



The Good Shepherd: Meditations on Christian Ministry in Today's World

1977

J.E. Lesslie Newbigin

(Oxford: Mowbray, 1977)

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Preface

The talks reprinted here were originally given to clergy of the Church of South India working in the city of Madras. It was our custom to meet for about four hours each month for worship, fellowship and discussion about our work. We always began with the celebration of Holy Communion, at which I preached on some aspect of the ministry. After breakfast we had a period for discussion of the issues raised. What follows is a selection of these addresses, given in the context of the Liturgy and in the fellowship of a shared ministry to the city of Madras. The last address was given to the Synod of the Church of South India in 1972.

Madras is a city of some three million people, adding 100,000 to its population each year. About half of this annual addition is made by immigrants from the hinterland of the city – often young people who have managed to struggle through an elementary education in their village and have come into the city in search of work. For very many of these the first ‘home’ is simply a sleeping place on the pavement. After a time, in company with others from the same village or area, they will perhaps manage to find a vacant site where a cluster of bamboo and thatch huts can be erected on some dark night when the police are looking the other way. They thus become part of the great company of slum dwellers, living in crowded clumps of unventilated huts, without water, light or sanitation-but with an unbeaten determination to come up in the world. The fortunate ones, where one or both of the members of the family can secure and hold a job in a factory, may eventually graduate to a small three-room house in one of the new residential estates. And they can dream that children or grandchildren will eventually qualify for one of the stylish bungalows which are to be seen, surrounded by their well watered gardens, but seldom more than a stone’s throw from one of the slums.

The small town which grew up in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries around the East India Company’s Fort is now a great centre of both heavy and light industry. North, west and south of the city, stretching to a radius of 25 miles, there is a great belt of factories which together produce a substantial part of India’s total industrial output including

railway rolling stock, weapons, heavy and light vehicles, cloth, tyres, electrical goods and much else besides. Industry forms a very large part of the life of the city and has to have a large place in the thinking of the Church.

The group to which these talks were given consisted of about fifty-six ordained men who – in the usage of the Church of South India-are called Presbyters, together with a number of women engaged in full-time church work. The men concerned are in pastoral charge of about 110 congregations, of which about thirty have come into existence since the union of the churches in 1947. Some of these congregations worship in the stately buildings bequeathed by the British Raj – including St George’s Cathedral and St Andrew’s Kirk, two of the most beautiful churches in India. About fifteen of them worship in English, most of the rest in Tamil. They come from a variety of backgrounds – Anglican, Reformed and Methodist. Some of the former Anglican churches adhere to the 1662 Prayer Book with a devotion which puts it almost among the fundamental objects of faith. The majority use the forms of service developed in the Church of South India. The Church includes in its membership a very wide range of human situations, from the dwellers in the slums and on the pavements to the men and women who hold positions of highest leadership in government, business and the professions.

Like the Church everywhere, the congregations in Madras are tempted to turn their backs upon the world around them and to concentrate on their own concerns. Yet it can be said with thankfulness that there is a real measure of concern for and involvement in the problems of the city as a whole. Some – though by no means all – of the congregations have active programmes of direct evangelism. Some of them have responded to the call to enter into the problems of the slums, both with emergency help at times of disaster from flood or fire (very common occurrences) and with long-term programmes such as the provision of modern sanitation units for more than a dozen of the slums. The Church has also been able to co-operate with the Slum Clearance Board of the Tamilnadu Government in programmes for community development in the new housing units built to replace the hovels in which people had been living. Under the name of ‘Christian Service to Industrial Society’ there is a programme aimed at helping Christians in industry – both on the management and on the

workers’ sides – to understand and fulfil their calling as Christians in the changing conditions of modern industry, and to awaken the Church as a whole to a biblical understanding of industry and its problems. A Community Service Centre, operating on behalf of a number of churches, provides both training for service to society and an opportunity for men and women in many sectors of public life to equip themselves for Christian witness and service in the common life.

In all of this work the effort has been made to involve the ordinary congregations as fully as possible in what is being done, so that these programmes may not be detached from the life of the congregation but may be seen to be part of that total life which has its source in the Gospel and in the regular ministry of work and sacrament. There are therefore many references to these programmes in the addresses which follow.

I have been greatly honoured by the suggestion that these talks might be useful to others than those for whom they were originally prepared, and especially by the great kindness of the Archbishop of Canterbury in selecting this as his Lent book for 1977. In revising the addresses for publication in this country, I have removed references which would be meaningless in this context, but otherwise I have allowed them to stand as originally given, with only a few explanatory footnotes where necessary. To have tried to ‘translate’ them into the different idiom of our own church situation in England at this time would have been an exercise of doubtful value, and would have required a more sensitive knowledge of the issues than I possess. It seems to me that it will be more useful for readers in this country to overhear remarks made in another context, and to do their own ‘translating’. If these addresses have any value, it is that they are spoken to a very particular and concrete situation with no attempt to generalise, and no pretence to universal relevance. I confess that I had thought of omitting some of the material altogether as being too local in its reference, but a greatly trusted friend in the parish ministry in England, whose advice I sought, urged me not to do so, on the ground that – even though spoken in another context – the words are relevant to the British situation.

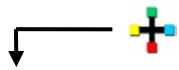
Perhaps one point should be made, to aid the process of ‘translation’. In spite of the rapid process of secularisation, which goes on in India as elsewhere, India is still a religious

society in a sense in which Britain is not. The difference at this point is very deep. Language which is perfectly natural in such a society can sound unduly pious in the cold secularity of the Britain of the 1970s. I state this as a fact, without making judgments about it. But climatic changes are not irreversible, and we still live on one planet.

This revised edition was prepared for the press by Miss Verleigh Cant, and the proofs read by Miss Gladys Mather. To both these friends I express my warm thanks.

These short talks were prepared in the midst of the normal pressures of duty, usually late on the night before the occasion. They have no claim to profundity or originality. I hope that they may help some readers to think about the many-sided ministry of the Church in today's world, a ministry which has – however – one centre. That centre is at the point where we are made sharers in the Body broken and the Blood shed for the life of the world. These addresses were given in the context of the celebration of the Eucharist. I believe that that is the proper setting for Christian teaching, and I hope that this setting may help to ensure that these talks, which deal with many different aspects of the ministry, direct attention to the one centre.

Lesslie Newbigin



1 The Good Shepherd

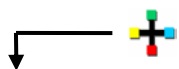
"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber; but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens; the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

John 10:1-5

The figure of the Good Shepherd – so much loved and so often misunderstood-has a central place in all thinking about the Christian ministry. Two things lead me to take it as the focus of our thought today: one is the fact that I have been reading afresh about C. F. Andrews, whose life has reminded people in our day of the Good Shepherd himself; the other is the fact that I am more and more conscious of a difference of opinion among us about our pastorate ministry, a difference which we need to bring out into the open for frank discussion.

Let me put the difference sharply as follows. There are those who emphasise regular visiting of the members of the congregation in their homes, and see this as the very centre of a pastor's work. There are those who emphasise programmes of teaching and action directed to the increasing involvement of church members in the business of doing the will of God in the life of the secular world.

It is easy to caricature both convictions. One can talk contemptuously about pastors who spend their whole time coddling well-to-do people in their imaginary troubles, instead of getting them out of their comfortable homes into the places where there is work to be done. And one can certainly speak of lay members who think that this is what they pay the pastor



for. One can also speak contemptuously about pastors who spend their whole time in committee meetings and seminars and conferences, who run all over India attending meetings which merely produce statements, instead of giving themselves in costly love and care for the people entrusted to them.

It is easy to caricature. It is easy to be self-righteous and critical of one another. Can we be humble enough to listen together to the words of Jesus in this famous passage?

I

Let us begin by acknowledging that the figure of the Good Shepherd has been sentimentalised in the course of church history. One thinks of the stained-glass windows and the pictures in which Jesus is portrayed as a womanish figure apparently fondling a pet lamb. We can correct this by

reading again the texts in Ezekiel which probably formed the background for Jesus' parable. The figure of the Shepherd there is more like a warrior. The ideal shepherd is the warrior king David, doing justice, punishing the wicked, leading God's people in warfare and in peace. The good shepherd is a king – but even that word 'king' has little meaning in our world.

Perhaps we come nearer to the meaning in contemporary terms if we take the word 'leader' as our clue. Put that word into the context of our contemporary concerns: Who is capable of being a leader for this nation of nearly 600 million people? Who has the courage, the endurance and the vision, but also the sense of justice, the feeling for the ordinary man and his needs, the care for the poorest and weakest? By asking such questions as these in our own present national context, we shall come nearer to understanding what the figure of the Good Shepherd would mean to a Jew of the first century.

The Good Shepherd 'calls his own sheep by name and leads them out'. They follow him 'because they know his voice'. A true Christian pastor will be one who can dare to say to his people: 'Follow me, as I am following Jesus'. That is a terrible test for any pastor. A true pastor must have such a relation with Jesus and with his people that he follows Jesus and they follow him.



II

Our text says two things about the relation between the leader and those who follow: he calls them by name; they know his voice.

1. He calls them by name. You and I know what that means. No text in Scripture gives me a deeper sense of shame about my own ministry than this: He calls his own sheep by name. I forget people's names, and I know what this forgetfulness really means. It means that in my deepest heart I am more interested in the programmes I am trying to get people involved in than in the people themselves. When you call a person by name, that means that you care something for that person as a person. And nothing less than this is a true reflection of the way God looks at people.

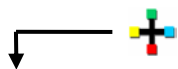
There is something very basic here. At the heart of a true pastoral ministry there is the knowledge that every human being is unique and uniquely precious. If, however, we are thinking of the human beings with whom we are in touch mainly as supporters, or as subscribers, or as workers, or as recruits or as opponents or as rivals, then our relation is not yet a pastoral one.

Let me put it from the other end. Each one of us knows that he is something more than the parts he plays and the jobs he does. When I am alone at my prayers in the morning I know that there is a person whom I know as myself, and that this person has a life to live, a journey to make, and eventually a death to die which is more fundamental than all the roles I may fill or the jobs I may do. And I know that a true pastor is one who can see past the jobs I do (or fail to do) and the roles I play to the person who is myself. A true pastor touches me at that point in the very centre.

All of this is meant when it is said that the Good Shepherd calls his sheep by name.

2. It is also said that the sheep know his voice. I think we know what that means. Those for whom Jesus Christ has become a living reality know and respond to his voice when they hear it on the lips of one of his servants. There is a recognition, *a rapport*.

I remember a discussion, in a pastoralia class, between John Oman and a student. The students wanted to know Oman's opinion about handling controversial political topics



in the pulpit. I do not remember the words used, but the substance of Oman's reply was this: If your people have learned to trust you as a pastor, you can handle the most controversial political issues in the pulpit without fear. If they recognise the voice as that of the Good Shepherd, they will follow.

Our colleagues in the Industrial Team have been telling us that we have to say to the workers in our congregations something like this: Following Jesus means taking up the Cross, and for you that means getting into a Trade Union and taking up the fight for justice. I think that this advice will be followed just in proportion as those who hear it have learned to recognise in those who give it the voice of the Good Shepherd. If they recognise and obey that voice, they will really be following Jesus when they go and join a Trade Union.

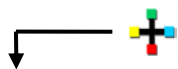
III

I want to plead that, beyond the criticisms that we make of each other, we listen to the words of Jesus himself.

1. There is no true pastoral work which merely comforts and consoles people, which is merely concerned with their happiness in this world and the next. The Good Shepherd expects his sheep to follow him. That means infinitely costly action. It means taking the road that Jesus took, the road that is marked by the Cross because it means bearing the *karma** of the world. Merely to comfort people and make them happy is not true pastoral work – even if it puts up the church attendance and boosts the monthly subscriptions.

2. There is no true pastoral work which merely involves people in programmes and does not deal with them as people, as each a uniquely precious person for whom Christ's blood was shed. Even the most splendid programme of social action which earned the unanimous applause of the best ecumenical experts would be of no value if they had bypassed the real human persons involved. What matters is not just that programmes should succeed, but that people should grow in holiness, wisdom and love.

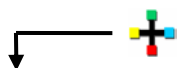
* The word *karma*, which literally means 'action', expresses one of the most fundamental convictions of Hindu thought, namely that a man's actions form a sort of indestructible reality the consequences of which a man must enjoy or endure through an indefinitely pro-longed succession of lives.



IV

I said at the beginning that I had been partly moved to take this subject by reading about C. F. Andrews. I would like to end with him. I wish that we could learn to sit at his feet more often. He combined in his own life's work astounding achievements in the field of social justice with a deep and passionate care that everyone whom he touched should come to a personal experience of Jesus Christ. He combined a brilliant intellect which made him more than a match for the astute politicians and businessmen with whom he had to deal, and a childlike simplicity which simply overflowed with the love of God for every human being. His last book – published after his death – was called *The Good Shepherd*. At the time of his death he was planning a book on 'The Life of Jesus'. He did not live to write it. As Marjorie Sykes says: 'The Life of Christ was not written; it was lived'.

That is the secret of the true pastor – that the life of the Good Shepherd is being lived in him.



2

Our Ministry In A World Of Change

Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth

on an old garment; if he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins: but new wine is for fresh skins."

Mark 2:18-22

It is obvious that Jesus shocked religious people by the way he behaved. This passage is an example of it. He did not behave in the way that religious people were expected to behave. He acted in a way which from their point of view was quite worldly. He was ready to break the most fundamental of the commandments, the law of the Sabbath, if it interfered with the works of love and compassion. He did not carry out the usual ceremonies before eating. And-as we see here-he omitted one of the three duties which were considered fundamental to the religious life-prayer, alms-giving and fasting.

When he was challenged he answered with a couple of very homely and very radical pictures. If you try to patch old clothes with bits of new cloth, you will just make the old worse. And if you try to put new wine into dry old skins, you will burst the skins and lose both the old skins and the new wine. Both of them say the same thing in a very blunt and



earthy way: you can't renew things by patching. You have to accept the fact that the old is old, and you have to be ready for what is radically new.

It is not surprising that the message about Jesus – his words and his deeds – has acted throughout history as a source of radical criticism of the old order. There is a revolutionary element in the Gospel story which cannot be escaped if you face it honestly.

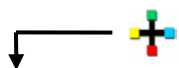
But we also know that religion is generally a conservative force in society. Almost by definition, religion is what binds society to the past, to the given traditions and the established ways. This has been true of Christianity in history too. At many times and places the Church has seemed to stand simply for that which is about fifty years out of date. Some of our Madras city churches appear to stand for exactly that. They represent simply a timid clinging to the past. Any proposal for change arouses a violent fear and anger which are plainly pathological in character.

It is obvious that this kind of clinging to the past is something totally different from the religion of Jesus. Anyone who behaved in the way that Jesus is reported to have behaved in this text would be quickly excommunicated from most of our churches. We surely ought to be much more seriously concerned than we usually are by the colossal difference between the pattern that Jesus set, and the way our church life is normally conducted.

This problem has a special intensity in our time. It is well-known that the gap between the older and younger generations has been growing wider and wider, and that in some parts of the world it has reached the point where there is almost no communication between the generations.

The reasons for this are probably not simple, but one can immediately point to two powerful factors:

1. The first is that the growth of knowledge, and of the technical skills in which the new knowledge is expressed, is constantly accelerating. More scientific advance has been made in the past ten years than in the previous fifty, and the movement goes on accelerating. This means that the younger generation in most parts of the world knows far more than its parents, has acquired skills which its parents never knew, and is at home in a world of technical development in which the previous generation are still strangers. To my generation



a man walking on the moon is still a matter of astonishment. To my son's generation it is a predictable and – on the whole – rather stupid technical exercise which ought to have been omitted. People under thirty are learning in tens of thousands to write the programmes for

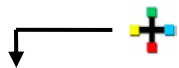
computers and thus to operate on an intellectual level which is completely beyond any experience that I have ever had. My son knows a great deal that I do not know, and he knows that he knows it.

2. The second factor is the enormous growth of population. The effect of this is that the old are a smaller and smaller minority. In Uganda more than half of the population is under 151 years of age. In India I suppose more than half is under 19. The people over 50 are a tiny minority. If they try to rule the rest, the usual problems of minority government arise. A minority cannot rule for ever.

In a world in which these two factors are operating with increasing momentum, a church which is essentially a church of the elders, basing itself on the past, is already a dying church. There is already a smell of death about some of our Madras churches. This is why the question of the place of youth in the Church is of such vital – literally vital – importance. It is not just a question of giving a few places to young people; it is a question whether the church is really a young church living in the world as it is, and flexible enough to be the authentic representative of Jesus who said that you cannot put new wine into old wine-skins.

But the real secret of this matter lies deeper. It lies in the nature of the Gospel itself. It is not just a question of keeping a good balance between old and young. It is not even just a question of having a fellowship to which both old and young can contribute their distinctive gifts-though this is truly of vital importance.

The conservative instinct in religious people has a foundation in truth. It *does* matter that we should be faithful to what has been given to us. It does matter that we should be able to take our bearings and hold fast in our course, not driven about like drift-wood with every current and wind. A church which is merely trying to keep up-to-date is much more pathetic and ridiculous than a church which is merely clinging to the past. Not every new fashion whether in theology or in ethics or in worship is the work of the Holy Spirit. God is at work in the world, but the devil is at work there also.



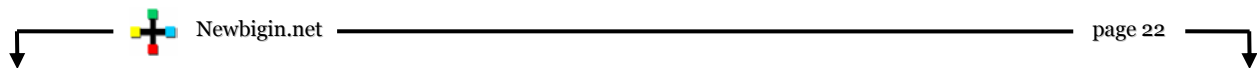
The kind of churchman who is merely trying to prove that he is up-to-date is to be pitied.

But the point is this: What is it that has been given to us? What is the revelation by which we are to guide our lives? The answer can only be this: It is Jesus, incarnate, crucified and risen. And to follow Jesus means to accept death and resurrection as the only law of life. It means to accept the fact that every good thing is given to us by God in order to be surrendered for the sake of something better, until finally life itself is surrendered for the sake of eternal life. It means therefore that we can never, never cling to the past-however precious it may be. It means that we are always ready to face the loss of old securities, the obliteration of old landmarks, the shaking of old certainties-knowing that, if we hold fast to Jesus, we shall be led on to better securities, deeper certainties, richer experiences of God's grace.

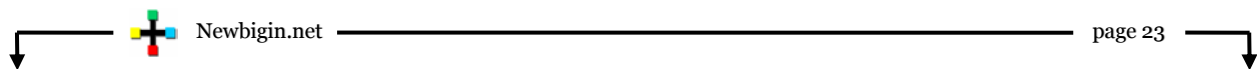
The words of Paul which we read for our second lesson (Phil. 3:2-16). are proof that this is not just a matter of which generation you belong to. Here is not a young man talking but Paul the elder, the apostle, who has behind him a lifetime of service to the Lord, and who knows that death is near. But here is no clinging to the past – rather an eager assurance that God has new and greater things still to give. Even the most precious elements of his old religious tradition he is prepared to treat as trash, in order that he may gain Christ, sharing in his death in order that his risen life may be his; not looking back but reaching forward towards the prize that still lies ahead-the goal of all that Christ has begun to do.

There is a right kind of conservatism in the Church, but it consists in this: to keep absolutely firm in allegiance to Jesus who is himself the great revolutionary; to keep absolutely central in our thinking the Cross which is the final 'No' to every human order that claims to be perfect and self-sufficient; and by so keeping close to the Cross, to receive constantly afresh the power of his risen life which is always power for radical renewal.

The old wine-skins have to be thrown away – old forms, old methods, old words – even though they were precious and adequate in their day. God has new wine to pour into our lives in each new generation. Finally these old wine-skins



which we call our mortal bodies have to be thrown away so that God may make us vessels fit to receive the new wine of heaven. Those who know this will know that the Church needs its youth as the very condition of its life.



3 Preaching Christ

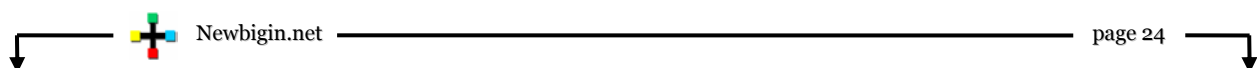
You have the words of eternal life.

John 6:68

This word of Peter is the testimony of the true believer. It is an echo of the word spoken by Jesus a few moments earlier: The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. Both sayings are in the context of a conversation about the flesh of Jesus as the true bread for the life of the world. The hearers have taken this teaching in a materialistic sense and ask: How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Jesus replies that the flesh itself is of no use. Flesh is just flesh, but if it is quickened by the Spirit, then it gives life. Words are just words, but if they are quickened by the Spirit they give life. The words of Jesus are words that give life.

Behind this statement is the fundamental affirmation of the Gospel that Jesus is the word of God made flesh. The word of God is the power by which all things were made and are sustained. God speaks – and it is done. Jesus himself, in his manhood, is the complete self-expression of God. He is the word of God. Therefore his words are the words of God, and they have the life-giving power of God himself. This is the testimony of those who believe.

This life-giving word of God is the power by which the Church lives. The Church is created and constantly renewed by the word of God. The word is given to us in two forms – the word spoken in the reading and exposition of Scripture, and the word acted in the sacraments. The same word is active in these two different modes. In both it is active through the Spirit. Without the quickening of the Spirit, bread and wine are just bread and wine, and words are just words. But the words of Jesus, which are spirit and life, are the source of continually renewed life in the Church. The Church does not live by its organisations and its programmes: it lives by the word of God given to it as the word spoken and the word acted.



I want to reflect with you today about our function as ministers of the word of God, about our work as preachers. Nothing is more fundamental to our ministry than this. Yet we have to recognise that there is a general and understandable scepticism about the value of preaching. People are tired of words-words which are just words without reality behind them. The air is filled continually with meaningless words. How can we ensure that our preaching does not merely add to this babel of meaningless sound?

I

We have to preach Christ. That is really our only business in the pulpit.

The reason why preaching has a central place in the life of the Christian Church is that the word of God to men is Jesus Christ, and he has to be put before men. He has to be put before men

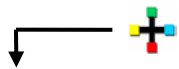
again and again in his flesh, in the concrete reality of his manhood-his life, his words, his deeds, above all his death and resurrection. That is our business as preachers. From whatever part of the Bible we take our text, the business of the sermon is to bring the hearers face to face with Jesus Christ as he really is.

II

We have to preach Christ as Saviour and as Lord, both as the one who helps and delivers and comforts us, and as the one who has the right to absolute rule over our lives.

