

REPORTING TO MEMBERS

As this second issue of the CBRF journal goes to press, membership is just touching 300. It is about three months since the Fellowship was launched - and our target membership is 1,000, - so that we can feel that signs are not lacking that the Fellowship will have a distinct place in the testimony of the churches we serve.

With this issue, the journal divides into two sections. The first section - the topic of the issue - contains two interesting and thought-provoking papers, together with a referee's introduction from Mr. Alan Willingale. Mr. Willingale stands like the angel of Eden: there are few loose thoughts which escape his sword of fire. We hope that his deliberately provocative introduction will evoke the correspondence which it deserves. For the papers themselves, we can only thank our distinguished contributors. Mr. Ellison is always worth reading (and dare we recommend to our readers his recently published book 'The Household Church'?) Mr. Galyer is respected and loved in a wide area for his truly fearless preaching of the Gospel to which he has devoted his life.

The second section is the members' own. The three features which it contains will all, we hope, become regular parts of the journal. For the book shelf we have the most able services of Mr. David Alexander, and for the other two sections we rely on you! In order to make correspondence easier and more systematic, there are enclosed with this copy of the journal two sheets of headed notepaper - one to be used as the first sheet of any letter intended for the journal, and the other to be used for suggestions as to new activities, local developments or anything else which the interest of our members produces. The secretary will replace any used sheet when he replies.

As local groups or individuals begin to take part in the activities of the Fellowship, we hope that one or other will take up some of the study projects which are in hand. We would remind you of these: if you can, as a group or an individual, take up one of these projects as your own, for eventual production in the journal, please let the secretary know, and he will endeavour to allocate dates to the different projects:

- (i) Christian service and family life.
- (ii) Influences on the Christian home.
- (iii) Any matters of practical local church life.
- (iv) Monitors of journals, secular and sacred.

Finally, please pray for the witness of the Fellowship:

1. That personalities may be forgotten, and the Fellowship be judged or blessed for what it is. (Although we do not wish to make a feature of the names of the council, for the sake of members who have particularly asked for them we shall give them in an early issue of the journal, after

one or two outstanding invitations have been cleared.)

2. That the danger of creating a 'party' may be guarded against and overcome.
3. For a true sense of personal responsibility for one another and all our fellow Christians.
4. For a proper representation of older men and of ladies among us, that they may contribute their proper gifts to the work of the Fellowship.
5. That the true glory of the Lord Whom we love and serve may be subserved by the Fellowship - and that that glory may not be only in piety, but in the practical affairs of workaday life.

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It is still the case that our natural inclination is to make ourselves happy and our neighbours virtuous: and the conjecture may be hazarded that the world would be a better and happier place if we attempted instead to make ourselves better and our neighbours happier.

T.W.Manson.

Crist and His apostlis taughten ye puple in yat tunge yat was moost knowun to ye puple. Why shulden not men now do so?

John Wycliffe.

THE GOSPEL AND THE MAN IN THE STREET

REFEREE'S INTRODUCTION

Our two contributors approach the subject from two very different angles. Mr. Ellison, ever supple, comes in on the sociological path. Mr. Galyer, and evangelist of many years experience in the Open Air Mission, advances by way of systematic dogmatics.

Let us question their assumptions to the roots. Has the expression 'man in the street' a class connotation, or does it stand for what is sometimes called the 'average man'; a non-existent abstraction from men in the concrete? Is there a form and content of the Gospel appropriate to this denuded cipher, this television interviewee who faithfully reflects the loaded questions put to him, or ought we to deny this and preach rather a chameleon evangel as protean as man himself in all his unrepeatable uniqueness? Is our real problem not that we stratify men socially, but that we attempt to stereotype them and push them all through an identical conversion experience?

Mr. Galyer, who cannot be thought to be talking without experience, makes similar basic assumptions. Ought we to think of the message as an unalterable thing, which perennially makes the same appeal to what is essential in man: provided only that we vary the methods by which it is sauced? Or ought we to regard kerygmatic continuity as a mere skeleton for a fresh enfleshment in every age, and human nature as a non-existent entity outside its concrete embodiment in men, who are now actually different from what they were in say A.D.50?

Then again, is it the inevitable corollary of these assumptions that we should address and reduce our gospel to the lowest common denominator in man? Is Mr. Ellison rather too optimistic in supposing that he will hold together in one local church the somatic and the cerebral? Would not a sounder sociological approach recognise that social and cultural differences are real and presumably indissoluble until the New Jerusalem?

Does the technical schoolboy's difficulty, cited by Mr. Galyer, justify the Bishop of Woolwich's recent plea in his 'Honest to God' for the scrapping of the old theological language?

Let us ask our correspondents to produce letters to force Mr. Ellison and Mr. Galyer to defend their every statement. Some correspondents may care to go further, and in an exploratory and tentative fashion reach out beyond them to ask, for example, whether we need the equivalent in the Brethren of the Worker Priest experiment, or whether we are afraid lest some might defect, or it offend the Establishment.

Alan Willingale.

THE GOSPEL AND THE MAN IN THE STREET (1)

H. L. ELLISON

So far as I know 'the man in the street' is a uniquely English expression, which has no real equivalent in other languages, and which is not even much used in the United States. It is essentially a U-phrase, and is used above all by members of the 'establishment' and other un-representative groups as a tacit recognition that they are in one way or another separate from the majority of their fellow citizens. Owing to differences in social structure it is far more an English than a Scottish, Irish or Welsh expression, and we shall confine ourselves to England in our study.

It has become fashionable to deplore the existence and influence of social classes in England and to suggest means for removing them. This marked class structure is the direct outcome of English history from the Norman conquest on, and it is questionable whether it could be removed without a major social upheaval more damaging than the ills it was meant to cure. For us it is important to note that these social distinctions have left a deep mark on the religion, or lack of it, of the masses.

