

SOME PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Lastly, I want to say two or three things :

1. Use your Bible in this kind of personal work. Good stories are all right in their way. But it is vitally important that the seeker after God should have God's own word to rest on. That "liveth and abideth for ever."

2. Somewhere the man under conviction must bring his sins to the Cross. We are not forgiven *because* we have confessed our sins to God, but because of what Christ has done in His death. Confession is a condition of forgiveness (1 John i. 9.) It is "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, that cleanseth us from all sin."

3. But it is important to know what you are aiming at. If you aim at a target you are more likely to hit it ! Work for actual conversion. Talk about God in a language understood of the people. Believe in the Holy Spirit who will Himself convict and convert. These days are no more evil than any other days. During one day in my parish, five men and three women sat in my study and ended by taking Christ as their Saviour. On another occasion three men and two women. A few weeks ago thirteen in a fortnight. But if we ourselves hardly believe in conversion the doubt can get subtly conveyed to our hearers, then why should they believe ? The promise of Christ still stands : "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me."

The Regeneration of Society

THE RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF CHELMSFORD

(The Bishop did not read a paper but gave an address from carefully prepared notes of which the following is a brief summary.)

On the subject of Evangelicals at work in the Regeneration of Society, the Bishop found the title a little obscure. There is no prospect at all of a total Christian State. The historical examples of Geneva and the Commonwealth period in England were not altogether successful and gave little hope that it ever would be realised. In fact it is very doubtful whether the complete regeneration of society was ever contemplated. Many New Testament passages seem to suggest the very opposite. The Christian life is spoken of as a strait and narrow way. Our Lord went further to say 'when the Son of man cometh shall he find faith in the earth?' and subordinate passages from other parts confirm this thought. Thus we are thought of as 'strangers and pilgrims' having here no continuing city.

It must not however be forgotten that there are on the other hand, complementary passages in the New Testament which suggest that the Christian influence would penetrate the whole society. We remember the parables of the leaven and mustard seed ; the sayings to Christ's disciples that they are lights in the world ; the salt of the earth. How far can the Christian message impregnate legislation ? How far can it act as an antiseptic to the corruptions of general society ? The first question is perhaps the more important. If the Christian

Church is to be this influence, saving, purifying, illuminating, it must recognise facts. This is a time of extraordinary difficulty not merely as a time of War, but because of the pre-war and post-war conditions, and in the general attitude to Religion, i.e. not that Religion is not true, but that it does not matter. It is far easier to face actual opposition than this.

For a long time now the popular view of the influence of Education and Civilization presupposed a continuous improvement, that we are getting "better every day in every way." This is simply a delusion which constitutes a grave danger and is undoubtedly responsible for the moral and spiritual collapse throughout the world, for we cannot doubt that everything is in a low state everywhere. Moreover, this popular idea that man can improve himself and is his own saviour, is a deadly enemy of the Christian faith. The basis of the Christian message is that man is a lost creature until he has been 'found' from outside. He cannot save himself but needs something from outside himself. To-day in the world at large we see the awful results of sin which illustrate the truth of the Christian Doctrine of the terrible results in man of the fall. It is the gravest of blunders to think of the Christian Religion as one that simply improves man. As it is the only one that recognises man as fallen so it is the only one that recreates, redeems, and so renews. For this truth we must stand unflinchingly.

As a programme subordinate to this fundamental principle there are various factors to consider. In this day of crisis we must remember that there have been special turning points in the history of the world and I believe that this is one of them. "I am not a believer in what is called the social gospel, but I think that at this time one of the things the Christian Church must demand is that all legislation shall be at least Christian in ideal." We may be thankful that the minds of people are turning from a preoccupation with the sanctity of property which for the last thirty years has been the only consideration, to a stress now on the sanctity of man. "I believe that when the world and social life is again reconstituted the rights of big business will be trampled on. Men are not annoyed so much by the possession of money as the power of money which reduces men to the state of serfs." Soldiers in the battlefield are prepared to suffer and endure but they demand better conditions for their children. If the Christian Church fails to recognise the justice of this demand it will miss the day of its visitation.

Another matter for grave consideration for a new society is the power of the Press. Let us face the facts. There was a lot of talk a little while back when Parliament had a word of warning for the 'Daily Mirror,' and much was ventilated on the freedom of the Press. But the Press is not free. "Do you realise that five people alone dictate the policy of seventy-five per cent of the papers, including the large dailies?" (Here the Bishop quoted various startling illustrations). There is no true freedom of the Press!

The moral state of the Country is even more depressing, the family ideal is distinctively a Christian conception but under stress of War this is breaking up and presents a most serious feature of the National life. The home life is being squeezed out as it were, by a 'pincer'

movement. Fathers are away on service, Mothers are in munitions, communal meals are a vogue, children are evacuated. Divorce is of course easier. On the other hand the Registrar-General in his report for 1938 showed that of the girls married in that period under twenty years of age, forty per cent were pregnant at the time of marriage. Juvenile crime figures also disclose a grave situation. The percentage of criminals under eighteen years of age is enormous and nearly fifty per cent of the crimes have been committed by young persons little older than mere children.

All this is traceable to one thing—the failure to recognise the finality of God's Law. Children are no longer taught that a thing is wrong because it is contrary to the will of God. Their cry is "Why can't I?" They do not realise what sin is and why it is sin. Thus there is no occasion for surprise that young people do not react to the Gospel, for they do not know their religion. The inefficiency of Religious education to-day lies at the root of all this.

There are two great needs that are necessary for the life of society to-day, especially among the young. First of all it is that there should be a movement to teach them their religion. Neither parents nor children know it. In the Roman Church they have a Catechism of the Creed which is used even in the prisons. We need to have some such manual which by simple question and answer sets out the teaching of the Christian faith. Secondly, young people do not know how to pray and they must be taught.

We must begin again, starting from such foundations if we are to make any headway in the regeneration of society. God has given us a great opportunity in these days. May we all do our part and fulfil His purpose in the work.

Evangelical Unity as a Fruit of Evangelism

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IF Evangelism is a primary charge upon the Christian Church in respect of her temporal life and work, and, by sheer force of the very title they claim, a primary responsibility of Evangelicals within that Church, not less is it true that Unity is both a primary test and a primary "desideratum" both of the Church in general and of Evangelicals in particular. And if we are all in general agreement, as it may be assumed that we are, that each of these statements is true, it can hardly be possible that they are unrelated to one another. "But where shall 'unity' be found?" The story of the search for it is not altogether encouraging. Credal formulæ seem to say "It is not in us": certainly, they cannot produce it. Liturgical experiments at discovering forms of worship acceptable and helpful to Christians of quite different tempers and traditions have not proved