Why do I say this? because in fact we tend to get two different kinds of preaching, each of which gives us only half of the truth.

1. There is the typically evangelical type of preaching which lays the whole emphasis on Jesus as Saviour. The refrain throughout is 'for me'. He died for me. I am safe. I am all right. I go out of church comforted, but with no burning zeal to tackle the crying evils of the world around me. I may even be tempted to scoff at the efforts of those who are moved by this zeal, advising them to stop bothering about 'social service' and get down to the real business of evangelism. I am reminded of what a friend said to me once-that as a little girl she had been converted every Sunday, but no one told her after that what she should do about it.

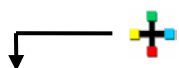


2. There is the kind of preaching which simply sends people out of church with a bad conscience. Sometimes, I fear, our preaching is mere scolding, and mere scolding does not even produce a bad conscience. It merely induces a strong desire to find an opportunity to tell the preacher where he falls short. No, I am referring to preaching which really does bring a sense of sin, but which does not bring any release from the power of sin. There is a kind of preaching which loads onto men's consciences a suffocating sense of the sin of the world, and sends them out burdened beyond endurance with the sense of all the things that they ought to be doing and are not doing. A vast amount of preaching is not preaching Christ but simply preaching law.

When I was a very young bishop I spent an evening with the great Bishop Sandegren of Tranquebar. Among a hundred other questions, I asked him this: If you are in serious doubt about whether a man should or should not be ordained to the ministry, how do you resolve the doubt? Without a moment's hesitation he replied: I go and hear him preaching, and listen to see whether he is rightly relating Law and Gospel in his sermon. At the time I thought it was a strange answer; I see more and more the truth in it. We are called to preach Christ, and preaching Christ means preaching him both as Saviour and as Lord. It means that people go out from the church not merely comforted with the assurance that they are saved, and not merely crushed by the unbearable knowledge that they are sinners, but rather re-enlisted in Christ's army as fighters for the rule of God in this world. This means that they are liberated from care about their own salvation in order to be totally at his service for the world's salvation. Although I prefer to put it in this way, rather than in the traditional terms of Law and Gospel, I would nevertheless commend to you the point that Bishop Sandegren was making. When I have finished writing the outline for a sermon, before I begin to write it out in full, I always find it helpful to look over the outline with this single question in mind: Does this sermon rightly relate Law and Gospel? Does it preach Christ both as Saviour and as Lord?

III

We have to preach Christ as he is set forth to us in the



Scriptures. We are not in the pulpit to give a lecture: we are there to expound a passage of Scripture. I like the practice of carrying the Bible very solemnly into the church at the opening of

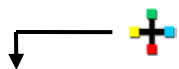
the service. Among other things, it is a reminder both to the preacher and to the congregation that the preacher is there as a servant of the Word, not as its master. I often comfort myself in the pulpit with the thought that even if I could not find a word to say, I could simply open the Bible and read a passage. And I always hope that, as the result of my sermon, at least one verse of Scripture, or one parable or incident, will remain vivid and glowing in the minds of my hearers throughout the coming week.

This means that the beginning of your sermon preparation is the choice of a text. I know that very often you do not have to choose a text: the text chooses you. Some word of Scripture catches hold of you so that you cannot shake it off, and that is the text you have to preach on next Sunday. More often, however, you will have to spend time choosing the text. You will choose it with the hope that it will become a living and glowing lamp in the minds of people through all the days of the following week.

Very often our theme, if not the actual text, is chosen for us by the Church in the plan of lessons set forth in the Book of Common Worship. I was brought up in a church which did not use such a plan. I have come to value it very highly. It is a safeguard against becoming a prisoner to my own limited ideas and emotions. It compels me over and over again to preach on a passage which I would not have chosen for myself, and therefore compels me to wrestle with what is new and unfamiliar to me. I would say that this wrestling with an uncongenial text can be the source of endless new insight. I am sure that the most helpful sermons I have preached have been those which came out of this kind of wrestling, not from texts which I could easily choose for myself.

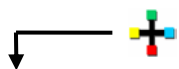
IV

True preaching of Christ springs out of action and leads into action. The word which we preach was made flesh, became part of history. If you and your congregation are really involved together in tackling the trouble and pain and sin in the world around you, in the slums around your church,



in the lives of your members; if you are standing beside your members in their battles with the world and in their trials and problems, then the words you speak in the pulpit will not be empty words. They will be a part of the obedience of you and your congregation to the living Lord. And they will lead your people into further action. You have to write the sermon yourself, but in a real sense your congregation should be with you as you write. And while you are writing it, you should be asking yourself insistently this simple question: What do I expect them to do as the result of this sermon? There may not always be a simple and clear answer; but if the question is not being asked, the sermon is likely to miss the mark.

Jesus said: The words that I speak to you are spirit and are life. These words are, the vehicles of the life-giving power of God. True preaching has, by his grace, the same promise given to it. The Holy Spirit can take even our words and make them the vehicles of God's eternal life.



4

Leading The Church's Worship

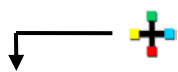
Truly God is good to the upright, to those who are pure in heart.
But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had well nigh slipped.
For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart,
I was stupid and ignorant, I was like a beast toward thee.

Nevertheless I am continually with thee; thou dost hold my right hand.
Thou dost guide me with thy counsel, and afterward thou wilt receive me to glory.
Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is nothing upon earth that I desire besides thee.
My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.

Psalm 73:1-3, 21-36

As ordained ministers of the word and sacraments of the Gospel, we are called upon to lead the worship of Christ's people. It is our highest and most sacred privilege. And yet I fear that it sometimes becomes a matter of dull routine. Some of us received careful training in worship in our theological college or seminary. Some of us received very little. All of us are tempted to slip into a mechanical routine, repeating without real thought either the words in a book or the stereotyped phrases that are expected of us in 'extempore prayer'. I am ashamed to say this, but I must say that much of the worship in our churches is carried on in a way which can only be called slovenly. By our worship we dishonour God.



We are made for God. To worship God with heart and soul and mind and strength is the highest exercise of all our powers. Heaven is the perpetual worship of God, a perpetual enjoyment of the bliss of beholding what we now only know in glimpses and foretastes. The corporate worship of the Church should enlist all the very highest powers of which our minds and spirits are capable. It should be a true foretaste of heaven and a preparation for its joys. And yet in fact how much of what happens in our churches every Sunday morning is dull, flat and joyless. We have deep reason to be ashamed.

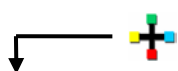
I

Christian worship is the corporate response of all Christ's people to what God has done for the world through Jesus Christ. It is our response to what is utterly holy. Worship is what is due to God alone and cannot be given to anything less than God. The Bible makes very sharp distinction here which the religions of the world have not always made, and which Hinduism does not make. It is an absolute distinction between what is due to God and what is due to anything or anyone else. There are many kinds of response which we can and should make to what is good. We may admire a thing of beauty. We may honour a great teacher. We may respect and obey the authorities set over us. We may love a friend, wife, husband, child. But all of these are less than, other than, the absolute offering of love, praise and obedience which are due to God alone who is our Creator and Redeemer.

Because the Bible makes this sharp distinction, it severely attacks any kind of idolatry which blurs this distinction. We may admire, respect, love and obey many people and things. But if we give *worship* to anything or any person other than God our creator, we are dehumanised and eventually enslaved. That is the teaching of the Bible. The biblical attack on idolatry is the negative side of the biblical understanding of worship. In true worship we are gathering together the very highest and best that we have to offer, our all, in total dedication to our Maker. And this is the very goal of our being as human beings.

II

Christian worship is the act of the whole Church. It is the



corporate action of a single body. Every member is involved and has to play his part. Alas! we suffer from the effects of the long period which we call the Middle Ages, when worship was

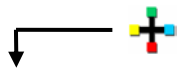
understood to be essentially the work of the professional priesthood, and the congregations were spectators. Gothic church architecture expresses this idea. The real worship goes on in the choir, led by a priest who turns his back on the congregation. The people remain outside in the nave, devout spectators but not participants. But the same kind of sacerdotalism is to be seen in the churches of Protestant tradition where the congregation sits dumb throughout the proceedings and the minister even has to say the Amen for his own prayers. This cannot be called true Christian worship. Christian worship is the corporate act of the whole body, in which everybody right down to the last man standing at the back of the church has a part to play.

But it is not only the congregation present which is involved. True Christian worship is the act of the whole universal Church in earth and in heaven. In every true act of Christian worship, the whole Church is present. Our worship, therefore, must not reflect merely our own local and domestic interests. It must reflect the catholicity of the whole Church. Certainly there must be full opportunity for the local and immediate concerns to be expressed. But these must be seen within the context of the whole fellowship. Our worship should be recognisable as the worship of the universal Church, in which every Christian from any part of the world could meaningfully take part.

And indeed true Christian worship is an offering on behalf of the whole of mankind. The Church as a whole is called to be God's holy priesthood for all of the human family. It should never become a self-enclosed community shut off from the rest of mankind. This means, for example, that in our worship we should try to offer up to God all that is best in the art and music and thought of the world around us. All of it belongs to God, and all of it should be offered to God in our solemn acts of worship.

III

Christian worship is a testimony to the reality of the living God in the midst of a world which does not know him, and



it is a protection against false and unworthy ideas of him.

St Paul told the Corinthians that whenever they met to break the bread of the Eucharist together they were proclaiming the Lord's death. The action of the Eucharist is the most simple and profound form of testimony to what God has done for the world in Jesus Christ. But all Christian worship has an evangelistic dimension. Among those who are drawn into the fellowship of Jesus and come to us seeking baptism, there are very many who have been drawn simply by the reality and power of God acknowledged in the worship of the Church. In the world which lives by quite other standards and convictions, the convictions which are expressed in Christian worship stand out in the sharpest possible contrast and challenge men with the question of truth.

And for the same reason Christian worship is a protection for those who take part in it against the false standards and convictions of the world. To be drawn week after week into this act of adoration and self-giving to the living Lord who is revealed to us in Jesus Christ is itself the most powerful possible antiseptic against the infection of worldliness.

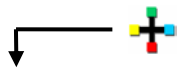
The writer of the 73rd Psalm was overwhelmed by the colossal pressures of the world and its false standards. He could see nothing but the success of evil and the failure of goodness. He felt that his foothold was slipping and he was on the point of falling into the pit of cynicism and despair. It was when he went into the sanctuary of God that he saw things as they really are. The delusions of worldliness vanished like a dream. He knew reality again.

Whom have I in heaven but thee?

And there is nothing on earth that I desire beside thee. My heart and my flesh may fail

But God is the strength of my life and my portion forever.

If we are truly leading our people in the worship of the living God, there will be men and women who can go out from the church every Sunday with that testimony on their lips and in their hearts.



5

The Structure Of Christian Worship

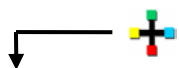
1 Cor. 14; Luke 24:13-35

In a questionnaire which was recently sent to a number of people who had left the CSI and joined Pentecostal or other groups, the question was asked: What were the factors which led you to leave the CSI? The great majority of those who answered gave the following two reasons: Because your pastor did not visit, and because your worship is so dull. Let us think today of our worship.

I have chosen two passages of Scripture which have something to say about the form of our worship. The story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus reflects the fundamental structure of Christian worship as it has been from the very beginning. It has two parts. In the first part the risen Lord Jesus opens the Scriptures to the disciples and interprets in them the things which bear witness to him. In the second part the same risen Lord sits down at table with the disciples and is known to them in the breaking of the bread.

This, from the very beginning, is the form of Christian worship. It is the gathering of Christ's people by the living Lord himself, in which he first interprets to them the Scriptures as a continuous revelation which finds its meaning and focus in him, and then – through the bread broken and the cup shared – draws them into an actual participation in his dying and his life. There are two parts – the ministry of the word and the breaking of the bread – but in both it is the risen Lord himself who meets with his people.

The passage from 1 Corinthians reflects some of the early struggles which took place in some of the churches about the form of Christian worship. The basic assumption, which Paul does not question, is that everyone has something to contribute to the worship of the whole congregation. Worship is the action of the whole, and each person has some gift of the Spirit to contribute – tongues, prophesy, songs of praise, prayers, interpretations, instructions. The one rule is that each



gift is to be exercised only for the good of the whole. The problem is to get order out of this profusion of gifts. Paul does not do this by trying to impose an order upon the Corinthians. He insists only on mutual respect and deference. Each is to be ready to give place to the other. No one is to monopolise the worship of the whole assembly.

From the early part of the second century we get another picture of Christian worship. Listen to this account written by Justin Martyr, trying to explain what Christian worship is to a non-Christian:

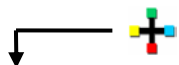
We salute one another with a kiss when we have ended the prayer. Then is brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of water and wine. And he takes them and offers up praise and glory to the Father of all things, through the name of his Son and of the Holy Ghost, and gives thanks at length that we are deemed worthy of these things at his hand. When he has completed the prayers and thanksgiving all the people present assent by saying Amen. Amen in the Hebrew tongue signifies 'So be it'. When the president has given thanks and all the people have assented, those who are called deacons with us give to those present a

portion of the Eucharistic bread and wine and water, and carry it away to those that are absent.

It is clear that worship is still understood as the action of the whole assembly, even though there is now a president who has an essential part to play.

We cannot trace in any detail the steps by which the role of the president was more and more emphasised until the time came when the congregation had become merely spectators. This was one of the main issues at the time of the Reformation. At the heart of the reformers' attack on the mediaeval practice of the Mass was the charge that it had been converted into a 'gazing-stock'. They sought deliberately to change things so that the whole congregation would be involved in the action of the Mass. There should be no non-communicating attendance. All those who were present should communicate. The Holy Table should be placed in the centre of the congregation and the elders should assist in distributing the sacred elements to the people.

The Reformers were only partly successful. People could



not be persuaded quickly to change the habits of centuries. Because they could not persuade the people to communicate every Sunday, the Reformers had to develop what was called at one stage the 'dry Mass' (*Missa sicca*). This was simply the ministry of the Word without the sacrament. For 1500 years Christendom had known only one kind of service for the Lord's Day, the complete act of worship which included word and sacrament as one whole. Now, because of the partial failure of the Reformation, Christians became accustomed to a kind of worship which was robbed of its central element—the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup. Instead of being spectators, the congregation became hearers. They went to church to listen to a clergyman offering prayers and preaching. In some places even the last vestiges of congregational participation were eliminated, and the preacher had to say Amen to his own prayers—the ultimate limit of morose sacerdotalism.

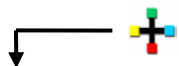
Obviously this is every bit as bad as the abuse against which the Reformation was directed. In Christian worship the congregation are not to be either spectators or hearers; they are to be active participants. It is not surprising that people leave us for assemblies where worship is really an action of the whole people.

As in so many other matters, so in this matter also we find today that the living Spirit of God is awakening the Roman Catholic Church to the realities which the Reformers saw, but to which their successors have been so blind. Listen to these words from the Second Vatican Council:

Pastors of souls must therefore realise that, when the liturgy is celebrated, more is required than the mere observance of the laws governing valid and licit celebration. It is their duty also to ensure that the faithful take part knowingly, actively, and fruitfully.

By way of promoting active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes. And at the proper times all should observe a reverent silence.

The rites should be distinguished by a noble simplicity; they should be short, clear, and unencumbered by useless repetitions; they should be within the people's powers of



comprehension, and normally should not require much explanation.

As you know, these ideas have not remained mere paper resolutions. The Roman Catholic Bishops in Tamil Nadu have declared that the renewal of worship is the fundamental condition of

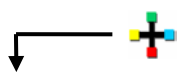
all other renewal in the Church, and they have set about implementing the findings of the Vatican Council with a vigour which puts us to shame. Whereas much of our worship remains dull and lifeless, tied down to dead traditions and reduced to a meaningless repetition of unintelligible formulae, our brethren in the Roman Catholic Church are deliberately and vigorously carrying out in practice the very things for which the Reformers struggled.

Brethren, what shall we do? Let me suggest to you four lines of action:

1. We must set ourselves deliberately to train our people in worship. This is very specially true if we are using printed forms of service. It should be one of our main tasks to teach our people thoroughly and systematically the meaning and relevance of every word we use in these forms of worship. The only justification for using printed forms is that they can enable the whole congregation to take an intelligent part in worship. They can only do that if they understand what they are saying. May I also dare to add that they can only do that if the minister appears to understand what he is saying. I am ashamed to say that I do from time to time hear presbyters rattling through the forms of prayer as if they were meaningless formulae, and as if the job of the minister was simply to get through them in the shortest time possible. Worship conducted in this way is little short of blasphemy.

This training should include training the whole congregation to participate audibly and intelligently in the parts which they are to say. We should not be content with a stony silence or a mumbled 'Amen'. If the congregation has come to praise the Lord, let them at least open their mouths!

2. We should take much more pains to train our people in the musical part of worship. Music has always had a very great place in Christian worship. There is no need for me to enlarge on that point. And the music should be the very best that we can offer. Most of the music in our Madras churches is utterly unworthy of the worship of God. We



really can do much better than this if we are serious about it. Let me make three detailed points here:

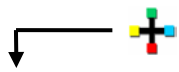
(a) Some of our people are apparently wedded to western music in life and in death. They believe that God can only be worshipped with music from Europe. I have no quarrel with western music; I love it very much. But if we are to have this imported music for our worship in India, let it be done properly. I am afraid that many of our organists are quite incapable of training a choir to sing western music properly, or even of playing a tune properly on the harmonium. If we cannot have good foreign music, would it not be better to give up the attempt, and do what we can do well?

(b) I must refer to one particular form of western music which urgently needs our attention. I refer to the attempt to sing psalms in Tamil to chants written for singing in English. These chants are designed to suit the rhythm of the English words. When the Tamil words are squeezed into them, the result is a mass of unintelligible gibberish. I do not understand why those who accept this do not see that they are doing something which is very near blasphemy. What other word can we use for an operation which converts the words of Holy Scripture into nonsense? This practice is an abiding disgrace to our Church.

(c) We have in the Tamil Church, by the grace of God, a marvellous treasure of devotional lyrics. There must be few churches in the world which have such a rich treasure. Why do we so shamefully despise it? Or why, when we do sing these lyrics, do we set them to cheap cinema tunes instead of to the original *ragas* for which they were composed. Why should we abandon this flowing spring of pure melody and substitute for it cheap drinks whose only merit is that they are coloured and that they fizz?

3. We should work ceaselessly for the full participation of the lay membership of the congregation in the act of worship. Our liturgy encourages us to do this in many ways. Lay men and women should take part in reading the scriptures, in the intercessory prayers, in preparing and

offering the bread and wine for Holy Communion, and should assist the presbyter in the administration of communion. I would especially refer to this last point. It is absurd that one man should be asked to distribute the communion in both kinds to 500 communicants. Our Church rightly requires that a person who presides



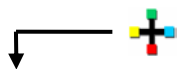
at the Lord's Supper must have received ordination and authority on behalf of the whole Church. No one but an ordained bishop or presbyter can preside at the Table. But lay members should be called to assist him in the administration. Such persons should be carefully chosen and should be those who are acceptable to the whole congregation. They should receive due authority for this ministry. I am happy that more and more churches in Madras are making use of the help of laymen in this way.

I would add, however, that we should insist on a high standard of devotion and of preparation in all these duties. No one, for instance, should read the Scriptures as part of divine worship unless he has thoroughly prepared himself to do so by a careful study of the passage.

4. We should take our Pastorate Committees and congregations fully into confidence in all these matters. They should understand what we are doing and should share intelligently in it all. Mere alteration of forms of worship accomplishes nothing unless it is part of a real inward renewal in the whole congregation.

Some years ago I had the privilege of sharing in the worship of one of the great churches in Moscow. It was an unforgettable experience. The Russian Church has lived for more than half a century under extreme pressure. One of the most powerful governments in the world has deliberately sought to destroy it. Every kind of outward activity in teaching, preaching or service has been forbidden. The one corporate activity which is left to the Church is its worship. Into that worship the faithful of Russia throw everything they have. Because of that worship the Russian Church is still a living reality, continuing to draw men and women to faith in God, even in the midst of an aggressively atheistic culture.

We are not in that situation. We are free to carry out a multitude of activities openly and unhindered. And yet the fact remains that the weekly gathering for worship is by far the most important thing we do. It is the place where the great majority of our people come most continuously under the power of the Gospel. It is the place where they can truly meet, week after week, with the risen Lord. What an amazing privilege to have a share in making this possible! And what a terrible betrayal if we do not give everything we have to help to make it possible.



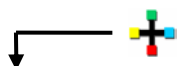
6 Pastoral Visiting

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

1 Peter 2:21-25

There is no point on which we are criticised more often or more severely than on this point of pastoral visiting. 'Our Pastor has not visited me for two years' is the kind of remark which is made with real bitterness, and – alas – all too often.

I know the things that can be said on the other side of this matter. There is the fact that visiting can become a merely mechanical routine. There is the fact that a lot of superstition still clings to the pastoral office, and that there are many of our people who think that the mere visit of an ordained priest-provided he is wearing a cassock – will bring blessing to the house. And there is the fact that some lay people who ought themselves to be much more active in the mission of the Church think that the pastor has nothing else to do but to coddle and comfort them, and that time spent otherwise is wasted. I know that the image of the Shepherd and the sheep, when it is used as the one and only image for the relation of pastor and people, can be seriously misleading. I do know these things. But I want to say, nevertheless, that regular visiting of the homes of our people is a vital and indispensable part of our ministry, and that the new insights regarding the nature and function of the ordained ministry cannot and must not lead to a neglect of this. Let me put the matter to you from two angles.



1. God cares for each person as a father cares for each of his children. It is true that God's purpose is the redemption and renewal of the whole creation, and that he calls upon every one of his children to play a part in this great mission. Nevertheless God's relation to his people is not simply concerned with their function in his saving purpose. God cares for each one as a person beloved and precious and unique, not simply as one who has a function to perform in God's plan.

Pastoral visiting represents that loving, caring relationship. The pastor visits every member of his congregation, however poor and insignificant, not because he is useful for the programme of the parish, or because he is influential or helpful, but simply because he is one of God's children to be loved and respected as he is.