Since this is no detailed historical-sociological study, only a few facts can be mentioned. The Christianizing of England was delayed by the Scandinavian inroads which led to the creation of the Danelaw, nominally Christian though it was, and then to its brief incorporation under Canute in a united kingdom of Denmark, Norway, England and the Hebrides. With the Norman conquest virtually every position of influence and wealth in the Church went to foreigners. Though they were in practice largely inoperative, the Acts of Provisors (1351) and Praemunire (1353, 1365, 1393), all aimed at Papal interference in England, are evidence of the deeply felt hostility of the laity to what was to them a foreign church. The very considerable success of the Lollards supports the contention that the heart of the ordinary Englishman was not in official religion.

The great weakness of the Reformation in England was that perhaps more than anywhere else it was a political movement. The steadfastness of the Protestant martyrs, both men and women of rank, and others of no social standing, finally turned popular dislike of Rome into deep hatred, a hatred that is probably more widespread today than many realise. But the Reformers produced no one of the calibre of Luther, Calvin, Zwingli or Knox, who would both preach fearlessly to those in power, rebuking them for both individual and social sins, and also capture the imagination of the masses. This failure to stir the people is reflected in the almost complete lack of Reformation hymnody in England. The position was made worse by the main beneficiaries of the dissolution of the monasteries

being a newly risen set of landowners, who were even more disliked than the remnants of the feudal nobility.

The result was that while over most of the country there was this deep and abiding hatred of Romanism, yet it is questionable whether there was ever much positive enthusiasm for the Church of England. Even when it was at its most popular at the trial of the seven bishops (1688), the motives were clearly anti-Roman and political. What popular sympathy there may have been was largely destroyed by Laud and his fellow Carolines, the non-jurors and the later anglo-catholics. It should not be forgotten that the parliament that impeached Laud by a unanimous vote included good royalists and Anglicans.

The whole-hearted Reformation, personified in the Puritans inside and outside the Church of England, though finding adherents in all ranks of society, was based mainly on the new middle class emerging in the big cities and on the richer yeomen and small country gentlemen in the more prosperous country districts like East Anglia. History books make much of the fact that when "the saints" ruled they prohibited bear-baiting and Christmas puddings, but it was not such follies or their faults in government that led to their complete repudiation by the country once Oliver Cromwell had died. The nobility despised them as upstarts and the masses saw no reason why they should rule over them. From that time Dissent has been linked in the popular mind with social class, and to a very great extent it has conformed to the popular estimate of it. This has meant that traditional Dissent has tended to perpetuate itself in relatively limited circles. It was only the Quakers in the days of the Commonwealth and Restoration that had a widespread influence on the masses, but they too very quickly became respectable. With respectability their outreach died.

So far as I can judge the only religious movement that has really stirred the masses in England has been the Methodist. This is probably partly due to John Wesley's semi-Arminian theology, which is much more congenial to the English temperament than Calvinism. Far more important was his institution of local preachers and class meetings. For the first time since the Reformation, except among the more despised Commonwealth sects like the Fifth Monarchy Men and the Levellers, the effective control of the churches was in the hands of common people. It is to be noted that the first major split in the Methodist Connection grew out of a protest against the growing influence of the ordained ministry in it. It will hardly be questioned that the increasing intellectual qualifications of the local preachers and the replacement of the class meetings by Wesley Societies have kept step with the steadily diminishing influence of the Connection on the poorer classes in England, though this has been to some extent countered by the witness of the Central Halls. John Wesley foresaw this himself, to some extent at least, and was seriously concerned by the increasing prosperity and rise in social standards in Methodism

produced by godliness. It is worth mentioning that the two movements which more than others touch the poorer and less educated today, the Pentecostals and the Salvation Army, both took their rise from Methodism.

The Evangelicals in the Church of England figure more largely in social histories of England than the Methodists. How far this is really fair is open to discussion. It may well be doubted whether the Evangelicals would have accomplished anything comparable with what they did had the Methodists not first influenced wide areas among the masses.

The Evangelicals made a major impact on the desperate material conditions of the poor both by Parliamentary action and by the founding of an almost incredible number of charitable societies. But except in rare cases it is wholehearted charity we see and not a descending to the level of those being served. Therefore we have few examples of really flourishing Evangelical churches in working-class districts. Some apparent exceptions were, like Spurgeon's Tabernacle at the Elephant and Castle for the Baptists, preaching centres that influenced the immediate surroundings but little. In fact, the Methodists through their influence on many early trades union leaders and workers, not a few of whom were devout Christians, probably had a further reaching influence than the Evangelicals on a changing society.

Though the Brethren were from the first a predominantly middle-class movement, in limited districts, especially in the early days, a marked impact was made on the masses. I do not doubt that the reason was that leadership was based on spiritual rather than intellectual or financial qualifications, and that active participation in worship and witness was open to all - all men at any rate. The objection to active participation by women is the reason why they have never been very successful in areas where Methodism is or has been strong. So far as I know this impact has remained restricted to the original areas, for the controversy that practically wrecked the movement was a typically middle-class one and rivetted middle-class fetters on the assemblies, which only a very few have been able to shake off.

If this reading of English history is at all correct, it means that since the Reformation, and probably before it, the typical 'man in the street' had little zeal for Christianity and indeed was all too little Christianized. There was strong anti-Papal zeal, but little that was positive. If there was for a time some sympathy with the Puritans, the best of it probably chose the egalitarian Quakers. For the rest sympathy evaporated, when "the saints" claimed the right to rule. Men went to church fairly regularly under the threat of a fine or later of social penalties. After all, if one's livelihood depended on the squire, to say nothing of some welcome charity at Christmas, church attendance was a small price to pay. Bishop Ryle of Liverpool told with apparent approval how Fletcher of Madeley used during the long hymn before the

sermon to make a round of the ale-houses, whipping those there into the church.

