, we were not really prepared to be led by the Lord into His will for our assembly’.

Accepting that mere changes in organisation will not achieve the necessary results does not mean that the present evangelistic methods being used by assemblies are perfect. Leaders had a wide range of comments, opinions and ideas for improving their evangelism and the following notes are a synthesis of the difficulties and problems facing assemblies today, together with suggestions on tackling these. They cover all the range of evangelistic activities of the assemblies concerned and all the groups of peoples who are targets for their evangelism.

The topic drawing the largest number of suggestions was the Sunday evening gospel service. The wealth of comment on this make it a suitable subject for a separate article to be published in a later issue.

The remaining comments could have been dealt with in many different ways. Part of our failure in the past has been to adopt means of evangelism and then look round for an audience, rather than seeing who are the people we are trying to reach and then devising a method most suitable for that category. The comments, therefore, are first segregated into activities, aiming at various age groups.

### III—THE YOUNG (pre-teenage)

The statistical survey highlighted the fact that most recognised the importance of this age-group in their evangelism. Practically all assemblies ran a Sunday School and a few had weeknight clubs. Certainly these activities absorb a fair proportion of the energy and work force of most assemblies.

Young people are regarded as being susceptible to teaching, are easily induced to attend Sunday school, and are described as being without most of the restraints which inhibit adults from accepting what is put to them.

‘Evangelism is more effective amongst children because they are more responsive (than adults) to the gospel’.

‘Far more children reached than adults’.