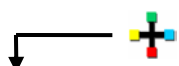
2. Put the matter from the other angle. One of the growing problems in our urbanised society is the problem of identity. In a rural society this hardly arises. Everyone knows who he is and everyone else knows who he is. He is bound up in a network of relationships and is constantly living in the society of people who know him and address him. In a great city, by contrast, people find themselves more and more anonymous parts of a huge machine. They work in a factory, perhaps with a number instead of a name. The people with whom they work come from the other side of Madras, and their parents came from the other end of Tamil Nadu, and they are really unknown. In highly developed industrial societies, such as that of the U.S.A., this problem of identity becomes acute, especially for young people. The president of Union Theological Seminary wrote somewhere that the questions asked by students coming to the Seminary over the past half-century were something like the following:

50 years ago: How can I train for the Christian Ministry?

25 years ago: What can I believe?

To-day: Who am I?

Madras has not yet reached this stage of 'development' but we are moving that way. People suffer from the feeling that they are nobody. Some of our quarrels arise from the fact that people try to prove that they are 'somebody' by aggressive behaviour. The truth, of course, is that each of us is 'somebody' only because God made us and loved us. *I am* because God loves me. Otherwise I do not exist. But I



cannot believe that God loves me unless there is someone who represents that love to me. In a healthy and happy home it is parents, husband, wife, brothers and sisters, who minister the love of God to one another. Those who have been nurtured in such a home do not find themselves tortured by the question 'Who am I?' But there are very many who have never had that kind of home. There are very many for whom the pastor will be the only representative God has to

minister his loving care. These may, incidentally, be the very ones with whom it is most difficult to establish a loving and trusting pastoral relationship.


I do not want to say more about the reason why pastoral visiting is important. I want only to share with you some practical suggestions.

(a) I think that the indispensable basis for good pastoral visiting is regular prayer by name for each member of your congregation. You cannot sustain a continuing, caring pastoral relationship with a great number of people unless you are regularly praying for them. Some of you have a very large number of people indeed in your congregations. I think it is quite necessary to keep a book which will help you to remember each person by name in your intercessions according to some regular plan.


(b) I do not believe that we can develop a really satisfactory system of pastoral care unless we develop smaller groups within our large congregations. It is only in this way that we can create a situation where every member feels that he is personally related to the others.

We have a good inheritance in the tradition of the 'Cottage Prayer Meeting'. In spite of its rather sentimental name, it does give us a foundation for something much richer and fuller than our present forms of congregational life. Their weakness is that at present they are too dependent upon the Presbyter. What is needed is that we should encourage and train lay members of the congregation to become leaders of these smaller units-leaders in Bible study, and leaders in thinking together about common Christian witness and service in the immediate neighbourhood. It is in this way that we can develop a sort of congregational life in which every member can know that he or she counts for something important in the total witness of the congregation.

Of the Good Shepherd it is written that he calls his sheep

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by name. That is a word which should never be far from our minds.

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7

Ministry of the Priest

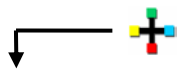
Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 4:14-16

In the traditions to which we are heir in CSI, the words Priest, Pastor and Minister have all been used to designate the office which we hold. We have chosen the ancient word Presbyter as the official designation of the office, but all the other words are still used in some quarters. What shall we say of the word Priest? For some it is a very precious word; some are afraid of it. Yet it stands for something very essential in our ministry. In what sense is our ministry to be described as a priesthood?

The name Priest is not applied to any office in the Church by any New Testament writer. The New Testament speaks of Christ as our High Priest, and of the priesthood which we all share as members in Christ. It does not speak of any office in the Church as a priesthood. But from an early day men began to speak of Christian ministers as priests, and this remains the practice of the greater part of Christendom today. The Reformation, in all except its Anglican manifestations, preferred to return to the New Testament practice and to speak only of the priesthood of Christ and of the priesthood of believers. To most of the Reformers, a human priesthood other than that of Christ appeared to be an illegitimate intrusion between the believer and his Lord, something

that stood between man and God. And that picture of priesthood has coloured much Protestant thinking on the subject.

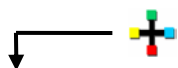


A priest is indeed someone who stands between man and God. Perhaps because he does so, he can become an obstacle impeding man's communion with God. But it need not be so. The priest may stand between man and God not as an obstacle but as a necessary helper. If we know our own selves at all, we know that there are times when we *need* someone to stand between us and God. There are times when God seems very far away, and we need someone to take us by the hand and lead us into the presence of God. Every one of us, surely, looks back with gratitude to the times when someone has done just that for us, brought us into God's presence, made God real to us, brought us to peace with God.

There is one Priest who has done that for all mankind, the one Mediator who has made peace between God and man. But all who belong to him are called to share in his priesthood. It is the task and privilege of the whole body that is called by the name of Christ to bring mankind into the presence of God and into peace with God. The whole body of believers forms the priesthood which is to bring men to God, to enable men to offer the spiritual sacrifices which are acceptable to God, and to show forth to men the fullness of God's salvation. Every Christian has a part in this priesthood.

But to say this is not to deprive the ordinary ministry of its priestly character. That would be a complete reversal of the truth. The fact that the whole Church is called to a priestly ministry *necessitates* the priestly character of the ordained ministry. We who are ordained to the holy ministry are called to be priests *in order that* the whole body of believers may attain to its true priestly character. We do not have an ordained ministry in the Church so that the other members may not be priests, but so that they may be priests.

The same principle holds good if we consider that other very common name for our office-minister, or servant. We are not made ministers in order that the rest of the Church may be excused from serving; we are made ministers in order to help the whole Church to be a serving Church and to lead it in this service. Just so, we are made priests in order that the whole Church may be trained to be a truly priestly body, fulfilling in its whole life the great High Priesthood of Jesus. If we are called priests, it is not in order to keep the priestly function in our hands and exclude the rest from it; we are



called priests in order that the whole body may be a holy priesthood, and that every member in it may be trained and equipped and encouraged in every way to play his part in the priestly ministry of Jesus for the whole of mankind. If we are priests, we are such as priests of the priestly people, for the sake of the priesthood of the whole body.

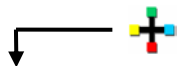
I do not say that we should be eager to be called priests. But we should be eager to *be* priests in the true sense of the word, to be faithful followers of the great High Priest, in order that all our people may also share in his priestly ministry to the full.

We have to learn the meaning of priesthood only from Jesus. The passages which we read from the letter to the Hebrews are the classic descriptions of his priestly ministry. The emphasis in all these passages is upon his humanity. Jesus can be our true priest because he shares our humanity to the full. He is one who has been tempted in every point as we are, yet without sin. He learned obedience through suffering. He 'offered up prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears'. He was truly and completely one of us.

We greatly need to listen to the message of this letter. The characteristic heresy of the Church as I know it in Tamil Nadu is to deny the humanity of Jesus. None of us questions his divinity. But I fear there are very many Christians who do not really believe in the full humanity

of Jesus. They think of him after the manner of a Hindu *avatar*, a god who plays the part of a man just like an actor playing a part on the stage, but who is really a god pretending to be man. For such people the strong language of the New Testament is offensive. They find it almost impossible to believe that Jesus really cried out on the Cross: My God, my God, why did you forsake me?

But this is not the Jesus of the New Testament. Jesus does not come to us like a pagan god with the answers to all our questions and the solutions to all our problems. He comes as one who stands beside us, bearing with us and for us the unbearable weight of our problems and the darkness of our unanswered questions. His revelation of God's grace is not given in thunders from heaven, or in ten legions of angels sent to deliver us; it is given in cries and tears like our cries and tears, alongside of us, on this earth. This is the emphasis of the letter to the Hebrews from first to last; Jesus is our

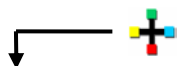


true High Priest because he completely shares our situation.

In the discussions which we have recently had about the methods of pastoral counselling, we have been repeatedly reminded of the words of the prophet Ezekiel about the beginning of his ministry to the exiles of Judah: I came to the exiles at Telabib who dwelt by the River Chebar, and I sat there overwhelmed among them seven days (Ezek. 3: 15). That is, perhaps, a prophecy of Christ's priesthood, and a hint of the nature of ours. We are not people who have all the answers. We are not moral and spiritual experts handing out solutions to the insoluble problems of our people. Our role is a more humble one, a more priestly one. It is to sit where they sit and to share their burdens – often intolerable burdens. It is to have listening ears for their troubles, their temptations, their agonies. And as we listen and share and bear, we can be priests to them because we ourselves are carried in the priesthood of Jesus.

When Jesus, who is the eternal Son of God, came and sat where we sit and bore all our sorrows, he opened up a way to God from the place where we are. Our burdens can no longer crush us. Our temptations and trials can no longer hide God from us, because he – God – is beside us in them. And that is eternally so. That is what this letter means by its teaching about the eternal priesthood and intercession of Jesus. Because we are upheld by the power of that priesthood, we can ourselves be priests for others. But the condition is always the same: we have to sit where they sit.

We are easily led astray by a pagan idea of religion. This deludes us into thinking of ourselves as wise and holy men who know the answers to the world's sorrows-or who at least have to pretend to know them-and can therefore hand out advice and strength to all in need. In truth our role is a much humbler one. It is to be priests of the priestly people, following the example of our great High Priest who, though he was Son, yet learned obedience by what he suffered. And this is in order that our people in their turn may be priests to their neighbours, so that the whole world may be brought at last within the grace and power of the eternal High Priesthood of Jesus.



8

The Role Of The Pastor As Peacemaker

Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

Psalm 85:10

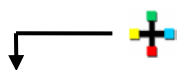
As we think about the various aspects of our ministry, we certainly cannot overlook this one, which occupies so much of our time – I mean the business of coping with quarrels among our

members. As I have travelled in various parts of the world and seen something of the life of the churches in many countries, I have come to realise that each church has its own special weaknesses. I think it would not be unfair to say that our special weakness is our fantastic propensity for quarrelling. As pastors we often feel a kind of despair, because so much of our time has to be spent in keeping peace among the various factions into which our congregations are always threatening to divide.

And yet – there is a beatitude for the peacemakers! Perhaps we should be ready to accept this part of our work more fully and frankly, to see how it can be made a vital part of our ministry, to find in it ways by which we can build up the people entrusted to our care to the fullness of the stature of Christ.

But peace is not our sole objective. The very next beatitude is for those who are persecuted for ‘righteousness’ sake which opens up a picture which is not at all peaceful. When a pastor tells me that everything in his parish is going along smoothly, I wonder whether the devil is having an easy time.

I have chosen a text which suggests the paradox inherent in our work as peacemakers: righteousness and peace shall kiss each other. Righteousness and peace do not easily go together; more often they go their separate ways. You are familiar with the kind of situation I have in mind. Something is wrong with the administration of the pastorate. The wrong must be exposed and challenged. In a few hours peace has



flown out of the window. Battle lines are drawn. Each side picks up supporters. Very soon righteousness has put forth a prickly growth of self-righteousness. The question ‘What is right?’ is drowned by the clamour about ‘Who is right?’ And so the smallest and most trivial issues quickly escalate into full-scale war with no holds barred and the unconditional surrender of the other side as the only term of peace. In the end, even though ‘the right’ triumphs, the damage done is more than the good secured.

But we also know what happens when we try to follow the other way – the way of peace at all costs. The Church becomes a place where pious language goes comfortably with sordid and worldly behaviour. We all know parishes where that has happened – and the Church becomes salt which has lost its savour. Worldly and wicked men sit comfortably on the Pastorate Committee, and no one challenges them for fear of the strife which would break out if they did.

Where is the place where righteousness and peace will kiss each other? Where can we find the righteousness which does not become self-righteousness, and the peace which does not become appeasement?

That place is the Cross of Jesus Christ. There alone I find a righteousness which is God’s righteousness and not my righteousness. There alone I find a peace which is not appeasement of evil, but God’s peace in the midst of the conflict with evil.

The passage from Ephesians which we have read is an exposition of the meaning of the Cross as the place where God’s peace is established. It should be our constant guide as we try to wrestle with the quarrels in our congregations. Only the Cross of Christ provides the place where righteousness and peace can go together. In the presence of the Cross, every kind of self-righteousness is absolutely eliminated. No man can think of himself as righteous who stands there and understands what Christ has done. In that place every one of us carries over him the accusation: ENEMY OF GOD. And yet, exactly in that same place every one of us is offered the unbelievable assurance: FRIEND OF GOD. Christ has died for my sins. He has died for the sins of the man whom I denounce as an enemy of God. He has died to make both him and me friends of God. If I refuse that friendship to him, I reject it for myself. To bring every situation into that

presence means that self-righteousness is destroyed, but it also means that compromise with evil is made impossible. The dying of Jesus is the ultimate exposure of evil. There can be no appeasement of the devil there. This is the final battlefield of God and the devil. Here there is the manifested and established righteousness of God, which can never be my righteousness. Here there is given a peace with God which can never mean appeasement of evil.

St Paul does not hesitate to bring tremendous theological truths to bear upon ordinary, mundane pastoral problems. It is in relation to the small quarrels and jealousies of the Philippian Church that he gives his marvellous exposition of the self-emptying of Christ (Phil. 2). We should not be afraid to do the same. Too often we try to solve these quarrels in a merely worldly way, by some sort of compromise which will save face all round. I do not deny that there is a place for this. But this alone is not enough. Our work as pastors is surely to bring these often petty quarrels into the awesome presence of the Cross.

The passage from Ephesians reminds us of the fact that this reconciling work of Jesus on his Cross is not just an affair of ideas and sentiments. Paul says that the work of Christ on the Cross has been 'to bring us near in the blood of Christ' and 'to reconcile us both to God in one body'. It is in the body of Christ and in the blood of Christ that we are reconciled. The reference of this to our meeting together at the Lord's Table cannot be missed. When we come together to break the bread and share the cup by which we are made participants in his broken body and his shed blood, we are proclaiming the Cross as the one source of our unity. To come together and do this, while cherishing hatred against one another in our hearts, is the most horrible blasphemy. It is against this that St Paul had to warn the Corinthians that they were in danger of eating and drinking judgment.

I fear that we take this warning too lightly. We are ready to exclude members from Holy Communion for certain offences—generally offences concerning their sexual life. But we receive to communion without question those whom Paul would certainly have warned to stay away—Christians who are not on speaking terms with each other, who are plotting evil against each other. We are given authority under the discipline of our Church to exclude from communion those

who persist in a malicious quarrel. Are there not times when we should be more ready to avail ourselves of this permission?

If we took the service of Holy Communion more seriously than we do, perhaps our ministry of peace-making could be the means whereby men and women are really brought into the presence of the crucified Lord, in whom alone righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

9

Pastoral Discipline In The Church

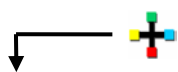
The Scribes and Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such. What do you say about her?" This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her". And once more he bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the eldest, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus

looked up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord". And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again".

John 8:1-11

I want to speak today about the duty of administering discipline which is part of the whole duty laid upon us in our ordination. I take as a starting point the story of the woman taken in adultery. This, as you know, does not form part of the original text of St John's Gospel. In some manuscripts it is included in St Luke's Gospel. It evidently belongs to the very ancient tradition concerning Jesus.

The church leaders have caught a woman in the act of adultery and they bring her to Jesus. Their object is to trap him. It is well known that he welcomes such people into his company. Now he must declare himself plainly. Either he agrees with them that the woman is to be put to death for a flagrant violation of the law of God, or else he is himself convicted of being in violation of the law of God. It is the perfect trap.



They stand facing him as he sits. The woman stands between. They are not interested in her; she is simply a useful instrument for the condemnation of Jesus. Jesus stoops down and begins to write with his finger in the sand. It is a gesture of complete dissociation from their question. He will not give them any answer. Nor will he deal with the woman in their presence. The word of judgment and mercy which he will speak to her, he will speak to her alone. They have no place in it. He ignores them.

They press their question, sure that the jaws of the trap are closing upon him. At last Jesus stands up and faces them. 'Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone.' There is no suggestion here that these men are guilty of secret adultery; there is no need to import this idea into the story. They are sinful men, that is all. In fact they are at this moment engaged in the sinful enterprise of trying to trap the Son of God. God's final judgment will be executed by God, not by these men.

Having said this, he stoops down and begins again to write on the ground.

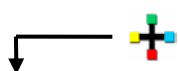
In the silence which follows there is a movement. Beginning with the eldest, one by one of the church leaders go out. There is silence again. Jesus looks up. The woman is standing alone. The sinner is alone before him who alone can deal with her sin.

'Has no one condemned you?' 'No one, Sir.' 'Neither do I condemn you. Go, and do not sin again.'

There is nothing sentimental about this. Jesus does not make excuses for her. She has sinned and she is warned not to sin again. But the divine mercy has forgiven her sin and given her time for repentance and amendment of life. This is what he alone can do, and he does it.

This scene has elements which are very familiar to us above all the Pharisees eager to have a sentence of condemnation, but basically uninterested in the human person involved. What does the story say to us, in the whole context of the ministry of Jesus, about the exercise of Christian discipline?

As so often we have to find our way along a narrow path between two opposite dangers. On the one hand there is Pharisaism – always present in the Church. We are familiar with the almost sadistic pleasure which some people take in



discovering and condemning the sins of others, especially if the sins are sexual sins and if the people concerned are not strong enough to fight back. It is always the mark of Pharisaism that it picks on a few sins and is quite merciless towards them, thereby perhaps diverting attention from

the sins which cannot be so easily exposed and condemned. Basically this is an attempt at self-justification. It is a futile attempt at selfdefence before the judgment of God.

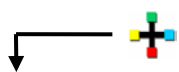
On the other side of the path is the danger of Sadduceeism – the sort of easy-going compromise with the world which merely shrugs the shoulders in the presence of evil and prefers to avoid trouble by saying nothing. Evil then goes unchallenged, and becomes comfortably established in the Church, like a tenant who cannot be evicted.

To speak quite frankly, I think that it is the second of these dangers which we are most inclined to fall into in our Church. I think we are far too ready to turn a blind eye to sin, especially when to challenge it will raise a storm of controversy. We do not honour our Master in this, for he who was so merciful towards the woman taken in adultery was absolutely unsparing in his challenge to evil in the seats of power. He could refer to the ruling Rajah as ‘that fox’, and to the leading ecclesiastical authorities as ‘whited sepulchres’. Can we say anything that will help us to find our way along the narrow path between a wrong kind of rigour and a wrong kind of laxity?

1. Only Jesus has authority to condemn and to forgive. The authority given to us is only to be the agents and instruments of his holy and loving discipline. Of ourselves we have no right whatever to judge the lives of our brethren.

2. We are the ministers of the Gospel, not law-enforcement officers. The enforcement of law is the business of the State. It is appointed by God for that purpose. There have been times when the Church encroached upon the domain of the State and tried to enforce law by means of fines and even corporal punishment. As ministers of the Gospel this is not our business.

3. In a world which is changing as fast as ours is, many things which seemed fixed no longer seem so. We have constantly to re-examine our fixed rules to see whether they do or do not embody the holiness and love of Christ in the concrete situation of our society today. This is particularly



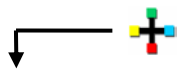
true of the relations between men and women, and between parents and children. It is especially true in a city like Madras, where the pace of change is rapid.

4. We have to be quite fearless in tackling the sins of the rich and powerful. If we fail here, we lose our right to tackle the sins of those who have no power. We merely expose ourselves as cowards and bullies. There is no excuse for timidity. The Constitution of our Church provides you with the means and the authority to take action. We should often call to mind the solemn words spoken to us on this matter when we were ordained, and the promise we made at that time.

5. The object of all Church discipline is that the person concerned may be saved, may be forgiven, healed and restored to the Church’s fellowship. Never for a moment must that be forgotten. Therefore, while we have sometimes the painful duty of publicly excluding people from the Church’s fellowship, it must always be our prayer and our endeavour to bring them to the point when they can be publicly restored and welcomed back into the family.

6. Fundamental to all church discipline is the fact that all who are called upon to exercise it – bishop, presbyter, elder, congregation-are forgiven sinners. I suppose that there comes to every one of us from time to time with special force the overwhelming sense of our own unfitness for our calling. In God’s sight and in the sight of men, too, if they knew all the facts-I am utterly unfit to be a minister of the Gospel. At such times everything depends upon being able to lay hold afresh upon the fact of God’s forgiveness; to believe afresh that Jesus died for my sins; and that those sins are therefore taken away, cancelled, forgiven. When I know that, the knowledge puts me into a certain kind of relation with the brother who has been overtaken in sin. It means, on the one hand, my solidarity with him. He is as I am, and I am as he is. But it also means a longing that he may have the joy of release, of forgiveness, of having his sin blotted out. It may be that that can only happen through a painful experience of estrangement, of condemnation, because only so can the man come to the point where he owns his sin so that he may disown it, acknowledge it in

order to be free of it. That is painful, but it is infinitely fruitful. It is a part of our ministry which we dare not neglect.



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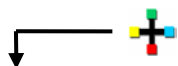
Leadership In The Church

A dispute also arose among them, which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves."

Luke 22:24-27

Nothing is clearer in our Lord's teaching than his repeated warning that leadership among his people is not to be modelled on the pattern of leadership in the world. Yet how constantly we have forgotten or ignored it! Probably we shall think immediately of the lordly prince-bishops of the Middle Ages. There are still many in our Church who hanker after something of the same kind, and who love to be able to call the bishop my lord. People hanker after it, because the love of bossing other people is even greater than the distaste for being bossed oneself. If the bishop is a big prelate who bosses the clergy, they in turn can be little bosses to their congregations, the Committee members can boss the rest, and everyone is happy except the sexton who has nobody under him to be bossed. We are all involved in this and no branch of the Church is free from it. I remember spending a week with a group of Pentecostal pastors in Chile. Towards the end of it I asked them what was the biggest problem that they faced in their Church. Immediately they answered with one Spanish word: *caudillismo-bossism*. We all allow the world's patterns of leadership to govern the Church. We all forget the simple word of Jesus: it shall not be so among you.

Perhaps we are less severely tempted in this matter than our forefathers were. At least we have much less excuse. All over the world there is a break-down of the older authori-



tarian patterns. People are not prepared to tolerate the kind of arbitrary authority which was accepted a generation ago as part of the order of nature. There is a demand everywhere for participation. People insist on being consulted about decisions which affect their lives. Industrial management is far ahead of the Church in this matter. Big industrialists have learned that a factory cannot work at top efficiency unless there is consultation and partnership in decision-making all down the line.