The industrial revolution, which removed the masses from under the direct observation of the squire and the respectable merchant, led to a catastrophic fall in church going. This was aggravated at the first by the absence of church buildings in the new working-class areas that were springing up, especially in the industrial North and Midlands. We have statistics of about a century ago from London, where the lack of churches was never so serious, and what lack there was had largely been made good, which suggest that the percentage attending church was very little better than today. Indeed it may have been worse, when motive is considered, for at the time social prestige still demanded that certain strata of society had to make an appearance at least on Sunday morning.

The position might have been much worse but for the work of the Sunday Schools, which began in 1780 and were enthusiastically developed first by the Evangelicals and then by the Nonconformists. It is, of course, impossible to estimate what proportion of the poorer children maintained contact with the church once they had grown up. Probably only few did, but their childhood experience prevented complete estrangement in the majority. In addition former Sunday School scholars will have supplied the vast majority of the working-class converts in the great evangelistic campaigns of the second half of the nineteenth century - actually in England the majority professing conversion will have been middle-class. On the other hand much of the work of the Sunday Schools was undone by the outcome of the denominational controversy over the 1870 Education Act and its solution by the Cowper-Temple clause. This meant that many children received no religious education at all in day school, and many more were taught by teachers with neither interest nor belief in the Bible. To this period we owe at least two generations of agnostic or even anti-religious teachers in the State schools.

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It is not easy to know what the man in the street thinks about class distinctions, for he is seldom very articulate about such matters, and tends to act on feelings rather than principles. The probability is that he is not particularly interested in egalitarianism and that he is prepared to accept the present class structure so long as it is based on character and intellectual ability and not on the mere possession of money. He buys the large circulation national newspapers for their sports' news (and on Sunday for their pornography) but pays no attention to the political views of the wealthy press lords. On the other hand it is improbable that a single vote would be won at the polls on a programme of abolishing the House of Lords. He does, however know, sketchy though his knowledge of Christianity may be, that there is no place for class distinctions in the religion of the Carpenter of Nazareth.

It is surprising how many true Christians there are who would protest that the attitude of the man in the street is quite unreasonable, for whatever may be the position elsewhere, there is no class distinction in the church of their choice. True enough our unhappy divisions, which so often follow social lines, tend to hide from us how much the average congregation is infected with this disease. In addition in many of our new housing estates and towns social variations hardly exist to the great detriment of life in general.

If we visit a local church with unbiassed eyes, we are fairly certain to see the rich singled out. Thus may be by dress, it is often by the seats they occupy, and it is rare for the wealthy not to be over-represented on the parochial church council, deacons' board, oversight or whatever it may be called. It is rare for the affluent looking stranger, who has arrived in a luxury car, not to be given a warmer welcome than the tired looking man in a baggy Montague Burton suit. It is not easy for the woman with a little strip of coney round her coat collar to feel at ease in a congregation where the other women are dressed in mink and other luxury furs.

The exaltation of intellect, real or imaginary, and of education is even more obvious. The minister or preacher normally has his degrees stressed and may very well wear his academic hood - where else are we likely to find this? Music, the language of worship and the style and content of preaching are expected to appeal to the better educated present. There is a growing tendency for hymn tunes to be beyond the abilities of the musically uneducated. The attitude of so many towards the RSV and especially the NEB is typical. When they are told that they are a blessing to the many who cannot understand the language of the AV, they maintain that they could understand it, if they would, or that with some patience and effort they could learn to. The strange jargon of many a prayer and address in the assemblies is only another example of this intellectual snobbery; those responsible for it are indifferent whether the simple understand them or not.

A local church should be a cross-section of local society. Particular interests may well meet separately for their special concerns, but in the worship of the church all elements should be able to understand and join in. The true test of scholarship is its ability to make the complex and difficult simple enough even for the childlike mind to grasp. If a theological truth cannot be made simple, it is either unimportant or not a truth. The great musician shows his gift best when all enjoy his music. The man who prays or speaks in theological jargon only betrays that he has been too lazy to think through what they mean.

Our Lord said: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." James reinforced it: "Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised

to those who love Him." Is it not scandalous then, if by our ostentation or behaviour we make the poor man conscious of his poverty and uncomfortable in the church of Him who for our sakes became poor? However revolutionary it may seem, it is clear that the New Testament implies that where priority is to be shown in the Church it should be to the poor.

There is a tremendous propaganda today for more places in grammar schools and universities. The fact is that we have probably more places in both than can be profitably filled. (This does not mean that there are not very many who would profit from a wider and longer technical or semi-technical education, whether given at a university or elsewhere). The proportion in our society capable of real abstract thought is limited. Yet so much of the language of our preaching and worship is abstract. The Gospel is essentially that God has done something and that its effects are available today. A man's acceptance of God's acts for him is always more important than his understanding of them.

The man in the street is inclined to ask first "Does it work?", not "Is it true?" Then will come "What do I get out of it?" and finally "Is it worth it?" These are the questions he puts to our theology and code of practice. Puritanism, understood as the avoidance of various common and often pleasurable practices on principle, has never attracted the man in the street, though he may be prepared to discuss the individual case on its merits. In other words he is interested in morals not ethics, in what he should do in a given circumstance, not in general principles, in practical guidance and not in legalism.

