

denomination or sect, have the task and the right to seek to influence their neighbours in the way of righteousness. The Church of England, as the Established Church, has this burden laid upon her in a very special way. The Church must round up the sheep, and she requires all her members to assist in the work. To-day the climate of opinion is far more favourable to the preaching of the Gospel than before the War. People are spiritually unsure of themselves and are willing to be led in a way in which they were not in those pre-war days. But the Church must conscript all its manpower to cope with the task if it is not to miss its opportunity, and must ensure that the tradition or *ethos* or Church-conscious community is created around it. And we offer this experiment at Bradford, not as a universal panacea but as a practical suggestion, that the vicar, his magazine, and visitors may under God achieve it.

CITY EVANGELISM—II

Methods of Approach at a Mission Boys' Club

BY THE REV. T. DUDLEY SMITH, M.A.

THE Mission in question is in Bermondsey, and was founded nearly fifty years ago, to do medical, social and spiritual work among the people of the district. With the passing of the Insurance Act and the coming of the borough health service the provision of medical facilities was no longer needed, and the Mission began to concentrate most of its energies and resources on its boys' club. Before it was destroyed in 1940 there was also a smaller separate club for girls. Since the war the boys' club has again been the Mission's main responsibility: it caters for anything from two to three hundred boys between the ages of ten and eighteen, and it offers all the usual club amenities. Indoors, a hall where cricket and football can be played, with a P.T. instructor once a week, a table tennis room, billiards room, workshop and crafts room and a canteen, provide plenty to do. And according to the season we send out a number of football or cricket teams, and offer nets, swimming, athletics and street running. The club is manned by two full time workers and a body of voluntary helpers, comprising students and young business men resident at the Mission, old club boys still working in Bermondsey, and a few local friends and supporters. We are affiliated to the National Association of Boys' Clubs through membership of the London Federation, and we are also a Christian Mission with evangelism through the club as its over-ruling aim. Before going into details of the way in which this is attempted, we must sketch in the background.

Not for many years can the young people of Bermondsey have been as prosperous or as well looked after as they are to-day. Far better schools than their fathers knew retain them for longer than ever before:

conditions and hours of work—and especially rates of pay—are quite changed. Health is immeasurably better. Housing conditions are improving, though overcrowding is still the rule rather than the exception. Evening Classes and Institutes (including Recreational Evening Institutes) and a variety of clubs offer alternatives to the dance-hall, cinema, or pub. Educational opportunities have never been so good : a local boy sent by our Juvenile Court to an Approved School has just passed into Cambridge.

Because of all this it is easy to think that the work of clubs and missions like our own is done, and that their day is past. As a matter of sober fact they have probably never been more needed than they are now. Much bodily and mental welfare is being admirably attended to by the State and by voluntary organizations, but both in constructive work among young people and in Christian witness a mission such as this has still a vital part to play. That this role is recognized, and that it is one which cannot be undertaken by the State through its educational services, or by the Diocese through its parochial organization, is attested by their interest and concern for the work, and the grants they make for its continuance.

The church in whose parish the Mission lies will seat seventeen hundred without difficulty. In the old days when it pioneered the "Lantern Service" it was full every Sunday evening, with boys from this club taking up the whole of one gallery. To-day, in common with the rest of Bermondsey, and in spite of every effort, few people go to church. The flagrant and open immorality, drunkenness and swearing of the old days is far less in evidence, but not only are there few signs of even a nominal adherence to Christianity among the sixty thousand people in the Borough, but there are definite signs of a hard godlessness, so encrusted with urban civilization as to be impervious to all but the most direct and spiritual assault. This can clearly be seen in the club among the generation who still remember the war, or who were born and nurtured in the war years. It is not only that they are apathetic : they genuinely believe, many of them, that the Bible is long discredited, the Church deliberately corrupt and hypocritical, and religion dope for the masses : and that with their liberation from economic struggle and political insignificance they are also freed from the tyranny of religious allegiance.

This is a dreadful state of affairs. And for the children, things are often very little better. Pathetically few go to a Sunday school or church after they enter double figures, and put away childish things. And this is not the worst of it : for it must be remembered that there is little or no Christian teaching, no Bible stories, no Bible picture books, for most of them at home. The schools are bound, of course, to offer daily worship and regular religious instruction : but in a secondary modern school, with a class of forty, some of whom may well be educationally subnormal, the opportunities for teaching the most basic facts are terribly limited. Religion means nothing to our boys, for the most part. Few have ever met a practising Christian prepared to talk simply about his faith and his Lord. All the usual paraphernalia of Christian propaganda passes them by—and the club is the only key.