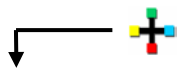
But our churches are slow to learn these lessons which should have been learned from the Lord himself. Our churches are full of people who seek for power over other people. Look at the struggles which take place when there is an election to the Pastorate Committee,* or for a bishop. Ought we not to recognise that when a situation arises within the Church where we have to give orders over-riding the will of others in the Church, something has already gone wrong? There has already been a break-down of real order.

What is the pattern of leadership in the Church? It is Christ's own pattern. 'If anyone would come after me, let him take up his Cross and follow me.' The only leadership recognised among Christ's followers is leadership in the way of the Cross. Perhaps the most moving illustration we have of this is to be found in Paul's relation to the Church in Corinth. A party in that Church challenged his authority and denied that he was an apostle. What was his answer? To what did he

appeal as the true credentials of leadership? He appealed simply to the fact that he had followed the way of the Cross.

*In the Church of South India each pastorate (which may include several congregations but has normally only one pastor) elects a committee of lay members who serve for a period of two or three Years and are corporately responsible, with the Pastor, for the spiritual and temporal affairs of the Pastorate. There is keen (and sometimes unseemly) competition for membership.

As servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labours, watching, hunger.... We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as



sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

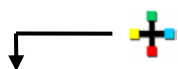
Paul is a true leader because he goes before, carrying the Cross as Jesus did. Because he is doing this, he can boldly ask others to follow.

This is the test of leadership in the Christian fellowship. Are we cheerfully and faithfully bearing the burden of sorrow, of shame, of anxiety, of pain which is our lot as pastors? If so, we can boldly ask others to follow.

I was once a member of a group of bishops who were discussing the problems of the work of a bishop and asking themselves about the pattern of episcopacy in the modern world. There were some who stressed a rather traditional idea of the bishop as a father-in-God. There were others who took their stand on the famous verse in Ephesians 4, and saw the bishop as one whose job is to equip all God's people for their service in the world. As the discussion went on, one American bishop said: What I always say to my people is: 'Come on; let's go'. Another in the group responded: 'That's all right if you remember the context in which our Lord said it'. It was, you remember, in the Garden of Gethsemane that he said: Arise, let us be going, and went forward to his passion.

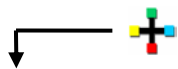
There is no escape from the problem of leadership. No society can become effective except through the right kind of leadership. The Church is no exception. The wrong kind of leadership in the Church has played a terrible role in history. Such words as 'prelacy' and 'priest-craft' have horrible associations in the minds of most people, and there is reason in history for these feelings. Sometimes one meets people whose thought about the Church is so dominated by these revulsions against the wrongs of the past that they are suspicious of any kind of accepted leadership, especially of the leadership of the ordained ministry. We have to respect and understand this. We have accepted episcopacy in the Church of South India but we need to understand how deep is the suspicion of episcopacy among millions of our fellow Christians. Yet we have to insist that the Church cannot live its life and fulfil God's purpose for it without leadership.

Everything depends upon the pattern of leadership. The pattern is given to us in the person of our Lord himself. Let this picture remain in our minds as we think about the pattern



of our own leadership in our congregations. Jesus and his disciples are in the garden. He is facing, in an agony of prayer, the terrible conclusion to his ministry which now confronts him – betrayal by his friend, rejection by God's people, the shame and agony of the cross, death as one rejected by men and abandoned by God. The disciples who should have been his companions in prayer are half asleep. Judas and his mob are coming nearer. Jesus rises from his knees and calls his

disciples. 'Rise, let us be going', he says, and goes before them-to the Cross. There is the pattern of leadership for the Church.



11

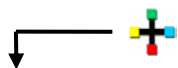
The Pastor As Evangelist

The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame". For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him. For, "every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved".

Romans 10:11-15

But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news!"

It is characteristic of the Christian message that it speaks of hearing good news, rather than of receiving spiritual enlightenment. The word Gospel just means 'good news', and from a very early time it became practically a technical term for the Christian message. Evangelism – telling the good news – has been central to the Christian way of life from the beginning. The passage which we have read from Romans 10 gives the logic of it. You cannot get to know about Jesus unless someone goes and tells you. There has to be a journey, a going, a mission. That simple piece of logic underlies the whole splendid ministry of St Paul as we see it described in the Acts and interpreted in the Letters. It underlies some of the most moving chapters in Christian history – the mission of the Irish to Germany, of the early Jesuits to South India, of the Protestant missions of the 18th and 19th centuries, of Azariah to the jungle of Dornakal and of Kagawa to the slums of Tokyo. The haunting phrase of Isaiah – How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news – has been remembered in generation after generation, because they truly expressed what men felt.

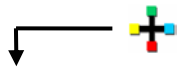


How is it, then, that the words 'Evangelism' and 'Evangelist', have become so unpopular? How has it come that we use the name 'Evangelist' for the lowest category of church worker – half-trained, half-paid and half-starved? How does it come that respectable Christians feel uncomfortable with the very idea of evangelism? An American missionary friend of mine told me recently of a congregation which had offered him a large sum of money, provided he would promise that it would not be used for evangelism. In response to the questionnaire sent out to pastorates at the time of the last Diocesan Council, one pastorate answered the question: Are you doing any evangelism? with the words: I hope not. How has this state of affairs come about? I think there are several reasons.

1. There is the fact that we have often confused evangelism with proselytisation. I mean that we have not been people simply full of good news which we had to share with all our friends: we have been agents of an organisation trying to strengthen itself in the world by getting more members and more influence. I know that it is not easy to draw a sharp line between these two in practice. But the difference in spirit and motive is there, and ordinary people quickly recognise it. I do not need to dwell on this. We can all recognise the proselytising spirit in other people, even if we do not recognise it so easily in ourselves.

2. There is the fact that we have corrupted our evangelism by trying to exploit the weaknesses of others. We have almost come to take it for granted that organised evangelism is directed towards those who are in a weaker position than ourselves. We send evangelists to backward villages, to slums, to people who are sick in hospital, to those in jail, to the hill tribes.

We do not send evangelists to the lawyers, the businessmen, the legislators. Above all, the whole picture of evangelism in our world is coloured by the fact that it has been dominated by the massive power of the white races directed towards the coloured peoples who were under their political and economic power. Even where there has not been this exploitation of a political or economic or cultural weakness, we have tended in our evangelism to try to get at the weak spots of others, their secret sins and failures, as a means of getting leverage for the Gospel. This, as Bonhoeffer pointed out in one of his letters, is something very remote from the spirit of the man who is simply eager to share good news.



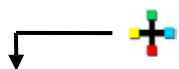
3. There is the fact that, in our evangelism, we have departed from Christ's own way—the way of the incarnation. Jesus became man—completely one among those for whom he came. We do not. We remain at a distance. I am thinking of the typical evangelistic effort which our pastorates put on from time to time. We go to a village, stand in the street, sing a few lyrics, perhaps shout a few texts through a loudspeaker, deliver a message and go home to supper. We do not become really involved with the people. We do not sit down beside them and listen to their thoughts, their problems, their hopes. Certainly we are not 'tempted in all points as they are'. Our model is not the incarnation of the Word of God, but the methods of a modern commercial or political advertiser.

4. I think there is also another fact which we are less willing to face. I think that behind the disrepute of the word evangelism there is a real break-down of faith in the Gospel. At least I think we must humbly face this possibility. I have never forgotten the first public meeting that I attended a few days after coming to India as a young missionary. It was arranged by the public of Chingleput to congratulate the Church of Scotland Mission on the completion of 100 years of work in that town. The speech of the Municipal Chairman was a model of courtesy. He said something like this: 'When the first missionaries came here from Scotland, we were very suspicious of them. We thought that they had come to convert us to Christianity. Now as we watch them we can see that our suspicions were quite unjustified. These people are perfect gentlemen, with no such improper motives. We can welcome them without any reservations.'

What has happened to us? Have we become wiser than our fathers – or less faithful?

Among the duties of presbyters as enjoined in the CSI Constitution is the responsibility 'to use every opportunity to preach the Gospel to non-Christians and to bring men to the obedience of the faith'.

These words make it very clear that we are not ordained to this ministry just to look after Christians. Many of our Church members think that we are simply paid to look after them, and get seriously annoyed if we devote too much time to those outside the fellowship. It has happened more than once that a pastor has been rebuked by the elders of the



congregation for spending too much time with Hindus, and told bluntly that he is paid to look after the Christians and not to spend his time with others. But this is a total misunderstanding of our ordination. The people for whom we are responsible before God as the result of our ordination vows are not just the members of the church, but all the people of our parish or diocese, whether they are Christians or not. It is an essential part of our ministry that we are appointed to lead God's people in evangelism.

But we must go deeper than this. The truth is that we do not truly understand the Gospel if we spend all our time preaching it to Christians. A French layman, Michel Philibert, has written an excellent little book called *Christ's Preaching and Ours*, in which he shows that we simply cannot transfer the language of the Gospels about the announcement of the good news to those who had not heard it and apply it directly to our weekly preaching to people who have heard the

Gospel innumerable times. If we know only the latter situation, we do not know what the Gospel is. The Gospel is communication of news to those who do not know it, and we only really understand it as we are involved in so communicating it. I would testify from my own limited experience that I have never felt the reality of the Gospel more fully than when I was regularly involved in a ministry to the condemned prisoners in the Madurai Jail. It is in a situation where the Gospel is really being received as NEWS that you understand what it is.

What can we say constructively about our role in leading God's people in evangelism? Let me begin with a phrase which has been used by many who are not happy with traditional ways of evangelism-the phrase *Christian presence*. This phrase has both a negative and positive reference. Negatively it draws attention to the fact, which I referred to earlier, that in much of our traditional evangelism we have not really been fully present to those to whom we spoke. We have addressed them, perhaps shouted at them, but we have not been *with* them. We have not 'sat where they sat'. We have not become part of their situation as Jesus has become part of our human situation. 'Christian presence' points to the true way of the incarnation. Positively the phrase may be developed along the following lines. When we read the Gospels we see that the presence of Jesus was itself the presence of the Kingdom of God. Jesus was, in a sense, him

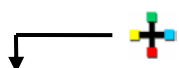


self the good news which he announced. If, then, the Church is truly faithful, then the Church's presence in any situation will be itself good news. The real presence of the people of God in a village, in a slum, in a situation of conflict or of despair, will be itself good news, and a source of hope.

Having said this, however, I must say that I do not think the idea of 'Christian presence' can replace evangelism in the life of the Church. Jesus was not only himself the good news, but he was also himself the evangelist. His deeds were interpreted by words. He *proclaimed* good news. It was not that every deed of love had to be interpreted by a sermon, or that every teaching had to be illustrated by an act. Certainly not. But nevertheless the same Jesus who did the works of love also interpreted these works of love by his announcement of the coming of God's reign. Both deeds and words were essential to his ministry. Neither was a substitute for the other. The words interpreted the deeds and the deeds authenticated the words.

So it has to be in the life of the Church. I have criticised the kind of evangelism which 'is words without real presence'. But presence alone is not enough. None of us is so like Jesus that our presence can be a substitute for the naming of his name. We must faithfully follow him by taking up the Cross and being, as Luther said, a sort of Christ for our neighbours. But we still have to point them to that one Cross on Calvary by which the world is redeemed, and there is no substitute for that. The exclusive use of the concept of presence could mean a betrayal.

We have to keep hold of both parts of the truth. Our evangelism will be futile if it is mere words not authenticated by deeds. But our deeds will be futile if they do not eventually find their full meaning in the message of the Gospel which has to be proclaimed by words. At this moment in the life of our Church I think that the most important thing to say is this: it is as we are truly present with our neighbours, bearing with them the sin and sorrow of the world, that we shall be in a position to point them to Jesus in such a way that they will recognise him as Saviour.



12

The Good News Of The Kingdom

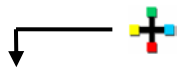
Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel".

Mark 1:14-15

There are not many passages in the New Testament dealing explicitly with evangelism. Evangelism does not seem to have been seen by the first Christians as a problem, or as a duty. One gets the impression that the new life in Christ is something which glows with its own light. Witness is not something commanded but something promised. 'When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be my witnesses.' However, it is of course also true that Jesus preached, and that he commanded his disciples to go into all the world and preach. What, exactly, was the Gospel which he preached, and which he commanded his disciples to preach?

The first passage to be looked at is Mark's account of the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. 'Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of God, and saying: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel"' (Mark 1: 14-15). Here we have the beginning of the preaching of the Gospel. The good news is that the kingdom of God is at hand. God's time for this has come. World history is not a meaningless jumble of events. It is not a game. God is doing something, and this work of God has its times and seasons. He has been preparing for this over many ages, and now the time has come for something new and decisive.

This new thing is that the rule or reign of God has drawn near. This is the heart of the good news. In a world full of injustice and evil, a world which seems to be ruled not by God but by the devil, God's rule has come near. In a world where God is not known, he has made himself known. The



day for which the suffering servants of God have waited has dawned. The reign of God is at hand.

But what, exactly, does this 'at hand' mean? Has it come, or is it still to come? Is our Gospel about something which has happened, or about something which is going to happen? Where does the accent fall? As I ask this question, I think of two occasions on which I was engaged in street preaching. One was in Kancheepuram, where a catechist, after telling a good story, took a big breath and began: 'Two thousand years ago, in a country called Palestine, there was a man called Jesus'. The crowd began to melt away. Why should we bother about something 2,000 years ago? The other occasion was in a small country town. The preacher was a well-known evangelist. His message was simple: 'Jesus is coming; are you ready to meet him?' The crowd gathered round. Something which is just going to happen excites more interest than something which happened 2,000 years ago. But how are we to preach the Gospel? If the good news is: 'Jesus is coming soon'-what does 'soon' mean after 2,000 years? If the good news is: 'The reign of God has come', why is there still so much evil in the world?

We cannot begin to answer these questions until we look at the last part of Jesus' announcement. 'Repent, and believe the good news.' To repent means to turn round and face in a different direction. People were waiting for the reign of God waiting eagerly. But it was coming from the direction opposite to the way they were looking. They would not see it unless they turned right round and faced the other way.

Not only is repentance (turning round) required, but also faith. Even when you turn round you do not *see* the reign of God. The Jews wanted to see it, and asked for some proof that it was there. Jesus answered with parables, stories of ordinary life which challenged his hearers to see what they had been blind to, to recognise the signs of the reign of God, and to believe in its reality. If the reign of God were obvious to everybody, there would be no need of faith. If it were completely hidden, there would be no possibility of faith. What is given in the coming of Jesus is the reign of God as a revealed mystery. Those who have eyes to see will see; others will not. His announcement is therefore a challenge to faith.

The centre of the revealed mystery of the reign of God is the Cross. There the power of God is revealed – but it is



revealed as weakness. The glory of God is revealed but it is revealed as humiliation. The victory of God is revealed – but it is revealed as defeat. To the ordinary eyes of what the Bible calls ‘flesh’ that is to say, to the eyes of men facing in the direction that men usually face, trusting in the things that men usually trust, the Cross is weakness, humiliation, defeat. To those who turn round, face the other way, and *believe*, it is power, glory, victory.

For this reason the preaching of the Gospel acts like a sword-dividing men from one another. Some will believe; some – a majority – will not. That is the situation to which the parable of the sower is addressed. One can imagine how surprising and perplexing that parable must have been to those who expected the reign of God to come with the kind of power and glory that men recognise. Nothing could be farther from that picture than this one of the seed-much of which proves unable to survive the pressures of the environment, only a small part of which bears fruit.

In the light of all this, how shall we interpret the announcement that the reign of God has come near? In some places, as we know, it is interpreted as a past event. ‘If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you’ (Matt. 12: 28). In other places it is something yet to come. ‘When you pray, say: "Thy kingdom come"’ (Matt. 6: 10). What is the relation between these two?

God’s reign has come into the world in the coming of Jesus. That is the good news. But the reign of God is present in Jesus to faith. It is a reality which is hidden from those who have not undergone a radical repentance, a complete turning round so as to face in the opposite direction. The reign of God shows its presence in Jesus’ deeds of love and compassion, and in the deeds done in his name and through his power. It is present supremely in his Cross and resurrection. There is the place where faith finds the supreme proof of the presence of the reign of God in the midst of the life of the world.

But this presence will not always be a hidden presence. The resurrection of Jesus, and the words that he spoke to his disciples after he was risen, are the sure promises that the power of the Kingdom will in the end manifestly rule over all men and all creation. Those who have turned round and



believed the hidden presence of the kingdom, long ardently for that day when what is now hidden will be manifest to all men.

Meanwhile, God respects our freedom. He does not force men to accept his rule. There is freedom to believe or to disbelieve. A forced allegiance would be a false allegiance. God wants nothing less than the willing commitment of our whole being-which means radical repentance and faith.

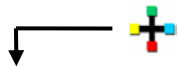
What does this mean for our evangelism? It means, first, that the *context* of our evangelism will be (as it was in the ministry of Jesus) those works of love and power in which men may – by faith be able to recognise the signs of the presence of the Kingdom. Where the Church is really continuing the ministry of Jesus – healing the sick, liberating the captives, seeking the lost, reconciling enemies, challenging injustice – then there is a possibility that men may be able to recognise and believe in the real presence of the reign of God.

But it also means, second, that we have to point beyond these things to the reality of which they are only signs. Our ‘good works’ are highly ambiguous. They do not themselves manifest the holiness and love of God. At best they can be signs which can lead men to ask whether – after all – the reign of God is a reality. If that question is followed up, it will lead to suffering, to the Cross. We have to point men explicitly beyond these signs to Jesus and his Cross. Our good works cannot save men from their real enemy. But they can point men to the one who can.

It means, thirdly, that we have to call men insistently to repentance and faith. ‘Have you come to convert us?’ was the question put by a local resident to one of our workers in the Slum

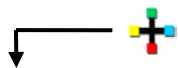
Sanitation Project. The only possible answer is 'Yes'. If we are not clear about that, then our social service has no future. It only achieves its real purpose if it leads men to change their attitudes, to turn round and face the other way, to believe in the reality of God's rule and to become committed to his service, to be not mere recipients of charity but agents of change.

I do not mean by this to say that every piece of social service we do has to be accompanied by a sermon and a specific call to discipleship. It was not so in Jesus' ministry. There are times when it is good to speak directly about the Kingdom of God, and other times when it is better to be



silent. What I mean is this: that the ministry of the Church as a whole should be manifestly and explicitly both a ministry of love and service and compassion, and also a ministry of proclamation and enlistment—the proclamation of the coming of the reign of God in Jesus, and the enlistment of men for the service of that reign. Within that total ministry there is room for a variety of special callings, but the world should be in no doubt that the Church stands for both these things and that they belong together.

If I am not mistaken, our current evangelism hardly ever uses the category of the Kingdom of God. And yet the original preaching of the Gospel on the lips of Jesus was – precisely – the announcement of the coming of that Kingdom. I believe that we may recover a true evangelism for our day if we return to that original language (translated into the idiom of our own time and place) as the basic category for our proclamation of the Gospel.



13

The Healing Ministry Of The Church

Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is he who takes no offence at me."

Matthew 11:2-6

I

John, in prison, is uncertain whether or not Jesus is really the Messiah who is to come. In answer to his enquiry, Jesus points to the works of healing which he is doing as signs, which John ought to recognise, that the Kingdom of God has really broken into the life of this world. The healing of the sick is a sign of the presence of the Messiah. In another place, when he is challenged about the source of his healing power, he replies with the little story about the strong man who is secure until a stronger one comes and binds him and then plunders his goods. In other words, Jesus by his coming is robbing Satan of his power and setting free his captives. This is how Jesus himself interpreted his works of healing. They are signs of the presence of the reign of God. Normally healing is bound up with faith in Jesus. It is part of what is involved in recognising Jesus as the one who brings the reign of God into the life of the world.

For this reason there is a very strong link between healing and salvation. As is well known, the same Greek word is sometimes translated in our Gospels by the word 'heal' and sometimes by the word 'save'. In the story of the paralytic boy who was let down through the roof into the presence of Jesus, the healing of his body and the forgiveness of his



sins are all part of the same manifestation of the power of the Son of Man – the one who represents God's reign. Healing belongs to the very centre of the work of Jesus.

Alongside of this, however, we note that there is the repeated warning that those who follow Jesus must expect suffering, must 'take up the Cross'. There is a profound paradox here. The coming of the reign of God in Jesus means that sick people are healed. But it does not mean that pain and suffering are forthwith banished from the earth. On the contrary, those who follow Jesus must expect suffering. To follow Jesus means being caught up into a great battle in which the power of the rule of God is attacking and overthrowing the power of the rule of Satan. In this battle the Christian suffers, but this suffering is all within the context of the mighty victory of the Cross, so that all suffering is seen in a new perspective.

II

The two things which – in the New Testament – are part of one reality, healing and salvation, have in our modern world fallen apart. We do not think of them together. They belong to two separate worlds of thought. The art of healing, the art of the doctor and the nurse, is seen more and more as a purely technical process. With more and more sophisticated drugs and operative techniques at his disposal, the doctor is encouraged to treat the patient's body more and more as an immensely complicated machine. The doctor is less and less concerned with the person and more and more with a series of medical or surgical problems.

Salvation, on the other hand, is regarded as something which concerns not the body but the soul. In this view the soul is regarded as a non-material entity which is somehow imprisoned within the body but quite distinct from it. The salvation of the soul has nothing to do with the healing of the body, but is a quite separate transaction which is ultimately concerned with what happens to this 'soul' after death. This way of looking at the matter is typical of Greek and Hindu thought, and is very different from the biblical picture of man as a single body-soul reality.

In this view there is no essential connection between healing and salvation. Healing might be a way of attracting people

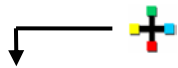


to the preaching of the Gospel. Illness might put them in a position where they would provide a captive audience for the preacher. But healing, on this view, is not part of the Gospel. Even a doctor who is personally a devout Christian is always under pressure to accept the concepts of secularised medicine and to see these two things – healing and salvation as quite separate.

There is a growing recognition among doctors themselves that this purely secular conception of medicine is defective. It has no conception of healing beyond the elimination of disease and pain, and the postponement of death. In the end, of course, the patient always dies. A purely secular medicine is always finally defeated. It does not know the paradoxical biblical attitude, which sees the power of God both in suffering and in healing, and the victory of God even in death. That is why secular medicine tries to hide the fact of death – both from the patient and from others, and why it is so unsuccessful in dealing with the incurably ill and the dying.