I am not suggesting that the intellectual and the theologian have no place; but that place is not in lifting others to their rarified intellectual and abstract level. The great purpose of Biblical exposition is taking God's dealings and revelation in another age and clime and translating them into the concrete realities of the 20th century. How are we to live out the Sermon on the Mount today? What should be the relationship of employee to employer or even great limited company and to his fellow-workers organised in some great trades union? The New Testament speaks after all mainly of slave-owner and slave. How is a man to look on the state now that he lives in a democracy and not under an autocratic emperor? Is the demand that we should obey the powers that be modified by some of the great evils they have perpetrated in our days? How are we to express the relationship of man and wife now that they stand equal in the eyes of the state? How are we to meet the growing pains of the teenager so strangely unmentioned in the Bible?

It is not enough to treat the man in the street as my equal and to speak to him of the problems he is interested in in the way he understands and thinks. I must also go to him and not expect him to come to me. I have met so many who have complained that although they have provided a warm and comfortable church or hall, the adults will not come to

the Gospel meeting nor the children to the Sunday School. But why should they come? For that matter why should I think that I have any prescriptive right to call on them uninvited or to preach outside their windows? Why should I expect that my open-air meeting will be treated with more respect than that of the atheists, the Mormons or the communists? Thank God, the last vestiges of privilege and compulsion are vanishing. If I want to win the man in the street, I must become a man in the street myself; I must walk where he walks and sit where he sits. When I have attracted and interested him, I must be able to introduce him to a local church that is prepared to adapt itself to him rather than insisting that he adapts himself to it.

We live in a period in which much is said of "the indigenous church" in the mission field, and very little is done about it. This is not due to hypocrisy but to a failure to understand what an indigenous church is. It is normally understood to mean that native leaders are given full freedom to function along lines laid down by the missionaries and the denominations to which they belong. In fact an indigenous church is one which has full freedom to develop under the guidance of the Spirit using the Word, whether the missionaries and "home" denominations like the Spirit's guidance or not.

We shall never really influence the masses until we allow an indigenous church to grow up among them. John Wesley saw this in measure, but the strict constitution he laid down for the Connexion prevented its further development, led to splits and finally to an increasing separation from those it sought to evangelise. The same holds true of the only real mass movement within the Mediaeval Church, viz: that started by Francis of Assisi. Here again the movement rapidly lost its spiritual power and its contact with those it was founded to serve, when it was contained within strict rule and diverted from those elements which the richer and more powerful felt were dangerous to them.

If the rich of this present age, rich through money, intellectual gifts, education, worldly position, feel that such an attitude is unreasonable and more than can possibly be asked from them, let them listen to the words of their Lord: "Among you, whoever wants to be great must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the willing slave of all."

H.L.Ellison.

Moorlands Bible College.

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THE GOSPEL AND THE MAN IN THE STREET (2)

W. S. GALYER

Yes, but which street? which man, and what gospel? Paradise Street or Park Lane, peer or postman, Paul's or Pavlov's? Although the human factor is not so hopelessly complicated as might appear at first sight, it will be better to begin with the message rather than the man, for we are here upon sure ground.

1. THE MESSAGE

The Christian Gospel is good news from God, addressed to men as sinners. This news was foreshadowed and foretold in the history, religion and prophecy of Israel. The Old Testament is not a gallant failure to be discarded; it is there to prepare men's minds to understand, and their hearts to be moved by, the New Testament message. This message was announced, heralded, by the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles. Our business is to hear and obey it, to prove and to learn it, that we in turn may become its heralds. Experience must give life to understanding, and understanding throws light upon experience. We are put in trust with the gospel. We are not at liberty to tamper with it or to alter it, or to water it down to make it acceptable to our own or any other generation. As Paul told the Galatians: "A different gospel is not another gospel" and no words are too strong to be hurled against the preacher of it. James Denney's words are worth much thought:

"The first commandment is 'Thou shalt have none other gods beside Me', and that is the foundation of the true religion. As there is only one God, so there can only be one gospel. If God has really done something in Christ on which the salvation of the world depends, and if He has made it known, then it is a Christian duty to be intolerant of everything which ignores, denies, or explains it away. The man who perverts it is the worst enemy of God and men;... If the evangelist has not something to preach of which he can say: 'If any man makes it his business to subvert this, let him be anathema', he has no gospel at all. Intolerance in this sense has its counterpart in comprehension; it is when we have the only gospel, and not till then, that we have the gospel at all." (The Death of Christ' chapter III.)

The content of this good news is Jesus Christ Himself; the Christ of the Scriptures, His birth and life leading to His atoning death, and proceeding from that death, His resurrection, ascension, mediation and return. By means of this is God's glory shown in His righteously saving the repentant, believing sinner. Let us freely admit that there are those who would speak of this as a 19th century evangel unsuited to and unintelligible to the 20th century. The Jews and Greeks still cry

"stumbling-block" and "foolishness". -

"To say that Paul is unintelligible, or that he presents Christianity in a way which does it every kind of injustice and is finally unacceptable to us, is to fly in the face of history and experience. There have always been people who have found Paul intelligible and accepted the gospel as he preached it. There are such people still, if not in theological classrooms, then in mission halls, at street corners, in lonely rooms. It is not historical scholarship that is wanted for the understanding of him; and neither is it the insight of genius: it is despair. Paul did not preach for scholars, nor even for philosophers; he preached for sinners. He had no gospel except for men whose mouths were stopped, and who were standing condemned at the bar of God. They understood him and they find him eminently intelligible still." (James Denney: 'The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation.' chap.III).

So this good news from God concerning Jesus Christ is addressed to sinners. Sin is basically a question of relationship. I am a sinner because I have failed in my relationship to God and to others. I do not love God as I am commanded to do, nor my neighbour as myself; and now that God has intervened in Christ, for my salvation, a further wrong relationship is seen - "of sin, because they believe not in Me." This we must keep closely before ourselves, and our hearers, for whatever fruit has sprung from the root, the basic offer of the gospel is that by a right relationship to Christ I may be brought into a right relationship to God and my fellow men. We hear much of 'feelings of guilt', but this is not conviction of sin. David's deed was a crime against Bathsheba, Uriah, his family and his realm, but David cries: "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned..." The crime against man was a sin against God. The gospel is good news precisely because it, and it alone, has any message for me here.