When a boy joins us he knows that he is coming to a professedly Christian club. Provided that it offers good facilities for canteen and football that does not usually worry him. On the basis of membership which he signs he agrees to attend prayers every night he is in club, and these nightly prayers are the first keystone in the work of evangelism. At first sight there is nothing impressive about them; half way through the evening—for this seems to be the best time—the staff move through the buildings, shepherding the boys away from the canteen, out of the football hall and the billiard room, and so down to prayers. A different person speaks each night of the week; only very rarely do we sing a hymn, and the speaker usually starts as soon as his audience are in their seats. There is a very real technique attached to giving the five minute address which, with a closing prayer, forms our nightly service. Prayer and spiritual preparation are vital, as new speakers quickly find, often to their great surprise. But presentation is an art with rules of its own. Any attempt to be dramatic, to weave a spell, will almost certainly fail; even the most breath-taking suspense is likely to be shattered by the maddening diminuendo of a dropped table-tennis ball. Anything which is not simple in language and ideas will soon provoke restlessness and indiscipline: shouts of "Say it in English" are not unknown for the more academic speakers. Anything which seems to be talking down to the boys will quickly be resented, and anything which savours of a professional religiousness will not gain a hearing. The boys may be quiet, but they will not be listening. Between these pitfalls there is a way simply to set forth Christ. Now and again there is a memorable evening, when in this dreary, badly decorated room, with an audience of local boys snatched from their games, glistening and sweaty under the electric lights, and sitting or sprawling with resigned constraint on the hard benches—now and again there is an evening when the Spirit of God shines through the speaker and gives his words that burning sanity and conviction which goes to the heart because it comes from the heart too. So day by day, week by week, year in and year out, there is in the nightly prayers of club a continuing witness to Christ, before which sooner or later a boy will make the first step in the choosing of his way. Some indeed remain disinterested and apathetic; one suspects that since these are usually the older ones they are already set in their ways, and have not the mental energy to receive new teaching, nor the spiritual willingness to respond. Others begin to understand, but cannot take their eyes off what it would cost them to follow Christ, and fear stifles love before it can be brought to birth. Some reveal clearly that they are prepared to take this seriously, that they would be glad to learn more; and for them the way is open to the next stage of their journey. This is a slow business, of course, but it is the only way we know. Night by night the boy listens to club helpers and residents, young men whom he has come to know and respect about the club, telling what Jesus Christ means in their own experience, and what He has to say about our lives and destinies. We are careful to stick very closely to the Bible in these prayers. We are not anxious to make our boys "religious" in the conventional amorphous and derogatory sense, and we should have no success if we did. We pray that God

Himself, through His Word and by His Spirit, will bring a conviction of man's need of Christ, and of Christ's ability to meet that need.

When a boy shows interest—and it is surprising who does—he may be asked if he would care to join one of a number of small Bible classes meeting for fifteen minutes on one evening of the week instead of prayers; one such class at least is in action almost every night. There, with only two or three others, he can investigate more deeply. He has a better opportunity to ask his questions, to clear up his misconceptions, to get down to brass tacks. Possibly, if he is still a youngster, he will start to come to the club Sunday school; and he will be invited to the evening service. Certainly he will get to know the leader of his little class, and find someone in whom his confidence will increase week by week against the day when he stands in need of such a person.

So, in theory, the road lies. From prayers to Bible class; through Bible class to Sunday school or the evening service. Some of the younger ones, of course, come to the Sunday school long before they become members of an individual Bible class. This Sunday school is small, informal, and popular. It caters for between a dozen and eighteen boys mostly between the ages of ten and thirteen, and corresponds to one class of a normal parochial Sunday school. It includes in its programme every popular innovation that is likely to make it more firmly established in the boys' esteem, or better able to do its job. One week it will use a filmstrip projector; another, a gramophone. A serial story with a "Don't-miss-next-week's-exciting-installment" flavour will appeal to a taste in reading already conditioned by the comic or the strip-cartoon; choruses on the blackboard, with suitable illustrations, models, cut-outs, and flannelgraph are all popular, and play their part in turn in the presentation of the story or lesson. It is a time when the club leader is able to get to know a number of the younger boys extremely well, talking freely about spiritual things. It is of immense value in this work to have had the boy right through Junior Club, and in the long run we think these Sunday afternoons will prove to have been very rewarding. It ought to be emphasized that the boys who come are those who have no allegiance to any other Sunday school, and were not attending one until they came to club.

