

Editorial

THE Rev. D. F. Horsefield has been bold enough to undertake a review of some of the findings of the Lambeth Conference, so we will not duplicate his labours. But, after all the pre-publicity, the Anglican re-assessments both grave and catch-penny of the past year, it is hard not to feel disappointed with the printed results of this gathering: hard, also, to imagine to what benighted audience the Report addresses, for instance, its belated approval of family planning and sexual pleasure. There may be some Christian homes left to be shocked, or in some way moved, by this: but what of the many who may suspect that such an official pronouncement might be better never than so late? Earnest Anglican intellectual mills, separated by vast distances, and meeting together only once a decade, must grind slowly, but should the creakings be amplified for all to hear?

For all that, the presence of 310 Bishops in London, has been an event which has called forth a response in the Press, and on radio and TV., which only underlined the understandable failure of these hard-worked men, sapped by committee duties, to rise to any great prophetic level. And yet it is surely just on this level that the Church most completely fails to meet the need of mankind. All credit to them that the Bishops refused to dish out any easy answers, but restraint can come from lack of conviction, spiritual vacuity, as much as from humility and wisdom. We can be grateful that individual leaders within the Anglican Communion, during their nine years odd off the Lambeth lead, are bolder in their speech. Even Joost de Blank, in a radio interview, seemed to be throttled back.

Lambeth had the cartoonists of the national dailies licking their pencil points. The *Evening News* showed a coach-load of top-hatted Bishops stonily wincing at the language of an infuriated taxi-driver alongside. Osbert Lancaster in the *Daily Express* had a series of Lambeth vignettes, the most delightful of which had two envious Bishops remarking, as they watched an elegantly robed figure swish past: "Trust Barchester to go for the trapeze line!" But the most brilliant cartoon for this column's money appeared in the *Daily Mail*. Dr. Fisher, dictating what one imagined to be some mellow pre-Lambeth memo, was discovered startled by the sudden intrusion into the palatial calm of a band of Eoka desperados, slung round with tommy guns and cartridge belts: their leader says with a leer: "You've got *your* Church Army, and we've got ours!" Somehow this vividly illuminated that terrible tendency of all conferences to discuss themselves away from reality instead of to the brutal heart of it. It also shed a tragi-comic light on the cruel dilemma of the Archbishop himself, at the summit of the most obstreperously comprehensive of all communions, juggling with a tremendous miscellany of ecumenical balls, including the newsworthy Makarios.

Outside the trenchancy of the cartoonists, Geoffrey Murray in the *News Chronicle* (Hugh Redwood's successor) provided a commentary of outstanding intelligence. And the whole company of prelates at Victoria Station, spilling out in all their archaic sartorial variety

(including several Eastern Orthodox hierarchs) on their return from a service at Canterbury, focussed travellers' attention with a completeness which any visiting star might have envied. The British (and the Tourist Boards) are fond of their traditional pageantry, but the snag is that Anglican leaders, mentally classified with the Household Cavalry, Beefeaters, and the Changing of the Guard, may be seen as historical mementoes rather than spiritual relevances. Unless their joint deliberations can occasionally produce something as stirring as (say) the Communist Manifesto there is every danger that this view may be confirmed.

Sunday night at Speakers' Corner at Marble Arch. Thousands of Londoners coagulating in groups, detaching themselves and moving off as they get bored. From one platform a lady speaker for the Catholic Evidence Guild, in answer to a question from an American tourist about how the Roman Church can justify the doctrine of purgatory from the Bible, gives a long and learned review of historical practice. The catacombs and their inscriptions, St. Augustine's mother's funeral, conciliar directives of the 5th century, etc. "But," says the American, getting restless, "my question was, where do you find it in the Bible? Do you carry a Bible?" "No, I haven't one with me." "Well, listen to this. I John i, 'The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.' I don't want all these traditions, I want God's assurance of salvation." "It might interest you to know that it was the great Councils of the Early Church, under the Pope, that gave you the Bible. The Church gave you the Bible, Sir." "And what led them to choose rightly? Wasn't it the Holy Spirit of God?"