In the wealthy countries of the West there is a growing understanding of the fact that healing must be seen as an affair of the whole person, that body and soul cannot be viewed as separate entities. In part this has been forced upon doctors by the growing amount of mental disease. In the 'developed' countries where modern techniques have almost eliminated the old killing diseases except for cancer, there is vast increase in mental and psycho-somatic illness of all kinds. In face of this, doctors have increasingly recognised that the healing art is concerned with the person as a person, and not just with a series of symptoms which can be treated as technical problems.

Moreover – and this is a still newer development – there is a growing recognition of the fact that the object of healing is not just the person as an individual, but the person in his community. You cannot understand a person’s illness without understanding his relationships in his family, in his neighbourhood, in his place of work. Illness is not an affair of the isolated individual. It is an affair of the society of which he is a part. One very obvious example of this is the fact that in more and more countries the greatest single cause of premature death is accidents on the roads. The factors which cause people to kill and wound each other on the roads are obviously factors concerning the sickness or health



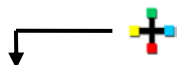
of society as a whole, and not just of individuals. There can be – and there are – sick societies, as well as sick individuals. And, conversely, there can be a healed and healing society, a society which brings health and wholeness to its members.

III

This brings us to the heart of our concern as Christian pastors. For the Church, as the body of Christ, is intended to be such a healing society. Just as the woman who touched the hem of Christ’s garment in the midst of a jostling crowd received immediate healing, so it should be that all who touch the Christian congregation in the midst of the busy life of the world should find healing.

When I was working with the World Council of Churches I was concerned about the enormous number of requests for help from Christian hospitals. All over the world Christian missions have founded hospitals, and everywhere they are finding it more and more impossible to carry them on without massive additional help. The WCC was being pressed to do something, and the problem was on my desk. I felt completely helpless. I did not have a clue about what we could do. While I was wrestling with this problem I had a visit from the late Dr. Ademola, who was at that time in charge of health services for the Government of Nigeria. He was visiting Geneva for a meeting of the World Health Organisation. I unfolded my perplexities to him. After listening to me he was silent for some time, and then he said: You must not forget that the primary unit of healing is not the Hospital but the Christian congregation.

It was a completely new thought to me. Coming as it did from a very responsible officer of a national government, I had to think about it seriously. The Christian congregation as the primary unit of healing in society? Could it really be so? Certainly very few congregations have ever thought of themselves in that way. But if you look at the New Testament, it certainly seems that this is what was intended. Otherwise how can the Church be called the Body of Christ? St Paul clearly sees the converse of this, when he tells the Corinthians that many of them are sick and some have died because they have turned the Lord’s Supper into a centre of division instead of unity in one Body. In ancient times the

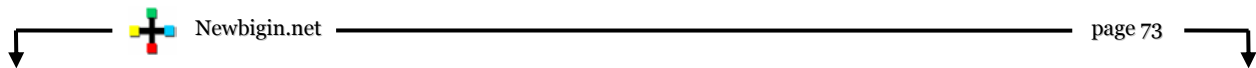


Sacrament was sometimes called the ‘medicine of immortality’. Behind that phrase lies the picture of the Church, its life centred in the Lord’s Supper, as a healed and healing community in which the healing love of Christ flows out to heal the sicknesses of men. This picture of the Church as a healing community is beautifully expressed in the well-known passage of St. James: ‘Is one of you ill? He should send for the elders of the congregation to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayers offered in faith will save the sick man, the Lord will raise him from his bed, and any sins he may have committed will be forgiven.’ Here healing, forgiveness and salvation are all together as part of the normal life of the Christian congregation. This is what the Christian congregation is meant to be.

We too have serious problems about the future of our hospitals. We do not see immediate solutions to these problems. But as pastors of Christian congregations we have a vital and immediate task in the healing ministry. Healing is part of our ministry as much as preaching and teaching are, for healing is an authentic sign of the presence of the kingdom of God. We have a right to pray for it and to expect it, and we should regard it as an essential part of the ministry to which we were ordained. Many of us remember gratefully the consistent teaching and example of Bishop PakenhamWalsh in this respect.

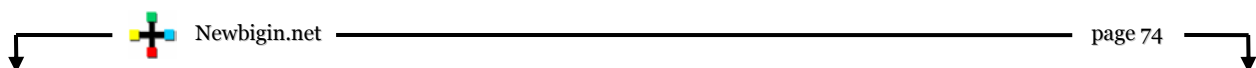
The whole congregation is called to be a healed and healing fellowship, in which the healing love of God is ever at work to bind up the wounds of the members. And beyond this, the healing work is to spread beyond the congregation into the community around it. I know that there are very many cases in which we are called (not only pastors but also members of our congregations) to pray in the homes of sick people who do not belong to the Church or profess the Christian faith. I know that many of those who are brought to faith and baptism have been moved in the first instance by this kind of prayer by a Christian friend during their sickness. This is, and should be, a very important part of the healing ministry of the congregation.

But I am thinking of more than this. Doctors and the health authorities are laying increasing stress upon community medicine rather than upon the treatment of the individual sick. The purpose of medicine – it is increasingly said – should



not be just to cure the sick who come to hospital, but to do everything which creates a healthy community. Here is something in which the whole congregation has a part to play. As one example, I am happy that some of our congregations have responded to the invitation to mobilise teams of voluntary health visitors for service in the poor districts round them. Our doctors are willing and ready to give the kind of training (over a period of several weeks) which will equip ordinary church members to visit homes, find out the essential facts affecting the health of each family, give simple advice, and make the necessary contacts with the local hospital. This kind of visiting is of enormous help to the work of the hospitals. It provides them with a whole new network of communication into the community. And it can open up loving communication between the congregation and the community, through which the congregation can learn to exercise its function as a centre of healing. I am also glad that several hundred of our members have come forward to be trained as hospital visitors; I hope we shall soon have reached the point when every one of the 20,000 hospital beds in the City is regularly visited by a Christian who has been trained to give the kind of encouragement and help that such a visit can bring.

When our Lord was in the midst of a crowded street, pressed on every side by the jostling multitudes, a woman who was too timid to address him openly, touched the hem of his cloak believing that she would be healed. Instantly the healing love of Christ was given to her, and she was made well. If the Church is truly the body of Christ, then surely that kind of thing should be happening all the time. Whoever touches the Church—even in the most tenuous fashion, even in the midst of all the bustle and press of our business—should find that he has touched the source of healing. The healing that we receive here, as we meet in the Holy Communion, is given to us for the sake of all our neighbours.



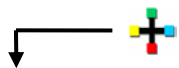
And these were his gifts: some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip God's people for work in his service, to the building up of the body of Christ.

So shall we all at last attain to the unity inherent in our faith and our knowledge of the Son of God – to mature manhood, measured by nothing less than the full stature of Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-13 (NEB)

‘To equip God’s people for work in his service’ – that is the translation in the New English Bible of Ephesians 4: 12. All the earlier English versions put a comma in the middle, so that it reads: ‘For the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry’ (RSV). The old Tamil version does the same. Here is a case where the presence of a comma completely changes the meaning. The old versions mean that the apostles, the ordained ministry, have the double duty of equipping the saints and of exercising the ministry. The new translation, which is undoubtedly the correct rendering of the Greek, means that the ordained ministry has one function: to equip all the members for their ministry. In other words, ministry is not the monopoly of the clergy; it is the responsibility of all, and the role of the clergy is to help them to fulfil it. The old translation reflects a mentality which we commonly call ‘clericalism’. The same mentality is to be seen at many points if you compare the old Tamil translation with the new. In 1 Cor. 2: 16, for example, Paul says: ‘We have the mind of Christ’. Who is this ‘We’? According to the old Tamil version it is Paul and his fellow-workers (*nangal*),* according to the new (and surely correct) Tamil version it is the Chris-

* In Tamil, as in many other languages, there are two quite different words to translate ‘we’: the one means ‘I and those with me’, the other means ‘I and you’. The translator of St Paul’s epistles has therefore to decide in each case which meaning was in the Apostle’s mind. Obviously very important theological decisions are involved.



tian fellowship as a whole (*Nam*). What made the old translators use the exclusive *nangal*? We can only answer, ‘the clerical mentality’.

By the clerical mentality, I mean a view of the Church, common among clergy and still more common among laity, which sees the Church as an organisation to be run by a professional clergy, in which the lay members are simply there to be organised, taught and comforted. If you will forgive a crude metaphor, in the clerical view the Church is not the body of Christ but rather a bus which is driven by the pastor and in which the lay members are the passengers. Their role is to sit quietly and be taken to their destination in heaven. If you like to have it, the sexton may be regarded as the conductor who goes round collecting the fares from the passengers. ‘Lay activity’ is a sort of organised backseat driving, which is to be discouraged.

How does this view of the Church arise? Perhaps it has its roots in the famous image of the shepherd. In the Old Testament the shepherd is a way of speaking of the ruler, the king. Our Lord uses this image for himself and for his apostle Peter. There is a sharp distinction between shepherd and sheep, and it would be easy for this image to lead to what we call clericalism. But probably this could not happen as long as there was no professional clergy. The primitive Church had no professional clergy. Even those who were called bishops were men who had to earn their own living, probably as slaves in a pagan household. What we call ‘clericalism’ could hardly develop in these conditions.

After the conversion of Constantine, and the official recognition of Christianity as the religion of the ruler, the way was open for the growth of a full-time professional clergy. With this could come the sharp distinction of Christians into two orders—the clergy whose duty was to teach and to govern, and the laity whose role was to learn and to obey.

It is clear that this is remote from the picture given to us in the New Testament. There we see a great variety of gifts, and a calling to each member to use his gifts for the building up of the whole. And, moreover, it is clear that our Lord’s own use of the parable of the Shepherd cannot be made to justify this sort of clericalism. He did not treat his disciples merely as sheep to be guarded in the field. He trained them to be sent out into the world as his representatives and wit-

nesses. The sheep are themselves trained to be shepherds! Their calling is not only to be with him, but also to be sent out by him (Mark 3: 14).

All truly pastoral ministry in the Church has as an essential part of its content the training of others to be ministers of Christ in the world. We are not ordained in order that we may be ministers and the rest not; we are ordained in order that all may be trained for ministry. The test of our ministry will be the extent to which our people become ministers.

This training for ministry has to be on several different levels. In my own experience in a small mass-movement area in Madurai Diocese I found that it was essential to give to new converts, as part of their basic training in Christianity, the experience of learning to communicate their faith to non-Christians. The newly baptised converts who were being prepared for confirmation were expected after each period of instruction to go over to the next village and try to communicate to their neighbours what they had learned. When they had completed their period of preparation and were admitted to the full privileges of membership, it would be their privilege to present for baptism people of the neighbouring village whom they had prepared. In this way there is a continuing and self-sustaining movement of evangelism. This should be an element in all basic Christian training. At the most sophisticated level we have to think of our task in a city like Madras to train our lay members who are playing key roles in the life of government, business and the professions to become ministers of Christ in these secular situations. All of this is involved in our calling and ordination. It is for this purpose that we have set up such institutions as the Community Service Centre, in order that there may be opportunities for Christians in various secular callings to learn how they can become effective ministers of Christ in their daily work.

I am aware that there is a resistance to this conception of our ministry. There is a certain tension between those who give a lot of their time to activities of this kind and those who think that this is a deviation from the basic tasks of the ministry. Lay members of Pastorate Committees sometimes complain that their pastor is spending too much time in this kind of activity, when he should be concentrating on visiting, baptising, marrying and burying his members. There is a

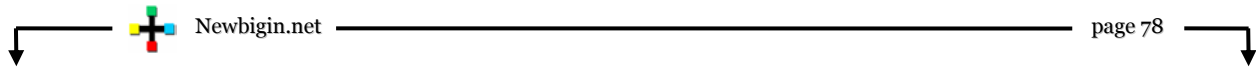
balance to be kept in this matter, but we cannot surrender to a purely clericalist conception of the ministry such as this implies. The ordained pastor is called to train all the members committed to his care for *their* ministry in the world, even though some of them have not yet woken up to the fact that there is a ministry to which they are called.

The text in Ephesians which was our starting point must be understood in the context of the teaching of the letter as a whole. In this letter the work of Christ is seen, not primarily as the gathering of a people out of the world, but primarily as the gathering together of the whole creation in order that it may find its unity and its completeness in Christ (Eph. 1: 10). Christ is already the head of the whole creation (1: 20-22), and the body which corresponds to this Head is nothing other than the Church (1: 23). In the Church the promised unity of all things in Christ is fore-shadowed (2: 1-22), and therefore the Church must be the place where God's plan is made known to the whole cosmos (3: 7-10). For this the Church has to grow up into full maturity as the embodiment of the love of God for his whole creation (3: 14-21). It is in this context that we can understand the task of training the whole membership of the Church to share in God's mighty purpose for the whole creation.

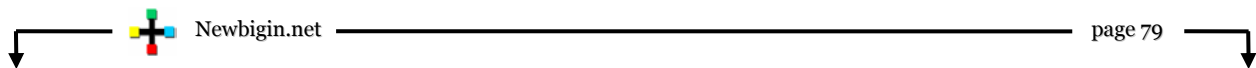
In practical terms this training for ministry will take a great variety of forms. There is the kind of training for leadership in groups of industrial workers which is already being undertaken by Christian Service to Industrial Society. There is training for leadership in neighbourhood Bible study groups, and training for work in Pastorate Committees. And then there is the whole area of training for work in particular callings, such as those of the lawyer, the doctor, the business man,

the government servant, the teacher and the professional administrator. We ought not to be content until we can honestly say that we are helping every member of the Church to fulfil his ministry in the secular world.

We may find the pattern and inspiration for this aspect of our ministry in the high-priestly prayer of our Lord himself which we read earlier. In it he speaks of his work in guarding those who were committed to him by the Father (John 17: 12). This represents what we may call the traditional understanding of the pastor's task. But at once he goes on to speak of sending them out into the world (17: 14-18) so that the world



may know the secret of its salvation (17: 20-23). All is summed up in the prayer which unveils the very centre of a true pastoral ministry: 'For their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth' (17: 19). In this prayer Christ consecrates himself an offering to the Father, and consecrates his disciples that they may manifest the Father's love to the world. That is the very heart of the ministry of every true pastor.



15

Presenting 'Every Man Mature In Christ'

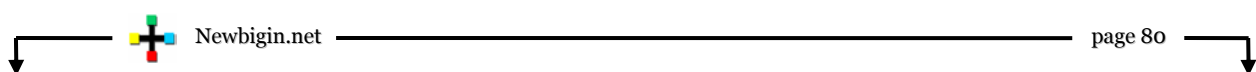
To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ. For this I toil, striving with all the energy which he mightily inspires within me.

Colossians 1:27-29

There are times when we experience the joy of being lifted up together with a great congregation into the presence of God. This really is what every Sunday service should mean to us and to our people – a very foretaste of the joy of heaven. When we recognise this, we will surely know that nothing can be too much trouble to ensure that everything in our services of worship is as perfect as we can make it.

But when we have had 'a wonderful service', it is time to be aware of our danger. It is the danger of forgetting that this is only intended to be a foretaste of something which is for the whole world and for all men. The light which shines in the darkness is for the whole world and is not to be covered up under a bushel. The salt is for the whole world to save it from decay; it is not to be kept safe in a jar. The treasure is not to be hidden in the ground to keep it safe, but is to be put into circulation in the commerce of the world, with all the risks that involves. The joy we have felt, the truth we have seen, is not to be hoarded but to be scattered, not to be protected but to be exposed to all the powers of this world which try to overcome it. When we have had 'a wonderful service' we must not forget that this is only one half of our work; the other half is that we should be concerned that what we have said and done in church is carried out in the world.

One half of our work is to gather people together for worship, that their union with Christ may be renewed and that they may be offered up as one body in union with the



one sacrifice of Christ. The other half is to send them back to their daily tasks equipped to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. If we forget this second part, the other can become positively dangerous.

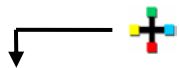
St Paul constantly stresses this aspect of his ministry. He speaks of his longing that his friends may become fully mature in Christ, so that the Gentiles may know that Christ is the hope of glory. He speaks of equipping all God's people for work in his service. How shall this 'equipping' be done?

As Pastors we certainly cannot do it alone. We have, for example, in our congregations here in Madras thousands of men and women working in every sector of the life of the city, who have knowledge and skill far beyond ours. What, then, is our role in the matter? To a very large extent we have to be 'enablers' rather than 'performers'. We have to liberate and mobilise the immense resources which lie latent in our congregations for this vast task of presenting every man mature in Christ. Let me make a few suggestions.

1. This work has to be done in small groups. A gathering of 1,000 people together for worship can be very inspiring. But it cannot be the context for the sort of mutual 'building one another up' of which Paul speaks in many of his letters. The language of the New Testament about the Christian congregation simply cannot be applied to our huge gatherings. We absolutely require the development of a multitude of occasions when Christians can meet together in small groups, where they can know each other, listen to each other, pray for each other and bear each other's burdens. It is from such groups as these that real renewal can come to the Church.

2. These groups do not have to be run by the pastor. Any attempt to keep this kind of thing within the control of the pastor (or the bishop) is fatal. We have to train and encourage lay leadership for these groups, and to trust them. Some of them may not develop as we would like. We seek to keep them within the broader fellowship of the whole congregation, but do not try to control them directly.

3. The centre of such group life should be Bible study. Over and over again in the history of the Church, both ancient and modern, the Bible has proved its power to speak afresh to small groups of ordinary laymen and women who are willing to listen to God's word spoken in relation to their own situations through the Bible.



4. Such groups should be ecumenical and not confined to members of CSI. The best pattern is the development of neighbourhood groups where Christians living near each other can meet to build one another up in faith. Some groups, however, should be on the basis of specialised experience – for example groups of lawyers, doctors and government officers.

5. Some groups may be formed around a concern for action in some particular sector of public life. All groups should be encouraged to seek to move beyond study and prayer to some specific action. It is by moving forward to action that one can gain the perspective for new vision.

The purpose of it all is that 'we may present every man mature in Christ'. Nothing less than this can be the goal of our pastoral ministry. The purpose is that every member of our congregation should be a fully functioning member of the body of Christ, taking his full share in Christ's saving work in the world, fully united with Christ, seeing and judging secular events with the eyes and mind of Christ, fully involved in the life of the world as one who is in the world as the agent of Christ. To put it in another way, we should understand every celebration of the Eucharist as something which carries right on beyond the end of the service and beyond the church doors into the life of the world, because the whole membership goes out to implement in the world what he has done in the service, to offer his whole life through Christ to the Father as the first-fruit of the offering of the whole created world to him.

If you look at this text in its context, you will be struck by the fact that before he speaks of presenting every man mature in Christ, Paul speaks of his own experience as a filling out of the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his Body which is the Church. Our pastoral ministry will be effective in presenting every man mature in Christ in the measure in which we ourselves fill out in our own lives the suffering of Christ for the sake of his body.

16 Youth In The Church

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him". Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God". Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God".

John 3:1-5

How can a man be born when he is old? This question of Nicodemus surely evokes an echo in all of us who are past middle age. Let me put it to you, my friends who are among the senior clergy, do you never find yourself asking that question? If you are honest, you have to face the fact that your life is a pretty comfortable compromise with the world. We are not very different from the average worldly man, you and I. We are not very heroic in our discipleship. We do not look like the stuff from which martyrs are made. Don't we sometimes wish that we could make a fresh start, take up the Cross afresh, and become real out-and-out Christians whom the world would recognise and follow? And then the cold question comes: How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? Impossible! This is the way I am, and nothing will change me very much now. I guess I'll be pretty much like this to the end, and even God will have to take me as I am. And so the question, with the longing behind it, is suppressed.

The young man in your congregation does not know about this question and our suppression of it. All he sees is the

Result – the old man who won't change and who will go on being that way till he dies. And the young man, while he is waiting for the old man to die, quietly becomes old too. I suppose that there must have been tensions in the Church between old and young from the very beginning – otherwise Peter would not have written the paragraph which we have just read.* His emphasis, you will note, is on the mutual duty of old and young – a duty which is summed up in the word 'humility'. All are to be humble towards one another – the old towards the young and the young towards the old.

In general the Church has been on the side of the old. No one looking at the Church would call it a young people's movement. The sins which the Church most vigorously condemns are usually the sins of which old people are no longer capable. The characteristic sins of the middle-aged and old-sloth, cowardice and compromise with the world – are more leniently dealt with. Even Christian art has almost always portrayed Christ and his apostles as old men.

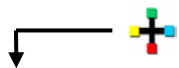
Yet it is a fact beyond question that Jesus and his disciples were young men. They would all have qualified for membership in our youth fellowship, but I suspect that most pastorates would have regarded them as too young for membership in the Pastorate Committee. It must have been hard for senior ecclesiastics like Nicodemus to believe that this movement of young people was really the coming of the Kingdom of God. Doesn't Nicodemus's question seem natural if you think for a moment of a tired old ecclesiastic in his sixties sitting opposite a young man from Nazareth just half his age?

What really is at issue in this tension between age and youth? Is it not this, that the experience of us who are old, the experience which we think is our greatest asset in comparison

with the young, is a sinful experience, an experience full of compromise with the world, the flesh and the devil? The demand that we must be born again, that we must become as little children, is a demand that we break with our experience. It is a demand that we shall *not* be conformed to this world (in which we have perhaps been rather successful), but be transformed by the renewing of our minds – by becoming young again.

The question of youth in the Church is not just a question

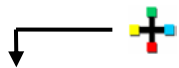
* 1 Peter 5:1-7.



of having programmes for training young people in the way that we think they should go. That is part of the question, but by no means the most important. We are not interested in young people because they are future leaders-as though we wanted to make them tools for carrying on our programmes. I have often heard people say that youth work is very important because the young people of today are the leaders of tomorrow. But this is surely the wrong way to look at the matter. We have to be concerned about young people not because they will be old later on, but because they are young now. The point is that we must have young people in the Church because we must listen to them, because they have something to say to us, because they put radical questions to us about the way we have become conformed to this world.

It is surely no accident that God has chosen to reveal his glory in a young man and in a movement of young people. The sins which the Bible condemns most severely are not the sins that the Church has loved to condemn – the so – called sins of youth. They are rather the sins of middle-age-unbelief, scepticism about the possibility of radical change, compromise with the world.

The tension between young and old in the Church can be a fruitful tension if we follow the advice of St. Peter and clothe ourselves – young and old alike – with humility, so that we can really listen to each other. Only a church which does that will find the secret of constant renewal, and will be able to say to the Nicodemus who lurks in each one of us: ‘Yes, you can be born again even when you are old’.