We go out into the street, then entrusted with good news from God, good news which we must proclaim as it was given to us; good news which is addressed to and understood by sinners. In the street we find the man with his sinful heart and his relationship to God perverted by sin.

2. THE MAN

This being a paper and not a book, we must be content to generalise somewhat, and will therefore consider the three principal reactions met with in gospel work today, that of the ignorant, the indolent, and the intellectual.

The ignorant - Less than one tenth of the population go to any sort or religious service at all. Many of these never hear the essential gospel, only a variety of religious ideas. With the great majority, the nine-tenths, the smattering of vague ideas gained from day or Sunday School, the popular press and television, serves only to emphasise their almost total ignorance.

In the course of a recent conversation a thoughtful fifteen year old technical schoolboy told how, after attending a meeting and reading the booklet given to him, he had tried to pray. "I said 'Sir' because that was the word I was used to. When I said 'God' or 'Jesus' there was no picture in my mind to go with it." In this situation we must learn from the Lord Jesus how to use the incidents and accidents of daily life as parables of spiritual truth. In the last event our target is the conscience, bearing in mind the fact that many are willingly ignorant; but we have to teach Christ as well as preach Him. We must begin where our hearers are, with what they know and understand, and proceed from there - "precept upon precept, line upon line." Much disappointment would be avoided if we realised how much of this patient teaching is needed before there can be any intelligent faith. So in our personal witness and our public preaching there must be much provision for teaching the ignorant, aiming at the conscience by way of the mind.

The indolent - Hand in hand with ignorance go indifference and indolence. This is a situation that others have faced before us. In his Fernley Lectures J.S. Simon describes the England of Wesley's day:

"The overwhelming majority of Englishmen in the 18th century had escaped from the direct control of the Christian religion. They stood aloof from the church, or were antagonistic to it, or they were indifferent to its existence. They were content that Christians should shut themselves up in their several enclosures, and cease from troubling other people about sin and judgment. They asked to be let alone, and to be allowed, without interference, to find the most pleasant paths to destruction." (John S. Simon: 'The Revival of Religion in England in the 18th Century'. Chap.VIII)

Such were the indolent who were aroused by the preaching of Whitefield and Wesley. In our day circumstances may be the means of an arousing. Illness, accident, bereavement, and other things make a breach in the wall of indifference through which the gospel may enter. But it is essential for us to see that the basic question of sin and relationship to God is faced, otherwise when the circumstances pass, the interest passes also. The same caution is needed in dealing with cases of drunken remorse and the like. In other cases interest is quickened and conscience challenged by meeting with the bright reality of a true Christian experience in another. Many cases of this could be cited, and such arousing often leads on to true faith. So far as our witness and preaching are concerned, there is a time for plain and faithful dealing, for hard-hitting on specific sins and the judgment they bring. But such dealing should come from a heart conscious of its own sinfulness and of how much it has been forgiven. Censorious denunciation only serves to harden. We must study to present the blazing holiness of God revealed in His holy law, and exemplified in the Lord Jesus Christ. Above all we must learn to aim at the conscience by way of the imagination. Observe in detail the approach of

Nathan to David after the latter's great sin. Travelling by the road of David's imagination the prophet's words were inside the door of the king's conscience, and all David's defences were pierced - he was the man. Our Lord used this means in His parables. Listening to the parable of the vineyard, His hearers perceived it as spoken against themselves. God has placed this road to the conscience in men's hearts. Let us see to it that we learn to use it.

The Intellectual - It was my privilege in 1961 to meet Professor Finlayson of Edinburgh. Arising from his account of a university sermon he had preached, I was able to seek his advice on presenting the gospel to the intellectual. His answer was "Aim at the conscience every time," and he went on to point out the uselessness of presenting the gospel simply as another intellectual concept to be examined and assessed. The reader is recommended to a detailed study of the first chapter of Professor Hallesby's book 'Religious or Christian?' where the whole question is dealt with in masterly fashion. Having frankly set down the "offensive", paradoxical elements of the gospel, the Professor says:

"This matter of intellectual difficulty is one of those problems which is resolved in life, and not by our thinking... Becoming a Christian never takes place as a result of reasoned thought. It is an experience of God that makes us Christians. It is in Christ that we meet God. And this meeting has the same effect upon us all, regardless of age, sex, class or station in life... We experience that which the Bible speaks of as sin and guilt... If one has thus met God and had a genuine experience of sin, then there is in all the world... no other consolation and help remaining to a sinner but the paradoxical gospel of the paradoxical Saviour, who was God and became man, and suffered and died as an atonement for our sins."

We must face the fact that

"in the sphere of Christian truth there is no such thing as an argument to which it is impossible for a wilful man to make objections and, even if there were, many would object to it on that very ground." (James Denney: "II Corinthians chap.4"
(Expositors Bible).

We must learn by "manifestation of the truth" to "commend ourselves to everyman's conscience in the sight of God." Having experienced and learned the gospel, we must set it before our intellectual hearers as simply, as plainly, and as clearly as we can, avoiding all desire to score points or impress with our own brilliance. Our aim must be that in simplicity and honesty we present the Christ of the Scriptures, who is the Christ of our experience, counting upon the convicting power of God the Holy Ghost.

