

Editorial

THE impact of the Greater London Crusade has awakened a wide consciousness of the need, the means and the glory of evangelism.

Public interest has naturally centred on Billy Graham himself, and it is good news that he is likely to return. But Dr. Graham, even with G.P.O. landline relays, cannot be everywhere at once. The brunt of the task of evangelism must fall on British shoulders. Evangelicals, basking in the success of the Crusade, are in some danger of smugness, yet there are countless problems facing us and we have by no means found all the answers. Two articles in this number reveal something of the grave issues of city evangelism, and discuss methods evolved to reach secularized, anchorless urban populations, both adult and young.

City evangelism is only one problem of many. Before we can affirm that a new Evangelical Revival has come to Great Britain its effect must be seen early on national character. The proof of the great revival of the Eighteenth Century was England's social and ethical revolution—the slowly changed tone of politics, the reorientation of moral values and the new sense of responsibility for races less fortunate than ourselves. Historical parallels may be dangerous, but as stimulants to thought and prayer they can be useful. To this end, the recent Canadian work on the Clapham Sect, *Saints in Politics*¹ is thoroughly worth reading.

Dr. Howse tells the story of the Clapham "saints" with a wealth of detail, based on careful research. As some pointed out when the book first became available in Britain, it is not in fact the first account of all the Sect's activities, but it is certainly the most up to date, and the most readable. Here may be seen again the story of the Abolition of Slavery, of the Indian Chaplaincies and of the rise of the Bible Society and the C.M.S. The impressive influence of Wilberforce and his friends on English politics is clearly brought out and here too is the somewhat sorry tale of the "Proclamation Society" and the Society for the Reformation of Manners. Above all, Dr. Howse, as a believer, recognizes the motive of these men and the source of their spiritual strength.

It is evident, therefore, that *Saints in Politics* is a worth-while study, of interest to all concerned with the impact of spiritual revival on national life, both in the past and to-day. We have no negro slavery to abolish, no industrial exploitation, no lotteries or duelling. The problems of our generation may seem less obvious. But the Divorce Rate, Homosexuality, the Pools—each awaits an effective application of the Christian answer. Public life is not, in the Eighteenth Century sense, corrupt, yet the Welfare State has bred its own diseases, and as for reforms, the Prison System is no less in need because its administrators are sincere and because reforming societies flourish.

The answer to these problems must be Christian; that is a mere

¹ *Saints in Politics: The Clapham Sect and the Growth of Freedom*, by E. M. Howse, Allen & Unwin, pp. 215, 18/-.

repetition of the obvious. But in this connection Dr. Howse's book provides a pointer. He brings out clearly that the power of the Clapham Sect sprang from their personal trust in the Crucified, Risen and Indwelling Christ. The prime object of their work was evangelistic and because they were spiritual they were not deceived as to the realities of human nature. For us, who live in the aftermath of an age which vaguely expected Christian ethics without deep personal faith, the lesson is pertinent. Our problems will not be solved by legislation alone, but by a change in the national conscience. This will not be achieved by the imposition of Christian morality on unchristian hearts ; and it will not be achieved merely by the contemporary return of the intellectuals to Christian values, however much that return may be welcomed. As the first article in this issue stresses, failure to win the allegiance of the masses " only leads to something of passing interest which leaves the bulk of our people content to live and die in their sins ". And thus we are brought back again to the prime factor which cannot be stressed too often—the evangelistic need. And this must bring us to our knees.

In 1955 the Church of England will decide on its relationship to the Church of South India. In this issue some of the theological issues are discussed. In the next will be an article suggesting what the action of the Church should be. Readers may be glad to contribute to the discussion and the Editor would welcome brief comments, which should be received by October 1st.