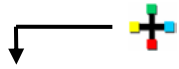
17

The Role Of The Parish In Society

The word ‘parish’ comes from a Latin word which simply means an area or district. The parish system as it was known in Europe for many centuries probably had its origins in pre-Christian times. Each landowner was required by ancient custom to provide a priest to perform the religious duties for the people living on his land. This practice continued when Europe became Christian. The landlord was obliged to provide and support a clergyman for his tenants and servants. The whole concept of the parish, therefore, springs from a time in which the religious community (whether Christian or pagan) was co-terminous with the total human community.

Plainly this is not the situation envisaged in the New Testament, and it is not our situation in India today. We are accustomed to make a sharp distinction between Church and world, between Christians and those outside. But our situation in this respect is not at all the same as the situation in Europe or North America today. The present situation in Europe has grown out of a total synthesis of Church and society by a double process: on the one hand there has been the movement of secularisation which has liberated more and more segments of human life from the control of the Church; on the other hand there have been powerful movements in the Church, beginning with the pietist movement of the 17th and 18th centuries, which have emphasised the separation of the Church from the world.

Our situation in India is by no means the same. Certainly a sharp separation was implied in the preaching of missionaries from the beginning. Converts were called upon to separate themselves radically from Hindu society, its festivals and social customs as well as its strictly religious observances. But – and this is the important point – the society *into* which they were drawn was not a purely ‘churchly’ society; it was rather a transplanted version of the mediaeval ‘Christendom’ which was breaking down in Europe. The great mission com-

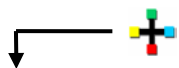


pounds created by the missionaries of the 19th century, including not only a church but also school, hospital, industries and farms, were more like small colonies of mediaeval Christendom than anything to be found in the New Testament. Similarly the ‘Christian villages’ made up of the converts drawn from the Harijan communities round about, were conceived as total societies in which civil as well as religious matters would be under the control of the Church. When I myself occupied for some years the position of a ‘District Missionary’, having authority over the employment of a large proportion of the Christians in the area, I used to reflect that this was probably the nearest surviving approach to the Hildebrandine Papacy! In other words, the separation with which we in our Indian Church are familiar was not a separation between the Church as a religious society and the world as a secular society. It was a separation between two different embodiments of the total ‘sacral society’.

But, as we well know, this situation has almost completely broken down. We live in an increasingly secular society. The ‘mission compound’ has almost disappeared. Christians earn their living and play their part in society alongside of others as equal citizens in a single secular society. It is true that we cling to our colleges and hospitals and schools as the last relics of the mini-Christendom which the 19th century missionaries created, but we are not likely to have them for long. What, then, is the role of the parish in society today? Is there any continuing meaning in the idea of a ‘parish’?

Many people would say No. Their picture of the Church is of a series of competing congregations, each of which is a sort of religious club catering to the religious tastes of its members. The aim of each congregation is to attract as many members as possible to its services, increase its income and improve its buildings. A ‘successful’ congregation is one that does all these things. The game is ‘free for all’ and everyone is at liberty to join in the scramble for membership. Each congregation is simply concerned for its own self-aggrandisement and there is no sense of responsibility for the welfare of society as a whole. The concept of the ‘parish’ is completely lost.

One ludicrous result of this in Madras City is the phenomenon of multiple membership. People tell me proudly that they are members of two or three churches, just as a man

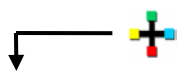


might say that he belongs to two or three clubs. They do not see how absurd it is. Suppose that you met a man who told you he was in the Army, and you ask him ‘Which regiment?’ and he replied: ‘I belong to several regiments. I like to get exercise so I am in the infantry. I am keen on radio, so I am in the Signal Corps. And then I am with Tanks for the week ends just to improve my driving.’ What kind of an army would that be? What chance would it have of winning any war? But these people do not understand what the Church is. They do really believe that it is a series of private clubs designed to cater to the religious tastes of the members. Plainly this is not what St. Paul was talking about when he talked about the Church.

We have become the prisoners of traditional congregational structures which have little to do with the real nature and function of the Church. It is not surprising that there is a world-wide discussion about the whole matter. How can the structure of our local congregations be so transformed that they correspond to the real purpose of the Church? Does the concept of the

parish-the area for which a particular group of Christians takes enduring responsibility – have any continuing validity? If so, what would this mean practically in a city like Madras? I do not know all the answers to these questions, but I share with you some guidelines for thinking.

1. The Church – and therefore every congregation of the Church – is intended by God to be the first-fruit and sign and instrument of his new creation. Each word in that definition is important. The Church is a *first-fruit*. It is not an end in itself. Mere church growth is not the same as the coming of God's reign. But neither is the Church merely an instrument, an organisation for getting God's will done. It is something different from both of these: it is a first-fruit, what St. Paul calls *arrabon*. It is the place where there is really fellowship with God through Jesus Christ here and now, but only as a foretaste of the much fuller and greater reality which God intends. And therefore the Church is a *sign* of this new reality. A sign does not point to itself; it points beyond itself to something else. The Church cannot say: here is the Kingdom of God. But existence of the Church, its fellowship and its works of love, can be a sign which causes men to look up and believe that the reign of God is a reality. And therefore the Church can be an *instrument* (not the only instrument)



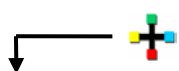
of God's reign. It can be a means through which God's will is done in the world and his reign becomes effective.

Therefore the question that has to be asked about the Church and about every congregation is not: How big is it? How fast is it growing? How rich is it? It is: What difference is it making to that bit of the world in which it is placed? Is it actually functioning as first-fruit, sign and instrument of God's new creation for that bit of the world?

And it is in this context that we are to understand the separation of the Church from the world. It is separated not in order to abandon the world to destruction but in order to lead the world to salvation. It is not the separation of a man who abandons his fellows in order to make his own escape, but the separation of the man who goes ahead of his fellows in order to show them the way to freedom.

2. The Church can be the first-fruit, sign and instrument of God's new creation only if it is placed firmly in the context of some segment of the old creation. 'The world' is too vague a phrase to have any real meaning. Human life is lived not just in 'the world' but in concrete and particular communities – this village, this factory, this school, this government office, this suburb, this trade union, this professional association. To speak of God's new creation means to speak also of God's will for these particular and specific communities which make up the life of mankind. If the Church is to be in and for the world, it must be in and for these particular segments of the world. It must be the Church in and for this village, this factory, this suburb. In other words, the structures of the Church must be organically related to the structures of the secular world. That is the enduring theological justification for the idea of the parish. There is no meaning in speaking of the Church as first-fruit, sign and instrument of God's reign in the world if this does not apply specifically to *this* bit of the world where the Church is set.

How, then, shall the parish be defined? In a simple agricultural society, such as that of mediaeval Europe, or much of India until recent times, the village was a sufficient definition of the parish. The village was a little world in which the ordinary man had his whole life – his work, his recreation, his friendships. The Church could be organised as a network of geographically defined parishes, and with that structure could meet the real needs of society. In our modern world



that is no longer the case. Most men in Madras city live in several worlds. There is the neighbourhood where their home is; there is the factory where they work; and there is the place

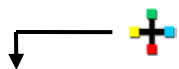
where they spend their leisure or where they go to church. In a world of this kind the parish cannot be defined in geographical terms alone. Certainly the place where a man lives, where his home is, has a fundamental claim to be regarded as primary. Therefore we are probably right if we continue to try to define our parishes geographically and encourage each congregation to take the responsibility for the people who live in its neighbourhood. But if we are serious in our mission we have also to develop other forms of congregational life related to other 'worlds' – such as workers' groups in factories, student groups in colleges, and professional groups in the many different segments of urban life. All of these have a rightful claim to be regarded as essential elements in the structure of the Church alongside of the traditional local congregation.

3. How is the Church in each place to fulfil its role as first-fruit, sign and instrument of the reign of God? Let me try to answer that question by using three traditional biblical words.

(a) The congregation is to be the humble *servant* of Jesus for the sake of its neighbours. It is to be ready to help them in whatever need they are. It will be recognised as truly the Church of Jesus Christ when its posture is not that of a lord and teacher, but that of a humble servant stooping down to do the menial tasks that a slave is expected to do.

(b) The congregation is to be the *witness* to Jesus and his kingdom. It must point beyond itself to him. It must be ready, in the wisest and most loving way possible, to tell its neighbours all about Jesus, through preaching, drama, the distribution of literature, and in any other way that seems appropriate.

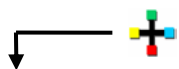
(c) The congregation is to be *a priesthood* on behalf of all its neighbours. As Jesus came to be the great High Priest for all mankind, so each congregation is to carry out his priesthood for its neighbours. Priesthood has a double character. It means bringing the truth and love and peace of God to men who do not know God. And it means offering up to God on behalf of all men the worship and prayer and obedience which are due to him. When the congregation meets for worship, and above all at the Eucharist, it is to offer up



to God not only its own obedience and love; it is to act as the priestly people offering up to God the life of its whole neighbourhood that God's reign may truly become effective in the whole of its life.

I suggest that many of the programmes in which we are engaged should be looked at in this perspective: The attempt to get each congregation deeply concerned with the life of one or two slums in its neighbourhood; the attempt to find ways of ministering to the new residents in the new industrial suburbs and in the slum-clearance projects; the work of the industrial team; and the work of the Community Service Centre in bringing together people in similar professions – all of these can be understood and judged in the light of the principles I have suggested.

It is easy to say that the Church is God's servant for the world. It only becomes realistic if we act concretely in relation to some segment of the world. That is the enduring validity of the concept of the parish.



18

Social Service In The Ministry Of The Church

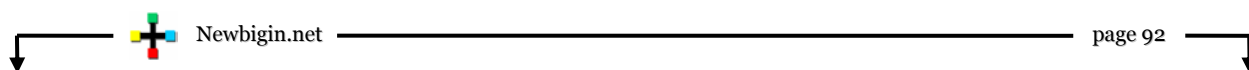
Jesus went to Nazareth where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went as usual to the synagogue. He stood up to read the Scriptures and was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor, he has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, to announce the year when the Lord will save his people".

Our Church is engaged in fairly extensive social work in the slums of the city. Sometimes the question is asked – and it is right to ask it – What are we really doing? What do we hope to achieve by this work? It is, after all, only a drop in the bucket compared with the vast needs of this city of three million people. Why not leave this kind of work to the Corporation and the Government? Why not?

I

What answer do we give to this question?

1. Some people will answer at once: this is not the business of the Church. The work of the Church is to save souls. This emphasis on social work is a deviation from our true work – an attractive deviation because saving souls is difficult. Let us concentrate on our real task. The immediate answer to that comes from St. James: ‘Suppose there are brothers or sisters who need clothes and don't have enough to eat. What good is there in your saying to them, "God bless you! Keep warm and eat well!" – if you don't give them the necessities of life?’ (James 2: 15f). People are not likely to believe what we say about the love of God if we don't care



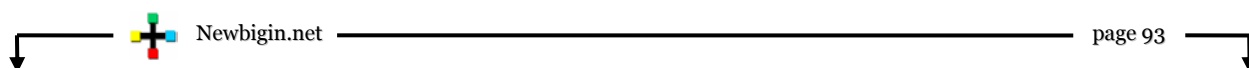
enough to help them in their need. That is why every sincere movement of evangelism quickly becomes involved in meeting the ordinary human needs of people.

2. Some people will accept this, but they will say that the real purpose of our social work is to create a situation in which people will listen to the Gospel. There is a kernel of truth in this, and yet it can be stated in such a way as to be utterly repellent to honest people. If our evangelism is primarily the effort of the Church to expand its borders, and if our social work is primarily a bait to make people swallow our preaching, then we shall rightly earn the contempt of honest people. It is for this reason that even our best work is often regarded with deep suspicion. People fear that we do not act from simple compassion, like the good samaritan, but from some ulterior motive. They fear that our apparent unselfishness is really a subtle form of selfishness.

3. Shall we then say that in doing social work we have no desire that people should accept the Gospel? While we were busy with the installation of modern flush-out sanitary units in a dozen of the city slums, one of our workers was asked: Have you come here to convert us? Quite rightly he answered: ‘Yes’. If he had answered ‘No’, what would it imply? It would imply that he was content that the people of the slum should retain the same mental attitudes that they had before. There would be a modern latrine, but there would be no change in the people. But that would be failure. If our social work does not change *people*, if it does not also convert them into agents of change, it has failed.

4. In fact there is a very great danger in our social work if we do not steadily maintain that we are out to change people. I am afraid that the old Hindu idea of merit (*punnyam*) is still immensely strong. I suspect that most people who look at our work assume that we are really trying to accumulate merit. Some time ago, after one of the slums had been destroyed by fire, church volunteers and social workers were doing their best to rush food and clothing to the people who had lost everything. While everyone was busy about this, I had a phone call from the Tahsildar*. ‘I hear that you are having a poor-feeding at ... Nagar. When does

*The *Tahsildar* is the revenue official in charge of one of the subdivisions of a district.



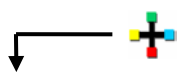
the function begin?’ I had a momentary picture of myself as that Tahsildar saw me – a typical religious functionary trying to add to his stock of merit by doing one of the traditional ‘good works’. A great deal of social work is just that. There are agencies which have continued for

decades doing the same kind of service to the same people, yet leaving the situation unchanged. ‘Good works’ of that kind leave the recipients basically unchanged. The same kind of ‘charity’ has to be continued endlessly. But we are concerned with something different. We are agents of change who cannot be content unless others also join us in being agents of change. We are out to convert people, not just to feed them.

II

But what kind of conversion are we aiming at? We may begin our answer to that question by pondering the words of Jesus spoken in the synagogue of Nazareth at the beginning of his ministry. In St Luke’s Gospel they form a sort of ‘manifesto’ in which Jesus announces what he intends to do. Attention is often called to the ‘social service content’ of this manifesto. But it is not merely the announcement of a programme of social service. It is the announcement of the presence of a new reality – the coming of the Spirit – anointed herald and agent of God’s new era of salvation. The works of mercy, of healing, of liberation—all are part of the breaking in of a new reality. They are parts of it and therefore signs of it – but signs which need to be interpreted by the spoken word. Jesus comes not only to liberate and to heal, but also to preach and to announce. The words interpret the signs, and the signs validate the words.

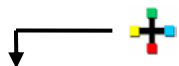
On the one hand the deeds of healing and liberation must not be separated from the new reality of which they are a part. They are part of the overflowing of God’s grace. Jesus’ deeds of love were not part of a contrived programme with some ulterior purpose: they were the overflowing of the love which filled his whole being. Just so, the Church’s deeds of love ought to be – not contrived signs but natural and spontaneous signs of the new reality in which we have been made sharers through Christ. Those who have received so much cannot keep it to themselves. It must overflow in love to others.



But though the signs are part of the reality and not something separate from it, yet they need words to interpret them. Even the works of Jesus were not self-interpreting. They needed the words in which he proclaimed the reality and the character of the reign of God. Much more do our faltering and ambiguous deeds need interpreting. One of the decisive experiences of my own life was a long vacation spent during my student days as part of a team of workers among the unemployed miners of one of the South Wales mining districts. The members of the group with which I worked were deeply convinced that they must confine themselves to social work, and that anything in the way of religious activity or preaching must be completely avoided. I was not at that time a Christian. But I could not fail to see that our social work was not meeting the deepest needs of these men and women who had rotted in unemployment for more than a decade. They needed more than food and games and education. They needed hope. They needed something to love and long for at a time when the world seemed to have no use for them. Our social work programmes alone could not communicate that: it needed the word, the word about Jesus and his Cross. It was in that situation that the death of Jesus first became a reality to me.

When I say that the deed needs the word to interpret it, I do not mean that every action has to be accompanied by a sermon or a tract. There have been mission hospitals where you could not get treatment from the doctor till you had listened to a sermon from him. I do not advocate that policy. The deed and the word do not always have to go together. But they must both be seen to be part of the same reality—the reality of a new power, a new reign which has broken into this world. There are different gifts and different callings in the Church. To some is given the gift of healing or of relevant political and social action. To another is given the gift of personal counselling. To another the gift of prophecy or preaching. No one person has all the gifts. But when this variety of gifts is visibly held within the fellowship of that company of people which looks to Jesus as Lord and Saviour, they reinforce one another and interpret one another. All

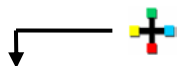
together they can (if the Spirit graciously uses them) make it possible for men and women to believe that God's reign is a reality and that they can and must commit themselves to



that reality totally and completely. It is that conversion, surely, that we seek in our social work.

III

But we have to bear the *karma* of our sins and the sins of our ancestors. The Church does not look to most people like the agent of God's reign. It looks too much like a group of people seeking their own sectional advantage. As long as that is so, our evangelism will be suspect, and our social work will be suspect even when we say that it has nothing to do with conversion. We have to accept this situation humbly and penitently. We cannot abandon our conviction that God's reign is embodied in the person of Jesus, and that it is his dying and rising alone which can make sense out of this world in which good and evil are so tangled together. We can commend that conviction to others only as we are willing to do as Jesus did – to take the form of a servant. When Jesus had finished all his teaching about the Kingdom of God, and when his disciples had still not 'seen' it, he did one thing which was the final and irreplaceable manifesting of what that Kingdom is: he stooped down and washed their feet. It is when the Church is in that position that our message of the Kingdom will be credible.



19

Out Of The World And Into The World

I do not pray that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth. As thou didst send me into the world, so have I sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth.

John 17:15-19

I want to put before you two sharply contrasted 'models' by which the life of the Christian is often represented. The first is what I will call the Pilgrim's Progress Model. You are so familiar with this model that I do not need to describe it. The emphasis is upon the decisive break by which the Christian separates himself from this world, flees from the 'wicked city' and makes for his true home in another world. In this model 'the world' is felt primarily as a threat, as a source of contagion from which the Christian must keep himself free. To be saved is to be saved from this world.

The other model I shall call the Jonah Model. Here too there is a wicked city at the centre of the picture. But the command to God's servant is to go into the city. Jonah incurs God's wrath by trying to flee as far as possible from the wicked city. He tries to escape to the other end of the world. But God relentlessly pursues him and drives him back to Nineveh. At the end of the story we have a picture of Jonah, in a bad temper, sitting in the outskirts of the city to watch its destruction, while God pleads with him for the city: Should I not have compassion on that great city which is surely full of wickedness, but also of innocent babes and animals?

These two pictures seem at first sight to be completely opposed to one another. And yet both of them have their roots in Scripture and both have played their part in the long history of the Church.

The Pilgrim's Progress Model is sketched already in the unbearable story of Lot and his family escaping from Sodom. It is developed in the story of the escape of the Israelites from Egypt, and in that second exodus of which the prophets speak – escape from captivity in Babylon. These brief references to Scripture will remind you of how deep are the reverberations which this vision of the Christian life evokes. There are deep roots for the feeling that to be a Christian means to make a clean break with the world, to be separated, to 'come out from among them'. There is no doubt that this first model is the overwhelmingly dominant one among our churches in India.

But the other model also has its roots in the Bible. Hosea is commanded to go and join himself to his immoral wife. Isaiah is sent to exercise his ministry in the midst of an unbelieving and unrepentant Jewish people. Jonah is sent into the wicked city of Nineveh. And – supreme example – Jesus 'set his face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem' – to go into that city which was the headquarters of all the forces which sought to destroy him and to blot out his message of the Reign of God.

And yet Scripture speaks of the 'exodus' which Jesus accomplished at Jerusalem. This very word should remind us that the two models are not simply to be opposed to one another, that our vision of the Christian life must somehow have room for them both.

It is, of course, very easy for those who are committed to one 'model' to make caricatures of the other. One can easily make a sketch of the kind of man who is only interested in his own salvation and is apparently ready to let the rest of the world go to hell. One can also draw a caricature of the Christian who is so worldly that you wonder why he bothers to call himself a Christian at all since his aim seems to be to become indistinguishable from the thousands of non-Christians around him.

But these caricatures do not help. If we are not to be pulled aimlessly back and forth between these two models, we have to go down to the very heart of our faith, which is the Cross. The Cross is both the new Exodus, and also at the same time that place at which the Son of God entered into the very heart of the world in all its wickedness. The prayer of Jesus in the 17th chapter of St John is the classical interpretation

of the Cross of Jesus and of what it means for the disciple to follow Jesus on the way of the Cross.

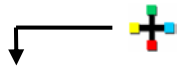
Jesus did not, like Jonah, run away from the city – though he could have done so. He went right into it, right into the place where all the evil that was concentrated in it – the blended wickedness of churchmen, lawyers, politicians and ordinary citizens – was focussed in burning heat upon himself. The Cross is in one sense an act of total identification with the world. But in another sense it is an act of radical separation. It is both these things at the same time. By going right into the heart of the world's sorrow and sin Jesus exposed it and destroyed it. At the heart of that event there was a mighty spiritual battle in which the holy love of Jesus was pitted against all the spiritual powers of evil and the prince of this world was defeated and cast out.

That is why, as he goes into this battle, Jesus consecrates himself, puts himself wholly into the hands of God, and at the same time prays for his disciples that they may be consecrated in the truth and kept from the evil one. He sends his disciples into the world, but it is by the same way as that by which he goes – the way of the Cross. This entry into the world is at the same time a radical separation from the world – not an outward separation, but the inward separation of total commitment.

I have been reading the full length biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer by his friend Eberhard Bethge. As the story moves to its climax, one sees two things happening at the same time. On the one hand Bonhoeffer is more and more deeply involved in the political activities for which he was eventually executed. Outwardly he is a member of the German Secret Service while he is secretly

working as a double agent. But, at the same time, there is an inner reality which is only rarely visible – a secret inward discipline, a consecration, a life of prayer, Bible study and meditation, through which he is being conformed more and more inwardly to the Cross of Jesus. Without that inner consecration, the outward life would be worldliness and nothing more. There is at the same time a total engagement and a radical separation. This is the way of the Cross.

If I return in conclusion to the two ‘models’ with which I started, I would have to say that our great danger here is that our Church is dominated by the ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’



model, to the virtual exclusion of the other. The Christian life is pictured too exclusively in terms of an escape from the world in order to be saved. This becomes very clear when one reflects on the fact that hardly any serious and committed Christians are engaged in politics, and very few in the work of trade unions. I even meet Christians who make it a point of virtue not to read the daily newspaper. Such Christians in fact are trying to take what the world offers without taking responsibility for the life of the world. This is surely a caricature of Christian discipleship. Christian discipleship means following Jesus along the way of the Cross. In other words, it means being with him in bearing the sin of the world. The salvation in which he invites us to become partakers is in that, and nowhere else. It is a terrible misunderstanding of the Gospel to think that it offers us salvation while relieving us of responsibility for the life of the world, for the sin and sorrow and pain with which our human life and that of our fellow men and women is so deeply interwoven. The very essence of our baptism is that it is our incorporation into that action of Jesus in which he identified himself with sinful men and took upon himself the burden of their sin. We continue in our baptism as we continue in the way of the Cross.