3. THE MEANS OF APPROACH

We are now in the street with our message and some little idea of the man. But our problems are not yet over. He is on one side of the street and we on the other, with a considerable gulf between us and him. We are faced with the necessity of building a bridge across which we may go to him, or he come to us. Thought of in this light, the activities of our local church may well become more effective. They will be so carried on, and held at such times as will make them bridges across which he and his wife and children will come. Sunday School and youth work is still the most used bridge and deserves our best workers and resources. No doubt we have a women's meeting, but why not an evening effort for those not free during the day; and why not a "Grandfather's Club" or a mixed "Veteran's Club" - bearing in mind all the time that these are not to be ends in themselves but bridges by which people encounter first us and then our Saviour, and are drawn into the fellowship of our local church, Bible clubs, squashes and study groups held in our homes, may be likened to a seat halfway across the bridge, while in our visitation, literature distribution and open-air work, hospital services and the like, we cross the bridge entirely to their side. Should our district abound in students or nurses, then let our homes and our services seek to reach across to them, while a nearby town centre may well be the site for a "coffee-bar evangelism" bridge. We must build every bridge that a God-guided sanctified imagination can devise, and use it as long as, and no longer than, it proves to be effective.

We have considered the message, the man and the means of approach. There remains the most important factor of all, -

4. THE MESSENGER

Having sought to apply the resources of our mind and experience to the matter in hand, there is something that must be said and honestly faced. Our scientific age is apt to assert that by its chemistry and conditioned reflexes, materials and men may be manipulated to achieve the desired result. Here is an aspect of "this present evil age" from which we need to be delivered. It is painfully easy to concentrate on new techniques and methods and all the time avoid the Divine demand for wholly yielded lives. By all means let us bring to bear on the situation every resource of intellect and experience, but we must do it remembering that nothing, absolutely nothing, of spiritual value will be accomplished apart from the operation of God the Holy Ghost. Apart from Him the most brilliant and up-to-date method will achieve nothing; directed by Him the yielded believer will discover the Holy Spirit sovereignly at work, graciously using his efforts. The Lord the Spirit is to obeyed, not regimented or directed by our ingenuity and intellect. It amounts to this: when we say "I believe in the Holy Ghost" do we "believe our beliefs?" In the same way do our constant pilgrimages of remembrance cause us to believe what the Gospel has to say as to the holiness of God,

the incurable sinfulness of sin, the alone saviourhood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the eternal issues involved? We visit the Cross Sunday by Sunday, but have we really learned to glory in nothing else? Is there a case for remaining silent until I can say "I believe, therefore have I spoken"? This much is certain: little will be accomplished until the Lord has all there is of me by an act of surrender worked out in a life of obedience; but five thousand can be fed with five loaves and two fishes that are unreservedly handed over to the Lord Jesus.

Having faced these spiritual issues we may consider some of the lessons life and experience have to teach us. It is not possible to do more than outline. Space does not permit development in detail, but some guiding principles can be indicated. We must learn to think and speak in terms of "us sinners" and not "you sinners". The greatest safeguard against giving the impression of placing oneself upon a pedestal is to allow God the Holy Spirit to teach me the incurable wickedness and deceitfulness of my own heart. There are many benefits gained from learning this lesson and true humility is one, a humility that enables me in all sincerity to sit down with any man, confident that the Saviour who saved me can save him. There is a world of difference between the profession of this truth as a matter of correct doctrine and the stating of it out of a real conviction of my own innate and ineradicable sinfulness. Allied to this is the principle of sympathy, a genuine interest in others for their own sake, and for the sake of God's interests in their life. This is something more than regarding them as spiritual "cases", and can only be sustained by the constraint of the love of Christ. It involves an attitude of consideration and helpful kindness as well as direct Christian witness. There must be a genuine effort to understand others and their point of view, and their problems. I must be "all things to all men in order that I might save some." Then in humble sympathy I must learn to be "concrete" and "real-life" in my approach and preaching. In personal work it is essential to get the other person talking so that my counsel is addressed to the real situation in his life; this is equally essential in public preaching. I must learn to assess the situation and needs of my congregation so that the truth I preach will not be a mere abstraction, but will come directly to the personal situation. It is to be feared that much gospel preaching fails here. I must be "concrete", direct and specific. Long ago Joseph Alleine said "Let us come to particulars. It is in the hand fight that the execution is done." Then I must be on the alert for God's 'moment' in a person's life. Experience seems to show that there are points in life when God draws near to heart and conscience, and, if such 'moments' are not used, then much time may elapse before God can or will draw so near again. One final word for those who have responsibility and leadership in the church or assembly. It must be their care to see that the corporate witness is properly guided and led, and then the next generation is being led and trained to follow on.

Finally for our comfort let us remember that great as our responsibility is, it is limited. The watchman who does his job properly "delivers his soul". The test of our work is the impact it makes. Wesley's criterion is the correct one: "Were any saved - were any offended?" It is when men can safely ignore us that we need to be concerned. A clear understanding of this saves us from needless self-reproach.

Remember that we serve a sovereign God, and that "omnipotence hath servants everywhere." God has purposed to "build His church" and to "fill His house". We may confidently count upon this, depend on the power and working of God's Holy Word and Holy Spirit, and rejoice in the privilege that is ours in having a share in the accomplishing of the eternal gracious purposes of the Triune God.

W.S.GALYER.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Mr. Galyer has offered to deal with any questions or requests for help on the subject of this paper, which might be sent to him. His address is :-

108 Portland Road, Kingston-on-Thames, Surrey.

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It is sheer slackness to fling at your people great slabs of religious phraseology derived from a bygone age, and leave them the task of retranslation into terms of their own experience; that is your task, not theirs.

James Stewart.

Discipleship does not afford us a point of vantage from which to attack others; we come to them with an unconditional offer of fellowship, with the sincerity of the love of Jesus.

D.Bonhoeffer.

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MEMBERS SECTION

CORRESPONDENCE

(Correspondence for publication should be sent to the Correspondence Editor: 229 Village Way, Beckenham, Kent, and should arrive within 4 weeks of the dispatch of the previous issue.)