Accused by several listeners of discourtesy, the American turned away, followed by several heated disputants. Who was he to set himself up to interpret the Bible? Did he think, for instance, that he could pick up a complicated book of medical science and explain it all without the help of a doctor? "I couldn't, brother, but God has promised us that His Spirit will lead us into all truth." Waving his New Testament, the American went on to testify to his absolute certainty of salvation in Christ—"Christ in me, brothers and sisters, the hope of glory. For what shall it profit a man to gain the whole world" (his voice cracked here, and the people that had gathered round him, about 50 by now, tittered: but he swept on undeterred), "and lose his own soul". He ended with an appeal to anyone who wanted to accept Christ as His Saviour to put up a hand, and kneel in prayer with him. A huge African came forward, hand up. A few moments before he had been heckling. "No, brother, you're not sincere. I can tell that by your face." The African knelt on the ground. "Will this convince you?" he challenged. There was silence and tension. Did the American's gospel include black people? He raised the man to his feet and said, gently: "Brother, you really seek the Lord and you'll find Him. That's His promise. Don't blaspheme. If you knew how I long to get down beside you and share your joy in salvation." ("Starvation, you mean," sneered someone, but no one

laughed.) The African slunk away, a little shame-faced. Even his parting shot—"Jesus can give me salvation, but can He give me £30,000?" fell flat. The American pushed through the group, which dispersed, drifting off in various directions, weaving among the shadows, the strolling policeman, the poor patrolling prostitutes of Bayswater Road. "Oh, boy," he said, mopping his brow, "I sure didn't expect that. But how can you keep quiet with such a message bursting inside you?" He waved his hand in a last greeting. "You stay with the Bible, you'll be all right!"

Listening to the other speakers, it is astonishing how often you hear Christ mentioned. A young man's stumbling testimony is discreetly curtained off by the swift jingle of Salvation Army tambourines. An impassioned I.R.A. orator appeals to the Christian upbringing of his hearers. A speaker for the London Anarchist Group insists that Christ had something when He said that only in the spiritual centre of his being could man know freedom—governments couldn't organize it. The gap-toothed man from the Association of Rationalists and Atheists (or some such title) is quoting from the Bible too. "Jesus said: 'if thine eye offends thee, pluck it out, it is better, etc.'". He looks round triumphantly. "If that's the case, there'd be a lot of one-eyed parsons, that's all I can say." Much laughter. He pauses. "And there's a lot of people in this audience would be stone blind!" He goes on. "Jesus said that a man looking lustfully on a woman had already committed adultery with her in his heart. That's like saying that if you look at a leg of lamb in a butcher's window and wish you could buy it, you've already eaten it!" His audience laughs comfortedly. Some individualist who has beguiled a few ears a few yards away is saying: "I feel the same way as Jesus—'those who are not with me are against me'. In my case that means just about everyone. I'm agin everyone."

You walk away. The babble of voices under the purplish neon haze fades. But the impression remains that there is more genuine puzzled seeking in progress, more crazy mixed-up spiritual vitality, at that amazing corner than you would get, somehow, in a century of Conferences, World Councils, Convocations. It must have been just such a scene that tore at Paul's heart in Athens and called forth his loving ingenuity: just as it tore at the American's heart and forced him to give witness.

One of the finest examples of imaginatively redemptive work in our century has been the work of Alcoholics Anonymous. In his fascinating article, the Rev. J. B. Harrison talks of the background and implications of this work, which has especially engaged the attention of Roman Catholic theologians. Billy Graham has said that "A.A." (as it is known for short), which refuses to commit itself to any one religion, has done a wonderful job which the Christian Church should have been geared to do. The example of "A.A." has done much to develop the theory and practice of psychiatric group therapy—probably the most hopeful single technique for treating mental illness.

One field in which conservative evangelicals badly need to do some extensive re-thinking is the wide, vague one of Worldliness. Moral theology run riot can become ludicrous. But the lack of any constant, detailed guidance about topical application of first Biblical principles leaves a vacuum which is easily filled by cranks, rigorists or latitudinarians. Mr. Cranston's paper, to be read at the Southport Evangelical Conference (whose two themes this year are Worldliness and Christian Giving), will, we think, be a real help in thinking through some of the problems involved.

We are asked by the Evangelical Alliance to extend an invitation to an evening service to be held at 6.15 p.m. on Monday, October 6th, at St. Peter's Church, Vere Street, London, W. 1 (just behind D. H. Evans, off Oxford Street). The service is open to the public, but is primarily intended for those who are in any way employed in the production or distribution of Christian literature: whether in writing, administration, editorial work, publishing, printing, packing, or selling. It is perhaps especially easy for those who work in isolation, or who are concerned with a never-ending administrative routine, to grow forgetful of the spiritual ministry that we serve. We hope that by joining together to praise and worship God, and to offer ourselves and our work anew to Him, we may remind ourselves of our dependence upon Him, and of our high calling in the work of the Gospel.

The service will be conducted by the Rector, the Rev. J. R. W. Stott, Chairman of the Literature Committee of the Evangelical Alliance, and the Rev. A. Morgan Derham, Editorial Secretary of the Children's Special Service Mission; Mr. B. Howard Mudditt of the Paternoster Press (Chairman of the Religious Group of the Publishers' Association) will read one of the lessons.