And that is the central meaning of the Eucharist. What is given to us here is indeed the food and drink of eternal life. But to take it means that we are committed to being part of his body broken for the world, and to being poured out with his blood for the life of the world.



20

Mission To Industry

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.

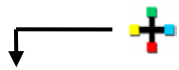
Matthew 28:18-20

Our theme today is ‘Mission to Industry’. But in what sense can we speak of a mission to industry? Is not our mission to men and women rather than to institutions? Let us try to answer these questions by taking as our guide the classic text of mission – the Great Commission.

Jesus says that all authority is given to him. If this is not so, mission is mere proselytising. Only if it is true that Jesus is the great and final reality with which all men have to deal at all times and places, are we justified in seeking to make the name of Jesus known to all men. But it is true. Nothing exists which is outside of his sovereign authority. The whole vast revolution in human life by which people are transferred from fields to factories, and learn to tend machines instead of driving the plough and tending their animals – all of this is within the sovereign authority of Jesus, and it is through Jesus that men can begin to understand what industry is and what kind of behaviour it calls for.

Therefore, says Jesus, we are to go and ‘disciple the nations’. The Greek word is, as you know, *ta ethne*. But how shall we translate this word? What we now call ‘nations’ did not exist when the Gospels were written. The Tamil translators of the eighteenth century chose the word

jathi (caste) to translate the word – a fact which always causes surprise to western readers. The background of the word is the Hebrew *goim* – the multitude of families and clans into which the one human race has become divided. These are to be ‘disciplined’.



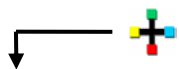
The Gospel is addressed not only to individuals, but also to the communities to which these individuals belong, because these individuals are what they are largely because of their life in their communities. Communities have a corporate personality. They can think and act together. If you take an individual right out of his community he becomes a different person.

The Gospel is addressed to these corporate entities. It is not true to say ‘Change the individuals and the community will change’. It is often nearer the truth to say ‘Change the community and the individuals will change’. In fact neither is true alone. One has to say both. And the Gospel is addressed to both – both to the individual and to the community of which he is a part.

One of the most vigorous and rapidly growing churches in the world is the Batak Church of Sumatra. Perhaps the main reason for this is that the missionaries who brought the Gospel to the Batak people took immense pains to study not only the language of the Batak people but also the whole body of customary law (the *adat*) by which the life of the whole people was moulded and held together. They sought to avoid the situation in which becoming a Christian means being cut off from one’s people. They sought rather to bring the people as a whole, with their *adat*, into the realm of the Gospel where new powers were at work and new forms could be created. Consequently what has happened is not that a few Bataks have ceased to be Bataks and become Christians. Rather what has happened is that the whole life of the Batak people has been changed by the Gospel. The Batak ‘nation’ has been disciplined.

The parallel with industry is obvious. The world of industry constitutes a community with its own *adat*. When men are drawn out of their villages into the great factories around our cities, they become different people. The great industrial areas of our cities are witnessing the formation of a vast new ‘nation’ which has to be disciplined. And this can only be done if we are patient enough to learn the *adat*.

We have indeed a mission to the individual men and women who make up these great industrial communities – each of them having his or her own personal and special needs. But our mission to them is not to individuals in isolation. We have a mission to the world of industry as such. And that means



that we have to have the patience and the skill to study, to learn, to understand the language and the *adat* of this ‘nation’. We have to work with Institutes of Management, with trade unions, with productivity councils and with managers’ associations in order to understand what are the tensions, the dilemmas, the pressures that men in industry face. Without this we cannot fulfil the great commission to disciple the nations.

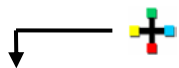
To become a disciple means to learn to *act* in new ways. This must be true also in the world of industry. We can only learn what kinds of actions are needed by those who belong to the world of industry from within that world itself.

Disciple the nations, says our Lord, and baptise them (that is the people who make up the nations) in the Triune Name. To disciple a nation means to bring its whole corporate life, the whole *adat* under the rule of Christ. And to baptise in the triune name means to bring men and women one by one into living membership with Jesus the Son who, when he took on himself the whole sin of his people, was acknowledged by the Father as his beloved Son, and anointed by the Spirit for his mission. The purpose of baptism is not to separate the one baptised from his people,

but to bring him into that saving relationship with his people which Jesus has already taken upon himself in his baptism – in the baptism which was completed on the cross.

What does this say to us about our mission to industry? We do not have to send missionaries into industry – like the worker priests in France or the industrial chaplains in England. There are already tens of thousands of baptised Christians in the industries of Madras – most of them as workers, some as managers and supervisors. The difficulty is that most of them have misunderstood their baptism. They have thought that it was something that had nothing to do with their work on the shop floor or in the office, that it was a personal matter concerning their personal and private salvation and not a commitment to be part of God's mission to industry. Our main job in industry is to set ourselves to correct this misunderstanding. Our job is to help them to understand that they *are* the industrial mission. This means at least two things.

First, we have to learn the *adat*. We must learn to understand the structure and the dynamics of industrial life. Only in

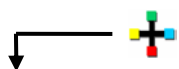


this way can we learn what it means to be a Christian in industry – what it means to ‘disciple’ this ‘nation’. What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus in industry – as a manager? as a foreman? as a trade union official? as technical expert? as wage earner? What is the responsibility of a Christian in relation to strikes? to automation and its problems? to wage structures? to conditions of labour? to amalgamations and take-over bids? The answers to these questions can only be learned as those who have to make the decisions face them together. Hence our mission to industry requires of us to plan seminars, conferences and study programmes through which those involved at various levels in industry can find their way towards acceptable norms of behaviour.

Secondly, this means that every one of us who has industry in his parish is involved in industrial mission. Of course we need expert help and we are grateful to those who are giving us leadership in this matter. But it cannot be left to them. It would be quite inappropriate for us to follow the pattern of industrial chaplaincies as it has developed in England. We are there, in industry, already through the thousands of our faithful members who are at work in the mills and factories. It is an essential part of the work of *every* pastor who has industry in his parish to become intelligently and effectively involved in the kind of activities of which I have been speaking.

Thirdly, one more word about baptism. Mission ought to lead to baptism as well as arising out of baptism. We do not hear of many baptisms as the result of our industrial mission, though there are some – more perhaps than you think. But it is worth remembering that the German missionaries among the Bataks often delayed baptism for a long time, lest baptism should mean cutting the Christian off from the community and so delaying the discipling of the whole nation. Perhaps we have to spend a long time in this work of learning the *adat* before the Christians in industry can give the kind of witness that will lead men and women in industry to look to Jesus as Lord.

The Great Commission ends with the promise: Lo, I am with you always until the end of the ages. To all of those Christians who are engaged in the world of industry, this is a sure promise. They are there because Christ has put them there. They are there to be the witnesses of his sovereignty



over industry, to be the instruments by which that sovereignty is more and more fully exercised, and to be the signs for men to see that his blessed reign is over the factory as it is over the field, the farm and the home.

21

The Role Of The Church In Seeking Social Justice

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Romans 8:18-25

The Conference at Bangkok on 'Salvation Today' has stimulated and brought into focus a great deal of discussion about the meaning of the word 'Salvation'. Careful biblical study makes it quite clear that in the Bible salvation concerns the whole man in the totality of his relationships. It includes both that which is inward and spiritual and also that which is outward-political and social and economic. If one looks at the Old Testament 'models' of salvation, they are profoundly concerned with man's social and economic life. Listen to this word-picture of salvation in the well-known words of Micah:

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it and many nations shall come, and say: 'Come let us go up to the

mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples and decide for strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more; but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid.

Or think of the closing verses of Psalm 144, with their picture of happy family life, abundant economic prosperity and civil peace. These and many other similar passages in the Old Testament embody the ideas which in our time are expressed in such secular forms as the Four Freedoms of President Roosevelt, or the quest for 'Development' of the 1960s. And the great paradigm of salvation in the Old Testament, the story of the Exodus, is a story which we in our day would tell in terms of the political struggle for the liberation of suppressed peoples.

And yet, the vision of salvation in the Old Testament is never a merely secular vision. It is never just a vision of political liberation or economic progress or social peace and justice. On the one hand there is always at the heart of it the promise: I will be with you. That is the true kernel of salvation – fellowship with the living Lord. The rest is the outward token of that inward reality. And, on the other hand, there is always in the background the eschatological vision of a totally new order which goes beyond anything that this worldly experience can show. On the one hand salvation is – if one may put it so – both outward and inward; it concerns man's fellowship with God at the very heart of his experience of being human, and it also concerns his social life with other men and his experience with the world of nature. On the other hand salvation is both present and future; it is both a present experience and a future hope.

This becomes very explicit in the New Testament. Here salvation is, from one point of view, something in the future. It is that final state of affairs when God's name is hallowed and his rule obeyed and his will done throughout the whole creation. But it is also something of which we have a present

experience. There are saving acts of God now, and there is an actual fellowship now with the living Lord.

This tension is most fully visible in the eighth chapter of Romans. At the beginning of the chapter Paul speaks of the saving act of God through Jesus Christ of which we already have experience. God *has* delivered us from the dominion of law, sin and death and given us the freedom of sonship through the Spirit (verses 1-17). But this very deliverance makes us long for the full deliverance of all things—a longing which is full of pain and anguish (verses 18-27). As Christians we share to the full the pain, the anguish, the sense of futility in which the whole creation groans. But we have the clue to its meaning: it is the anguish of child-birth; a new world is struggling to be born. And we have received already, in the gift of the Spirit, the foretaste of that new world. We are, and we know that we are, heirs of the new world – provided we accept the suffering, the anguish, the pain of the new creation. And so it is possible for Paul to say that we *were* saved (past tense) in *hope*. Salvation is at the same time a future hope and a present reality.

It is very hard to maintain this tension steadily in practice. We are constantly being pulled one way or the other. There is the Christian for whom life is a desperate struggle against evil—against injustice and oppression. One thinks for example of those devoted Christians who have given themselves wholly to radical political action, but for whom there is little sense of the joy of salvation as a present reality which can be shared with others here and now. On the other hand there is the Christian for whom life is all ‘peace with God’ but there is little or no serious concern about the injustice and iniquity that reign all around him. One thinks of the comfortable middle-class congregations, of which we have so many, whose Christianity is all a matter of the comforting assurance that God will look after them in this life and give them a place in heaven afterwards, but who have little or no care for the men and women rotting in the squalid slums around them.

Our particular temptation here is the second one. We have forgotten that the Church is the agent of God's kingdom put into the world to fight unremittingly against all the powers of evil, and have come to think of it as a place where we can enjoy the comforts of salvation here and hereafter.

If you visit an army in war time and are invited to the

Officers' Mess, you will find that even in the midst of war they manage to make themselves fairly comfortable, to provide themselves with enough food and rest to ensure that they are fit for battle. But what would we think of an army which had devoted its entire resources to ensuring plentiful food and comfortable quarters for everyone, and had completely lost contact with the enemy it is supposed to be fighting? Too often, I fear, that is a picture of the Church. Recently one of our pastors was rebuked by members of the Pastorate Committee for spending too much of his time with those who were not members of the Church. ‘We pay you to look after our spiritual needs, and it is not your business to spend your time with all the other people in the neighbourhood.’ What a fantastic misunderstanding of the Church!

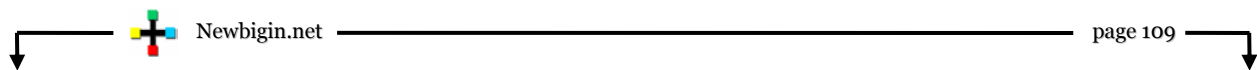
But it is a misunderstanding to which the people of God have always been prone, as the Old Testament prophets testify in place after place. How often they had to thunder against a

comfortable piety which thought that one can enjoy God's favour without being concerned about social justice.

When you come to appear before me, who requires of you this trampling of my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and sabbath and the calling of assemblies-I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them. . . . Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless and plead for the widow (Isaiah 1: 12-17).

The piety which can comfortably co-exist with flagrant social injustice is an abomination to God. This is a terrible warning which we in India must take to heart. Salvation is not a privilege which we can enjoy apart from our total commitment to God's battle with the powers of evil.

But salvation is also not something which merely waits for us at the end of the road when we have fought the last battle for social justice. We must not allow ourselves to be robbed of the present joy of salvation by those who see nothing except the almost hopeless battle with evil. The great evan-

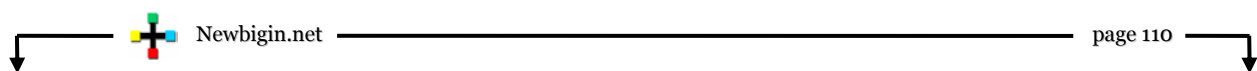


gelical doctrine of justification by faith remains basic and we must never stray away from it. We do not put ourselves in the right with God by our own efforts – however devoted and enlightened they may be. Justification – being right with God – is a free gift. It cannot be earned; it can only be received with wonder and gratitude. *But* we can only receive that gift as we commit ourselves totally and irreversibly to the justice of God in action. The gift of justification cannot be received except as it leads to justice in action. It was only recently that a friend pointed out to me something in the story of Zachaeus which I had never noticed. Jesus's coming to the house of Zachaeus was an act of pure kindness which had nothing to do with any merit of Zachaeus. But the moment when Jesus said: 'Today salvation has come to this house'. was the moment when Zachaeus made the decision to do justice to those whom he had robbed.

It is a disastrous misunderstanding to think that we can enjoy salvation through Jesus Christ and at the same time regard action for justice in the world as a sort of optional extra-or even as an inferior substitute for the work of passing on the good news of salvation. Action for social justice is salvation in action.

Of course it is true that no action of ours can do more than produce *a little* more justice in the world. Our actions may even, in the course of time, become the occasion for new injustice. There is no justification, no putting right with God, except as a free gift to be received by faith. But we can only receive that gift as part of an act of total commitment to doing the will of God for justice among men here and now. This paradox is at the very heart of the Gospel. The same Jesus who says: 'Come to me, all who labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest', is the one who says: 'If any man would follow me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me'.

We come to the heart of this paradox of the Gospel when we come to the sacrament of Holy Communion. We are offered as an utterly free gift the bread and wine which are the body and blood of Christ-the food and drink of eternal life. But to receive them is to be totally committed to his passion, to become sharers in his broken body and his blood shed for the life of the world.



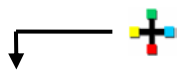
When you come, bring with you the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the notebooks.

This text, a favourite of my own theological teacher John Oman, gives us a rare glimpse of Paul as a student – as a man who, in the midst of a life of ceaseless action and danger, remained to the end a student.

The picture of St Paul which we get from the Acts is the picture of a man of action. It is a story of travels, of meetings, of storms and shipwrecks, of conflicts, beatings and imprisonments, and of ceaseless and passionate proclamation of the faith. From the epistles, too, we get the picture of an evangelist and pastor, always concerned about his congregations, always wrestling with them in the effort to communicate truth. This little text gives us a glimpse of an aspect of Paul's life which we do not easily see otherwise. It helps us to remember that, behind the passion and power of the ministry which we can see, there is something which we do not see – the passion of a student, whose books are his most precious possession, and for whom above all the most precious possession is the notebooks in which the ideas on which he is working are written – a man whose books are part of his life.

There are preachers who are called powerful, but whose words make little deep and lasting change in the lives of those who hear them. Their preaching does not have behind it a life of continuing study. Behind every life that has really changed the world through the power of words there lies always the hard, patient and hidden labour of study, reflection and thought.

This text is a rare opening into that side of Paul's life; but if we read the epistles attentively we will see the signs of it there too. How very often he prays for his friends that they may grow in wisdom, knowledge and discernment. For



the Philippians he prays that 'your love may abound more and more with wisdom and all discernment' (Phil. 1: 9). For the Colossians he prays that they may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding (Col. 1: 9). For the Ephesians he prays that they may be no longer children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4: 14). That is an accurate description of how many Christians are – 'Carried about with every wind of doctrine' – because there has been no training in wisdom and discernment, in learning to study widely, test all things and hold fast to the truth. They are like ships without a rudder, driven about by every gust of enthusiasm. A true pastor must be one who helps his people to develop the gifts of wisdom, discernment and spiritual insight. And if he is to be that, he must be a student to the end of his days.

There are two things which should move us to be students – all our days, two things which should excite in us that eager and restless curiosity which will drive us all the time to widen and deepen our understanding. The first is the exceeding greatness of the God whom we preach. The second is the greatness, richness and variety of the world to which our preaching is addressed.

I

At the end of one of his great theological arguments, Paul writes these words: 'O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor? ... For from him and through him and to him are all things' (Rom. 11: 33-6). As he has wrestled with the deep and perplexing problem of the relation of the Jewish people to the saving purpose of God, Paul is filled with wonder at the range and depth of God's wisdom. To begin to think about God is to be carried beyond the very farthest limit of human thought. He can only end with a note of awe-struck wonder and praise.

By contrast, how very small is the world into which much of our professional religious language introduces us. How often one is moved to exclaim, after listening to a sermon or to an argument, 'Brother, your God is too small'. How often



the world of religious discourse gives the impression of being a small world, a world of timid ideas and mean feelings. How many arguments seem to suggest that God is a small-minded bureaucrat whose only business is to make sure that he does not make a mistake or break any of the rules. How often have I heard a pious young man or woman say: 'I would not like to study that subject because it might upset my faith' – as though our God were not big enough to stand up for himself!

The God who speaks to us in the Bible is the Lord of Heaven and earth. Everything that exists has its being only from him. Any true experience of God will bring to us the knowledge that we are only beginners in his school, that there is always far more to be known and understood than the present range of our understanding. A true experience of God will awaken our thirst for more and more understanding. It will make us long to be students all our days.

But a true biblical faith will also shape the kind of students we are.

There is a kind of person who is always studying but never getting anywhere, who is always asking questions but is not seriously interested in the answers, who is always trying out bright ideas, but shows no signs of moving forward step by step towards any discernible goal. There are people who enjoy playing about with vague ideas, but who have no taste for facts, people who are not ready to accept the hard work of real research, of checking the facts or of arguing coherently from point to point. They are the people who 'will listen to anyone and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth' (2 Tim. 3: 7).

A biblically nourished faith, a faith rooted in the revelation of God in the historic events recorded for us in the Bible, will produce a disciplined student who takes seriously the difference between fact and fancy, who checks the alleged facts as carefully as he can, and who thinks carefully and coherently as far as he is able.

For this kind of study, both history and science are – in their different ways – wonderfully strengthening disciplines. We need at least some of the kind of training which each of these disciplines can give to those who take them seriously. And coming to our own special field, these will help us in the careful and systematic study of the text of Scripture, of the



history of the Church's mission, and of the developing understanding of the Christian faith which is systematic theology.

II

The second thing which should move every pastor to be a student is the vastness and variety of the human world to which our preaching is addressed.

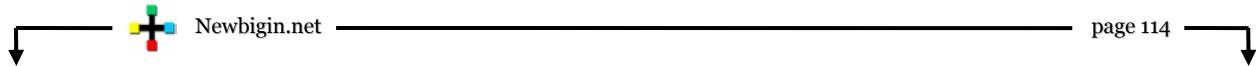
The people who make up our regular congregations, and the Hindus and others who come on special occasions, or who come to talk with us and enquire about our faith, are part of a rapidly changing world of thought and action. They are never just the stereotypes that we are apt to think them. Their models of the world and of themselves, their ambitions and fears, the pictures through which they try to understand and handle their daily experience, are changing all the time under the influences of the events of the public world, the work of scientists and artists, the impact of press, radio and film, the performances of politicians, and the ways in which factories and offices are run. If we are to interpret the Gospel rightly-first for ourselves and then for them-we need some understanding of these things. If we are to understand the real forces which are pressing upon the minds and consciences of our people, we must know and understand what is being said in the novels and films and short stories of our time. We shall certainly study these things critically. We do not study them in order to be brainwashed by them. But if we are not aware of the world in which we live, how shall we effectively communicate the good news of salvation?

The Pastor who is diligent in both these respects is seeking to understand more of God and his revelation in Jesus, and seeking to understand more of the world in which he lives, will be indeed like a scribe trained for the Kingdom of Heaven, bringing out of his treasures things new and old.

III

How is it possible for us, in the midst of the unceasing demands of our pastoral work, to keep alive this eager and unflagging desire to study? There are many difficulties.

The first – let us face it frankly – is our inherent laziness. Of all the things which can ruin our ministry, I think that



sheer laziness is the one that takes the biggest toll. It needs a lot of self-discipline to find time for real study. It is much easier to go on with routine business, and there is always routine business waiting to be done. We can always find good excuses for putting off our study to another time. To turn our full attention to study demands a strong self-discipline and power of mental concentration.

But it is good for us to remember that most of the people to whom we preach are themselves under discipline. Most of them have to be at their places in office or factory or school punctually at the appointed time every morning. We who are called to preach to them dare not allow ourselves a lower standard. If our members who are hard at work each morning know that we are lazing around or fiddling with small trifles, our preaching will carry no weight. It should be part of our essential self-discipline that we set aside times for hard work with our Bible and our theological books.

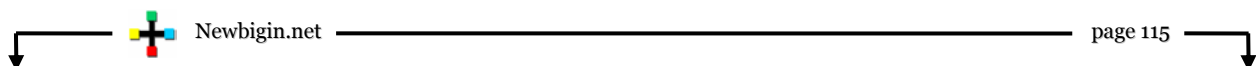
The second difficulty is to decide what to read. There are thousands of books published every month. Even if we can find the money to buy a few, how shall we decide what to read? On this I give these four suggestions which I think are sound.

(a) Always try to have one *big* book on which you are working. It may have to be read a few pages at a time over many months. You may have to read each page several times. But just as the physical needs of the body cannot be met by a continuous series of snacks, so your mental and spiritual needs cannot be met by a continual series of little devotional books, sermons and booklets.

(b) Try to read original works rather than summaries and digests. Read the people who were really struggling to say something fresh, even if you finally disagree. You will learn far more by doing so than by reading the second-hand opinions of those who came after.