Christianity and the Scientific Age

Mr. Ernest Laycock, 22 Regent St., Penn, Wolverhampton, writes:

I am teaching Chemistry, and almost the whole of my G.C.E. class has joined the C.U., not because I have preached at them or punched away at Bible texts or introduced the Gospel to them, but I have simply asked these lads to stand in awe and gaze at the wonders of God's creation.

I was trained to teach Religious Knowledge, but have never had the opportunity. Instead I find myself leading people into the worship of God (and eventually into the Scriptures, when we are outside the classroom) by gazing at the wonders of Calcium Carbonate and the physical properties of water. Of course I do not mention God; I merely hint at the presence of a great master-mind who has designed this universe with such infinite precision and careful thought.

There are hundreds of hungry and needy people around us who can only be reached by a means which is related to the atmosphere in which they have been reared.

Inter-denominational Work

Mr. Keith Elliott, 18 Queensbury Rd., Kettering, Northants, writes:

I have had opportunity to watch at close quarters missionary activity both church-based and inter-denominational, the former in Brethren and Free Church circles, and the latter through College Christian Union and Crusader work. From this observation I would say that the more effective work was done on an inter-denominational basis.

But Dr. Houston (CBRFJ i, 14) says that it is only the local church that presents the truly Christian challenge of the "I and my neighbour" relationship. I do not see that this should be more true of the local church, so-called, than of the local inter-denominational group. The latter, within the limits of the particular task which it has set itself, has lately seemed to me to be nearer the ideal of the local gathering of committed Christians than any denominational church or assembly.

(An interesting point, and precisely that made by Emil Brunner in

Chap.11 of "The Misunderstanding of the Church". Do we agree with Brunner that the task of churches is not of becoming the ekklesia, but furthering its growth? F.R.C.)

The Lost Heritage

Mr. G.A. Lucas, 73 Mount View Road, London, N.4, writes:-

It is clear to most who have taken the trouble to study the ministry of the early brethren that the Lord graciously led them back to some truths of vital importance which had been lost sight of since the close of the apostolic era.

This powerful testimony lasted about 20 years when the weaknesses which are such a sad evidence of our fallen nature brought disruption. From that time public testimony to the unity of the body of Christ ceased, for there were two mutually opposed parties each purporting to be its expression. An immediate consequence of this disaster was the division between teachers and evangelists, for it is accepted that, in the main, those gifted as teachers went in one direction, and those gifted in evangelism in another.

You have on the one hand an evangelical zeal which ultimately makes man the object of the Gospel and not the Son of God, and on the other a body of separatists who aggregate to themselves alone the light and privileges which are the heritage of all God's children, until they claim equality of status with Christ Himself, and the exclusive authority of God's Spirit for their utterances. These things, alas, have more or less characterised the two streams emerging from the crisis of 1848.

So far we seem to be concerned with ideals rather than the profound spiritual truths which abound in the Word of God, conveying the impression that an academic training is a 'sine qua non' to their realisation rather than the "eyes of our heart being enlightened." May I, in all brotherly love, remind my brethren that spiritual gifts are given by, and from the glorified Christ, and while they are doubtless subject to desire on our part, they are sovereignly given by Him alone. No amount of human teaching can make up for the absence of such a gift.

I humbly suggest that when we realise how much of our inheritance we have lost, and how it may be recovered by the resources we have in the Word and the Spirit of God, the Lord may be graciously pleased to uplift us and help us, that we in turn may have the desire and capacity to help others. I think we all realise that every work of revival must be cradled in a spirit of deep repentance, in order to make room for the mighty working of God.

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THE BOOK SHELF

Some Books in Current Debate

The recent fame - or notoriety - given to the Bishop of Woolwich's 'Honest to God' is a symptom of a more general malaise - a radical rethinking of the relationships of God and man, religious and secular, church and society. Some indication of recent books which have contributed to this debate may be of help, for of course the questions raised are of the greatest importance both for our faith and our churchmanship.

'Honest to God' itself has brought down to the level of an urgent personal problem what was previously the concern of academic theological debate. A sermon of Paul Tillich, in 'The Shaking of the Foundations' (Pelican, 1962. 3s6d.) gave Dr. Robinson the incentive for querying the whole category of the supernatural framework of Christianity (of God as 'other' and 'outside' ourselves), as being merely the hangover of a thought-form not our own, and a barrier to an understanding of essential Christianity to modern man. Another stimulus was Dietrich Bonhoeffer's 'Letters and Papers from Prison' (Fontana, 1959. 192pp. 2s6d.), a thought-provoking book quite apart from Dr. Robinson's interpretation of it, which had already been widely quoted for its remarks on the need for a 'religionless Christianity' to meet the need of the secular society of our 'post-Christian era'. The other basis for much of this reappraisal of Christianity in relation to the thought-forms in which it is expressed is Bultmann's extreme historical scepticism to the New Testament. His views may most conveniently be read in 'Jesus Christ and Mythology' (SCM Press, 1960. 96pp. 6s.) (where the less technical approach also shows up something of the inadequacy of his pre-suppositions).

The subject of 'Honest to God' is but one, even though by far the most radical, of several different methods of approach to the problem of modern post-Christian man. Where this attempts to rethink the whole traditional concept of God and the 'supranatural', a second approach meets man halfway in his intellectual doubts. 'Objections to Christian Belief' (Constable, 1963. 112pp. 12s6d.) brings together lectures on moral, psychological, historical and intellectual objections, posing questions rather than giving answers.