The club service on Sunday evening is in many ways the spiritual focus of the week's work. It is held in the back room of a bombed church, decorated with furnishings rescued from the church or borrowed from others, and with flowers. We shorten the service of evening prayer, singing an extra hymn in place of a psalm, and making certain other amendments for the sake of simplicity. We have an address from one of ourselves, or from a visiting speaker, and the congregation is composed of club boys and helpers, with certain faithful members of the parish who used to worship at the church. There are also a sprinkling—a thin sprinkling—of those who are interested and feeling their way to faith. The numbers are not large—we are usually about forty in all—but visitors confirm our own impression that there is reality in the worship, and a sense of the presence of the Lord. About twice a month we administer the Holy Communion after the evening service, and residents, visiting undergraduates (for we are a university

mission), club boys and helpers join with members of the parish at the Lord's table.

In addition to this method of approach, not dovetailing with it but supplementing it, there are the annual camps. There is no need to describe these in detail: the possibilities of camps and house parties for spiritual work are widely known. We have a large summer camp for any member of the club who is free to come, and a smaller "by invitation only" camp at Whitsun for the long week-end. Here it is possible to go rather more deeply into Christian teaching for those who are either committed Christians or deliberate seekers. Camp often plays a decisive part in a boy's conversion, but this can almost never be traced to the influence of camp alone. The testimony of those who have found Christ during their years in club all points to the overwhelming part played by the nightly prayers, even when the actual decision for Christ has been made at camp, precipitated by the factors that make this so profitable a part of the year's work.

This, then, in outline, is the strategy of our approach. Club membership involves participation in the nightly prayers: interest there leads to an invitation to a Bible class. Friendship with and confidence in the leader of a Bible class induces willingness to come to the Sunday service, and for the youngsters to the Sunday school. Slowly a sketchy but genuine background knowledge of the Gospel is being built up, and for those who are not overtaken by apathy, the cares of this world or the deceitfulness of its riches, there comes, at club or at camp or in some quite other way, the time of decision: the boy becomes a Christian. We often remind ourselves that there is joy in heaven over one sinner repenting, and penitents here are always one by one, often with a long interval and many disappointments in between. Any impression that suggested a steady or continuous flow of boys accepting Christ, or took no account of the prayer and energy expended upon the individual, would be quite false. It is not a pious supposition but a practical experience for this Mission that a camp is infinitely worth running if it leads one boy a step nearer Jesus Christ.

A year ago we started here a Christian Union in the club. In the old days this was not needed, for the club was then the Christian Union. But since the war it has become clear that much painstaking work must go on before the bulk of those who pass through club will be led to Christ during their time here. The Christian Union provides by its definite membership a clear line of demarcation between the "Church" and the "World", which is of great blessing as much to those without as to those within. It unites the little company of Christians, and in its twice-weekly meetings it offers to its members fellowship, instruction, and a spiritual home, much as a Christian Union does in any factory or school. When a boy decides for Christ he is invited to become a member; he nails his colours to the mast by this membership, and involves himself in a definite loyalty to the other Christians. He has a struggle in front of him, and he stands in need of all the help he can get. For to follow Christ is not lightly done in Bermondsey; there was a case of an older boy who was offered by his old friends the whole of their week's wages if he would renounce Christ and come back to them: there was another not far away who was

"carved up" about the face and hands with a razor when he took the same stand. This sort of thing, please God, is exceptional, but it remains true that the cost of following Christ is clearly seen by all our boys, and carefully counted: I wish the issues were as clear in many more comfortable districts. Even to maintain a walk with Christ in a home where the bedroom is shared with parents and other children, and in a factory or docks where there is contempt for the Church or bitterness against it, and among friends whose standards have always been yours but can be so no longer, is not an easy thing.