A third approach tackles the problem of the church in a secular society. 'Beyond Religion' by Daniel Jenkins (SCM Press, 1962. 128pp. 8s.6d.) takes up the theme of the contrast between Christianity and religion. This has long been familiar ground to evangelicals (even if not in this form), and such a discussion may seem to them unnecessarily involved; but it is interesting to see how the author works towards new attitudes in a secular society: we may notice, with reference to the first issue of this Journal, for instance, the trend which produces such remarks as '...the idea of a gathered church community is integral to a mature understanding of the nature of the Church...', and much else

besides. See too the essay by A.R. Vidler in 'Soundings' (CUP, 1962. 292pp. 2ls.) on 'Religion and the National Church'. Compared with this trend towards recognising the respective spheres of secular and Christian, a readable and penetrating book by H. Blamires might seem rather reactionary: 'The Christian Mind' (SPCK, 1963. 191pp. 17s.6d.) deplors the loss of a truly Christian outlook in social, political and cultural life, and indicates how this can be recovered.

As far as 'Honest to God' is concerned, no doubt there are some substantial 'replies' on the way: the promised sequel, 'The Honest to God Debate', should maintain interest in the question. Apart from many magazine articles, so far there have appeared two booklets and a book. 'Image Old and New' (SPCK, 1963. 16pp. 1s.6d.) by the Archbishop of Canterbury, is a fair statement of the position and firm reaffirmation of the 'supranatural' - also of religion, in its place, as might be expected. From the Church Book Room Press there is an expansion by Dr. J.I. Packer of his article in the Church of England Newspaper, 'Keep Yourselves from Idols' (20pp. 1s.) The original title was 'Episcopal Gadfly', and this gives some indication of the author's attitude. Another discussion from the evangelical viewpoint of the ideas contained in 'Honest to God' may be found in 'I Believe in God: Current Questions and the Creeds' (Tyndale Press, 1963. 80pp. 5s.) by Dr.K.Runia, an Australian theologian of Dutch extraction. This is basically a history of the creeds and their trinitarian faith, but the long last section is an extensive examination of Tillich's and Robinson's ideas about the doctrine of God. Promised in the autumn is 'A Rejoinder to Honest to God' from the Religious Education Press, 'For Christ's Sake' by O.Fielding Clarke. (5s.)

One other book may be brought to members' notice which has not apparently such direct reference to these agonizing reappraisals of 20th-century Christianity. A second and enlarged edition of 'Documents of the Christian Church' (ed. H. Bettenson, OUP, 1963. 490pp. 16s.) has appeared, a well-known source book giving the texts of major statements, creeds, historic theological definitions etc. down the history of the church. It would be a useful acquisition for members with little access to a theological library. And, in this age of doctrinal iconoclasm, it does help to keep the whole subject in perspective.

D.S.Alexander.

NOTE: An early issue of the Journal will deal with some of the points of this controversy, and these books mentioned will make a good introduction - Ed.

FROM THE MONITORS . . .

"Encounter" July, 1963.

This edition of "Encounter" is of interest to Christians in its entirety, for it is devoted to examining the condition of our country today. To see our nation as some of our unsaved, but intelligent, fellow-countrymen see it must surely help us in our preaching of the Gospel, both to meetings and to individuals. Almost everyone of the contributors to this edition looks at our country and finds its state very evil indeed. This very dissatisfaction, however badly directed at present, may at least be an approach to humility. But one needs to be careful when reading this kind of literature, however useful it may be: for many of those who write and of those who read it seem to be remarkably adept at discerning the motes in their brothers' eyes, while failing to see the beams in their own eyes, and it is easy to be drawn into an orgy of criticising other people.

As Arthur Koestler says, in his introduction to the magazine: "there seems to be general agreement that we are faced with a 'functional' rather than a 'structural' disorder." That is to say, it is not because we are spending a great deal on defence, or sustaining the burden of a Welfare State, or losing our overseas possessions, that our country is in decline, but because there is something psychologically wrong with us as a people. To this, of course, the Christian can say "Amen", for this is one of our basic beliefs: what else is the burden of the first two chapters of the Epistle to the Romans? But while a description of the malaise of our country is quite adequately undertaken, in this magazine, little is done to suggest any remedy for it. Arthur Koestler insists that our disorder is 'functional', but only 'structural' remedies for it are put forward, such as the reform of Parliament, the reform of the Trade Unions, and the reform of Education, which Koestler dwells upon in his postscript. The contributors agree that very many departments of British life are badly and inefficiently organised, and their only cure for this seems to be to improve the organisation. But such an improvement cannot be made until the people themselves have been changed, and the contributors give us no suggestions as to how this might be achieved.

One does feel, after reading this number of "Encounter", that as Christians we have a superb opportunity. The intelligent "world" is dissatisfied, but has no remedy for the evils which it sees in our society. We have that remedy in the Lord Jesus Christ. If only we could, with the direction of the Holy Spirit, find how to shew men that it is man's separation from God which is at the root of the 'functional' disorder of society, and find how to point them to the Lord Jesus as the One who has overcome this separation. The views of these writers do at least help us to see clearly wherein lies dissatisfaction, amongst intellectuals, with our country, and thus they give us a valuable means by which we may approach them with the Gospel.

Anthony Dean.

(We have the remedy - but what is it? Is it the message of personal salvation alone: as though a community of "saved" men will automatically be free from the evils of society? The state of our churches answers that question.

Then has the Church a responsibility for society? What did the gift of the Keys of the Kingdom mean?

Remember that for us, as individuals, this is a passing world. But for the Church Militant, in its corporate form, it is a permanent world. Except in relation to that world, the Church Militant has no "raison d'etre". Have readers any thoughts on this fact, and its implications?

F.R.C.)

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Every attempt to impose the Gospel by force, to run after people and proselytise them, to use our own resources to arrange the salvation of other people, is both futile and dangerous.

D. Bonhoeffer.

Our easy trafficking with the word of cheap grace simply bores the world to disgust, so that in the end it turns against those who try to force on it what it does not want.

D. Bonhoeffer.

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