With the Christian Union, there are other helps to those who want to press forward. We tried this year the experiment of a house-party over a spring week-end in a hutted camp in Essex, and this was a great success and we intend to repeat it. Confirmation classes are run from time to time within the club—three of our boys were confirmed by the Bishop of Woolwich this year, and others are being prepared even now. Opportunities to see good religious films are always taken, and a number of our Christian boys were greatly encouraged by visits to the Greater London Crusade. While wishing in every way to be identified as supporters of that Crusade, it was our impression here from observing and talking with the non-Christian boys we took to Harringay that they were not ready for such a message, and that consequently it was not their language, and there was no real communication of the Gospel. I know that this is not universally true in the experience of the Crusade among this type of boy, but I can only record that this is what we found.

The scheme or system outlined above is a description of the stages through which a boy can progress, rather than a routine history of the progress of the majority. There are, possibly, as many exceptions to the rule as there are normal cases, and it is difficult to generalize when the total numbers involved are so small. But I think this must be true of a description of the strategy of any Christian work: "The wind bloweth where it listeth . . . and thou canst not tell. . ."

Among the exceptions, for instance, we must class a boy who came to Christ not long ago. He is an eighteen-year-old stonemason, on probation after a fight with razors outside another club. He never came to a Bible class: he has not been to any camp with us, and scarcely to the evening service. He was won in painstaking personal conversation, carried on with the greatest difficulty because of the inadequacy of his vocabulary and experience to express spiritual things. The story begins with his summary ejection from club, after many warnings, as an impossible trouble-maker. In his genuine distress at this he asserted that "in there"—in the room where we hold prayers—"things were different", and that if we put him out he would go back to his old ways. The club leader (who had not discerned any obvious difference between his old ways and what he regarded as his new ones) took the matter up. In his own way this boy has found Christ and been found by Him. The way ahead is by no means smooth, but whereas his presence in club used to be an incentive to even greater vigilance on our part, we have now accepted his offer of help with the canteen for the Juniors, on one of their nights in club. Another exception was a young docker, who became greatly interested in spiritual matters at last summer's camp, and came back to club to join a con-

firmation class—an unheard of thing among his circle. He became a Christian just three days before joining the army. We visited Harringay together on his last leave before he was sent overseas. These two, of course, are older than the general run. It is rare for a boy who has passed through Junior Club and has not given his life to Christ by the time he is fifteen, to do so afterwards. But there is a depth in the spiritual life of some of our sixteen year olds that is not easily found elsewhere.

Running a club is an expensive business—in money, time and energy. It is not rewarding if you are thinking in terms of quick results or many converts. But strategically it is terribly important if we are not to lose again the largest section of our community as we have lost it before. I know that the Church needs parsons, that the schools need teachers, and that full time Christian workers are in short supply. The fact remains that there are opportunities in club work to reach these youngsters with the Gospel as they will not be reached in any other way. These opportunities must be regarded as high priority in any Christian strategy, and we do well to commend the possibilities of boys' club leadership, either as part-time service or as a career, to every young Christian man who is looking for the place where God would have him work.

Priesthood and Sacrifice

BY THE BISHOP OF CHELMSFORD¹

*A holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter ii. 5)
A royal priesthood . . . that ye may shew forth the excellencies of God
(1 Peter ii. 9)*

THIS is the Church's vocation. It is the vocation of the Church because the Church is the Body of Christ, and there is no word that better sums up the vocation of Christ than the word priesthood. It is only in the light of Christ's vocation, Christ's priesthood, that we can rightly understand the true meaning of the Church's vocation as His Body in the world to-day and of our vocation within that Body.

The Vocation of Christ. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, so appropriately called by the late Dr. Nairne the Epistle of Priesthood, the heart of priesthood is disclosed in the phrase *τα προς τον Θεον* which occurs twice in this epistle and which Nairne renders "on the Godward side". Christ is presented as the perfect Priest; in Him we see the true meaning of priesthood revealed; He stands on the Godward side of man, representing God to man and man to God, revealing God to

¹ The opening sermon at the 1954 Conference of the Evangelical Fellowship for Theological Literature. Other views on this subject were put forward at the Conference. See, for instance, W. F. M. Scott, "The Eucharist and the Heavenly Ministry of Our Lord" (*Theology*, February 1953), which embodies the viewpoint expressed in his paper on "Priesthood and Sacrifice in the New Testament".