(c) Always keep some Bible work going. Try to take one book of the Bible and work through it with commentaries slowly and thoroughly.

(d) Keep on always reading something which is *not* theology. Salt needs to be in the food, and theology needs to be in contact with the secular. Have some secular interests of your own which you keep up and develop. Your theology will be kept fresh if you do so.



The aim of it all is that we and our people may grow in wisdom, understanding, discernment, that we may be no longer children tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, but may grow up into mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

23

The Gospel And Our Culture

I have many things to say to you but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine, therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

John 16:12-15

Here is an aspect of the work of the Spirit which is not often emphasised in our speaking about the subject. The Spirit is the one who is to guide the Church into the understanding of the truth as a whole. Wisdom and understanding are always placed high among the gifts of the Spirit in St Paul's writings. Here the Spirit is promised as the one who will give the special kind of wisdom and understanding that will enable the Church to grasp the truth as a whole.

This text is a very remarkable one. It says plainly that there is more to be learned than can be found in the recorded teaching of Jesus to his disciples. God has more to tell us than Jesus was able to tell his disciples during the years of his ministry among them.

There is a very sharp contrast here between the testimony of the Bible and that of the Qur'an – and many Christians seem to follow the teaching of the Qur'an at this point rather than that of the Bible. There is a story about the destruction of the great library of Alexandria by the Moslem invaders in the year 642. It is said that when the Moslem commander was asked why he was doing it, he replied: 'There may be millions of books there, but everything in these books is either in the Qur'an or it is not. If it is not in the Qur'an it is untrue. If it is in the Qur'an it is not necessary. In either case the books can be destroyed.'

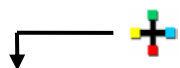
There are many Christians who have essentially the same view. Even though it is not in their power to destroy all the

books in the world, they take pride in the fact that they never look inside them. 'The Bible alone is enough for me', they say. But this is both to ignore the teaching of Jesus and to misunderstand the nature of revelation. Revelation is not the communication of a body of timeless truths which one has only to receive in order to know the whole mind of God. Revelation is rather the disclosure of the direction in which God is leading the world and his family. The stuff of the Bible is promise and fulfilment. It is the story of a journey, of a pilgrimage, of a movement. The real history of mankind, according to the Bible, is set in motion by the promises of God received in faith, and it is sustained by the continual but partial fulfilment of these promises – each fulfilment pointing forward to what is yet to come.

Very specifically Jesus is both the one who comes in fulfilment of the promise, and also the one who is still to come to complete all things. His resurrection, which is the supreme fulfilment of promise in the New Testament, is also the event which opens up a whole new vista of promise whose horizons are a new heaven and a new earth. The revelation of God in Jesus is not the disclosure of a body of timeless truths, beyond which there is nothing to be learned. It is the decisive point in a story through which the direction of world history is revealed.

The era which begins with the coming of Jesus and extends to the end of history is – according to the New Testament – the era of the Spirit. The Spirit, in St Paul's phrase, is the earnest, the guarantee, the first-fruit of the final victory of God. The Spirit is therefore not only the witness who points men towards the coming kingdom, but also the one who leads the Church through all its encounters with new experiences, new cultures, new languages and new forms of

thought, until the fulness of the truth is seen in Jesus, until God's purpose for the whole creation is complete and all things are brought into unity with Jesus as their centre. The true history of the Church is the history of the Spirit's activity in leading the Church through its successive encounters with all the ranges of human experience into the fulness of the truth. It is the Spirit that gives the Church the boldness to deal with new and unprecedented questions – questions which simply could not be asked within the human conditions of the life of the incarnate Lord.

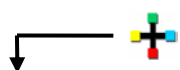


We see the first example of this in the encounter of the Gospel with the Gentile world. There was nothing in the explicit teaching of Jesus to say that uncircumcised Gentiles could be received into the household of God as fellow-members with the Jews. There were indeed recorded sayings of Jesus which seemed to point in exactly the opposite direction. But we have the precious record of the experience of the Church in the 11th and 15th chapters of Acts, showing how they were led far beyond the established positions, beyond what the whole of their religious tradition authorised, and recognised in this leading the work of the living Spirit. They were led by the Spirit beyond anything that was explicitly sanctioned in the teaching of Jesus.

Something of the same kind had to happen as the Church came to terms with the thought forms of the Greek-speaking world. There were immense risks in this – as the later history of the Church amply proves. Greek thought was saturated with concepts of God which are incompatible with the biblical revelation. For Greek thought God was a motionless and passionless being, whereas in the Bible God is one who moves and who suffers. Yet the early Church was bold enough to take the language of the Greeks and make it the instrument of a fully articulated Christian philosophy. The tremendous doctrinal battles of the first four centuries were essentially the working out of the struggle between Greek and biblical concepts of the nature of God. From the point of view of the later experience of the Church we may have to say that in the formulation of the early Christian theologies too large concessions were made to Greek thinking. And yet the risk had to be run if the Gospel was to become the motive power for a new civilisation.

The massive intellectual system which Augustine-at the end of this period – bequeathed to Western Europe, and which formed the foundation for the great culture of Catholic Europe, was largely a synthesis of Christian thought and that of Plato. But with the rise of Islam, Aristotelian philosophy challenged the Augustinian synthesis, and a new formulation of the Christian understanding of the world had to be hammered out in the great work of Aquinas.

Other movements arising within Christendom-the rise of modern science with its emphasis upon observation and experiment, and the rise of modern historical study with its



emphasis on the critical examination of sources – likewise presented the Church with the necessity of fundamental rethinking, in the course of which the Christian understanding of God's purpose was enlarged and deepened. In every case there is struggle and there is the risk of error. And yet the promise remains trustworthy, that the Holy Spirit will lead the Church into all the Truth.

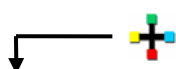
The great period of missionary expansion in the 18th and 19th centuries, which brought the Church for the first time into intimate contact with the ancient religious systems of Asia, should have been the occasion for a further fundamental re-thinking of the Christian faith. That this was not so is probably due to the fact that Christians came to Asia as conquerors and did not feel the necessity for a humble re-examination of their own faith in the light of the faiths which they encountered. The first contact with Hinduism and Buddhism did not produce the kind of profound re-appraisal which was made necessary by the earlier encounters with Greek thought, with Islamic philosophy, and with natural and historical science. Perhaps that encounter is only now beginning.

We who are part of the ancient culture of India, who share in the wrestlings and searchings *through which* Indian culture is now going, have as one of our most urgent duties and precious privileges the duty and privilege of going right into the heart of these wrestlings and searchings as believing Christians and seeking to discern the mind of Christ in the terms of our current problems. If we are not doing this, we are failing in our essential Christian mission.

About this struggle I want to say three things very briefly:

1. It is an essential part of our life as Christians, and it is the way by which the work of Christ in bringing all things to their true goal is carried forward. We are very much afraid of this task. We are afraid that we may lose the precious treasure of the Gospel which has been committed to us. We shrink from an open encounter with rival systems of thought, especially when they are in positions of power as they are in India today, for fear that we may lose the certainties that are given to us in the Gospel. We want to wrap up our treasure in a napkin and keep it safe, rather than put it into circulation with the risk of losing it.

Jesus told that parable in the context of the idea that ‘the

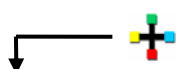


Kingdom of God would immediately appear’ (Luke 19: 11-27). It is a parable that deserves our serious study. I think that we in the CSI are in danger of incurring the condemnation which the master in that parable metes out to the timid servant who buried his treasure to keep it safe. We have been too timid in meeting with the great ideas of the world around us. We have not been willing to get into real dialogue with Hindus, with those who are seeking new sources of vitality for the national life, with Marxists and with humanists. We have not been willing to take the risks involved in re-thinking our faith, re-casting it in new terms, so that it takes up and re-interprets whatever in these movements is according to the will of God. We have been too timid, too anxious to make sure that we preserve intact what has been committed to us. We are unfaithful servants, because the treasure committed to us has been given not that we should hoard it, but that we should risk it in the commerce of the world, so that it may make a profit for the Master. It is true that when we do this we risk loss. But the Master is not afraid of taking risks, and if we share his Spirit we shall have a like boldness.

It is very specially part of our duty as pastors to take a lead in this process. Of course we must depend mainly upon scholars and experts in various fields, but they ought to know that they have the full backing of the Church when they engage in these activities which are at the very centre of the mission of the Church.

2. As we engage in these adventures we are given the promise that the Holy Spirit will lead us into the truth as a whole. It is true that we may make mistakes. The Church has made mistakes. But it is not abandoned to hopeless error. There is a living guide who will not let that happen. We can trust him.

3. The mark of the leading of the Spirit will be, according to our text, that it will glorify Jesus. ‘He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.’ The work of the Spirit is to show from age to age, more and more clearly, who Jesus is. It is to make more and more clear, as the Church moves out into every range of human experience and every sector of human culture, how completely adequate Jesus is to be the king and head of the human race and the sovereign ruler of all things. The work of the Spirit is not to be equated with whatever happens to be the latest idea or the most

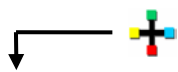


vigorously growing movement. The mark of the Spirit is that Jesus is glorified – is manifested afresh as the true lord who alone is worthy of the allegiance of all men and who alone can provide the light by which men can walk.

Does this mean that we are narrowing the work of the Spirit and confining it within sectarian boundaries? No, for 'all that the Father has is mine'. The name of Jesus is not a sectarian name, for Jesus is the word of God made flesh, the coming into history of that which is the meaning and purpose of all that is.

The work of the Spirit, then, is to lead the Church to see all things, the whole creation, all powers, systems, ideas, cultural achievements, all intellectual structures—all things in their relation to Christ as the head of all men and all things. He will lead the Church into the fulness of the truth as it is in Jesus, that is to say, to that point where it is made manifest that all things are subject to him.

Nothing less than this is the adventure to which we are called. As authorised teachers in the Church we have a special responsibility to understand the dimensions of this task, and to encourage all our members to take their share in it according to their ability. Because we have this promise we should be bold in fulfilling our part of this task, because we know that he is to be trusted.



24

The Particularity And The Universality Of The Gospel

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

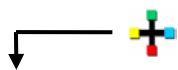
John 1:1-5

These are the opening words of the Gospel which we read to our people on Christmas Day. More than any other words in the Bible, they express the absolute universality of Jesus. We read them in the context of the birth of a child at Bethlehemone particular child among all the millions and millions of babies who have been born into the world, in the context of that tiny fragment of the whole of the human story, of that shed at the back of a village *chattram** in a small hamlet in the hills of Judah, in the light of the tiny lantern that illuminates the scene.

In that light we read the words of our text. He is the source of all that exists. All that lives has its life in him. He is the light, the only light that men have. Through him alone all that is, all that lives lives, all that can be known is known. This universal reality of which we speak is identified with one particular name, one particular series of events at one time and place. Jesus, born in Bethlehem of Judea, crucified outside the walls of Jerusalem, one baby among the millions of babies, one victim among the thousands of victims of Roman cruelty, this one man is the Word of God made flesh.

How can we become the interpreters of so tremendous a message? How can we express in our ministry *both* the total universality of Jesus *and* his inescapable particularity? How can we show that Jesus belongs to all men and all men belong

**chattram*: a rest-house for travellers.



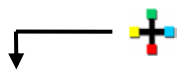
to him, that he is already the life and the light of all men, and yet show that the one of whom we speak is this particular man Jesus, son of Mary, and not Buddha or Krishna or the ideal man of the past or the future?

How can the particular be shown to be the universal? How can men come to see that the universal, the light they already have, is identical with this child of Bethlehem, this man of Nazareth? How are they to see that in and through our ministry?

There is one way by which the effort has been made to bridge the gulf between the particular and the universal—a way familiar to St John and St Paul—the way of colonialism. Rome, a small Italian town with its own special culture and its own political system, sought to become a universal power by establishing colonies of Roman citizens all over the known world. So, at the height of Roman power, one could speak of Roman power as the universal power. In modern times Portugal, Spain, France and Britain have sought to do the same on a grander scale. There was a time when one could speak of the Pax Britannica, a universal rule based on colonies and naval bases that circled the world.

It is tempting to apply the same kind of thinking to the claim that Jesus Christ is universal Lord. One can think of a Christian strategy, of Christian institutions and colonies, of a powerful world-wide apparatus of Christian penetration which can give the impression that Christianity is really a universal power. In fact this has been the way that Christian missions have mostly operated during the past 200 years. The missionaries came from the colonising powers. The mission compounds were like colonial outposts in a foreign territory. They represented visibly the power and the prestige and the universal claims of the colonising power. Certainly there were exceptions to this pattern—such as the heroic work of Robert de Nobili in Madurai in the early part of the 17th century. But these were the exceptions. The greater part of the missionary work of the past 200 years has followed what I have called the colonial pattern—depending largely upon the power, the prestige and the wealth of the colonising nations.

Today there is a strong reaction against this whole movement. The emphasis today is upon the fact that Jesus is already Lord of all men whether they acknowledge him or not. There is an unwillingness to make a sharp distinction



between those who are Christians and those who are not. The emphasis is upon the fact that Jesus is already the light that lightens every man, and a suggestion that this light shines even in the non-Christian religious systems.

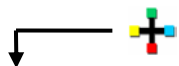
It is rather easy to go along with this way of thinking at the present time. But what does the Gospel say to us about this matter? How did God himself bridge the gulf between universality and particularity? Not by the method of colonialism. It is true that Paul says to the Christians in Philippi: 'You are a colony of heaven'. But the whole of the New Testament bears witness that it is a different kind of colony than the ones the Romans established. It is not a colony whose citizens can claim any extra-territorial rights.

The Jews did indeed think of the Kingdom of God in terms which reflected the political realities of Roman colonial power. They looked for a manifest display of God's power which would put to rout the powers of Rome. They challenged Jesus on the question of paying taxes to the colonial power and received an answer which showed that Jesus was thinking in totally other terms. He acknowledged the ruling power and did not claim extra-territorial rights on the basis of his universal lordship.

How, then, were the universal and the particular related to each other in the ministry of Jesus? By the total, humble, almost anonymous identification of himself with the men and women of his time and place in their actual situation. This is the great emphasis of the Letter to the Hebrews. Jesus is qualified to be the great High Priest of the whole human race, because he has shared completely in the common lot of all men—in the sufferings and temptations and agonies which belong to man as man everywhere.

But when we say that the way Jesus took was the way of total identification, this does not mean that there is no conflict. After saying that the Word is the light that enlightens every man, our text goes on to say that the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not apprehended—or overcome—it. The whole Gospel, with its climax and centre in the death of Jesus, is the explication of that short phrase. Jesus is the light of every man; but that light shines in the midst of darkness. Dark and light are in conflict to the end.

It is not that light and darkness are equal and parallel realities. God said ‘Let there be light’; he did not say ‘Let

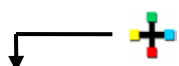


there be darkness’. Darkness is the negation of light. It is that which light dispels by shining. It is that which becomes past when the light dawns. Right through the fourth Gospel we are aware of this negation of the light – a reality which is nevertheless being dispelled, cast out. Over and over again the mission of Jesus is portrayed as the shining of the light in the darkness, right up to the end of the great High Priestly prayer, where Jesus says: ‘O righteous Father, the world has not known thee, but I have known thee: and these (men) know that thou hast sent me. I have made known thy name, and I will make it known. . . .’ There is light and there is darkness; but the light shines in the darkness, and will go on shining.

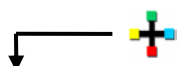
There is no light other than Jesus, even if it be only a very few who recognise him. The light may seem to be – and may indeed be – a very small candle in a very dark world, as it was in the world in which the New Testament was written. Whenever we read the New Testament we should remember that we are reading the words of men and women who faced the daily possibility of having to give up life itself for the name of Jesus.

How, then, shall we describe what it means to be ministers of this Gospel which is both universal and particular, which embraces all men, and yet divides men from one another as sharply as light is contrasted with darkness? It can never be by the colonial way, but only by the way of the incarnation and the Cross. It can never be by any display of power or wisdom or influence which would magnify our claim to the universal validity of our Gospel. It can only be by the way of humble identification with the ordinary human situation of men as men – whatever their faith or community or status. This identification must be reflected in the way we do our evangelism, in the way we run our institutions, even in the way we build our buildings. To take this seriously means a drastic criticism of the whole style to which we have been accustomed in the last 200 years of missionary work.

But this way of identification does not mean the end of conflict. On the contrary, it will mean the sharpening of conflict—the kind of sharpening that St John depicts as he unfolds the story of Jesus. This conflict will come in the context of actual deeds which challenge men’s traditional ideas of God and man. This is what we see in John’s account



of the ministry of Jesus. He breaks the Sabbath by healing a crippled man on the Sabbath, and thereby draws upon himself the unanimous wrath of all the forces within the nation which were usually opposed to one another. It is such incidents which spell out what John means by saying that the light shines in the darkness. And it must be in just such concrete incidents, acts which challenge men’s traditional ideas at their very roots, that we shall manifest in our ministry the all-embracing universality and the sharp particularity of the Gospel by which we live.



25

Remembering*

You shall remember the way the Lord your God has led you.

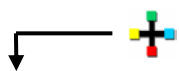
Deuteronomy 8:2

Why is it important for us to remember the things of the past?

It is the very heart of our faith that we remember what God has done in the days of our fathers, so that our eyes may be open to see his works in our day. The text which I have taken

from Deuteronomy, ‘You shall remember the way that the Lord your God has led you’, expresses the very core of the biblical faith. God is revealed in what he has done, in the events of history. We know him by his mighty acts. Hence it follows that at the heart of the worship of the synagogue and the Church there is the reading of the records of what God has done. We read the Old and New Testaments as the inspired record and testimony of what God has done in history, and this leads us on to the recognition of his presence and his work with us now. The story of the appearance of the risen Lord to the disciples at Emmaus reflects this essential structure of Christian worship. It begins with the recalling of the great acts of the past, so that the heart glows with faith and understanding, and it leads up to the act by which the same living Lord who was active in the past is revealed as present now in our midst when we break the bread in the remembrance of him. Our faith is a remembering faith; we remember what the Lord has done, and it is through remembering that we come to know him in the present.

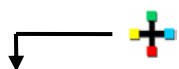
* This address was given in the Armenian Church in Madras; the first part of the address was a reminder of the great role of this ancient Church both in the story of Christendom and in the story of the Church in Madras. During the preceding week the Archbishop of Canterbury had visited Madras in connection with the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the inauguration of the Church of South India.



Our Church is, I fear, poor in remembering. I fear that this is one of the many ways in which we are too much controlled by our Hindu background, for Hinduism has no essential place for history. In Hindu thought history is a part of nature. Its pattern is cyclical. It returns always upon itself and there is therefore nothing which it is essential to remember. In Christian thought nature is part of history. Even the visible world itself is part of God’s mighty work in the midst of which we still are and which looks forward to a goal that we do not yet see. But in our Church we do not have this sense of history. We take very little trouble to preserve our archives. When we have to celebrate a jubilee or a centenary, we have great difficulty in putting together a reliable and intelligible account of the past. I was struck by this in reading the articles published in the *South India Churchman* at the time of our CSI Jubilee, purporting to describe the development of each diocese during the past 25 years. Many of them read exactly like primitive, pre-historical legends. There ‘ were just two parts: ‘those days’, the great days of the past, when missionaries of heroic proportions ruled the Church and everything was right and good; and ‘these days’, which can be described with varying degrees of enthusiasm or despair. But one looked in vain for a real history, for the story of how we had been led step by step, making new discoveries and learning from new experiences.

But when we lose a sense of history, something vital goes out of our Christianity.

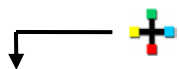
1. In the first place, we lose a sense of perspective. The events of the present appear out of proportion – bigger than they really are. To see them in a longer perspective helps us to deal with them as they really are. I have often remembered an experience I had as a very young missionary in Kancheepuram. I was left in charge of a district including many congregations. I had very little experience indeed. The problems seemed overwhelming. I could hardly believe that the Church could ever survive among such storms. By God’s good providence there came into my hands the delightful book by Bishop Pakenham Walsh called *Lights and Shades of Christendom*. On the whole there was more shade than light, but it helped me enormously to see my own problems in perspective, and to see that the Church had weathered very much worse storms than anything I was likely to experience.



I saw that the problems I was meeting for the first time were old problems with which the Church had been wrestling for centuries, and that in the course of history something had been learned about how to deal with them.

2. In the second place, if we lose our sense of history, we lose our sense of balance. Our danger often is that we get locked in a sterile conflict between what is supposed to be the latest thing and what is supposed to be out-of-date. It is very easy, and it is quite futile, to get into a state of mind in which things and ideas are valued because they are modern or because they are ancient, instead of being valued according to whether they are true and fruitful. A sense of history is a great help here. One can realise that what often looks like a new discovery is really just a periodic swing of the pendulum. Even in my own short life-time I can remember how quickly the pendulum swings. Many of the ideas which are flourished as the latest thing today are the same as the ideas which I was revolting against as a young theological student at the height of the revolt against liberalism. And many of the ideas which seem stale today were inexpressibly fresh and attractive then. But beyond the span of a single memory, there is the longer memory of the Church in which we can share through our reading of history. This does help us to understand and sympathise with the inevitable swing back and forth – which is part of our human nature – and at the same time to be eager to discern what is really precious and fruitful in every new movement of thought or practice.

3. In the third place, if we lose our sense of history we lose our sense of direction. The historian E. H. Carr has defined history as a continuing conversation between the present and the past. History has to be constantly re-written, not only because fresh materials come to light, but much more because each generation has new questions to put to its own past. We are very familiar with this, for we have seen the radical re-writing of Indian history after 1947. This is a living conversation which is always going on as long as life lasts. But, after reading Moltmann's book *Theology of Hope*, I wrote down on the back page an expansion of Carr's definition: History is a conversation between the present and the past about the future. The conversation is not just an academic one; it is a practical one. We have to go on questioning the past because we want to know what is the



way forward into the real future. When the Bible says: 'You shall remember the way the Lord your God has led you', it is in order to ensure that you continue to follow the same Lord who is still out in front leading you on. This attitude is expressed very clearly in the letter to the Hebrews. You do not remember the past just because of an academic interest, but because it is the record of the leading of the same Lord who is leading you on into the future—a future which we do not see, but over which his promise shines like a pillar of fire.

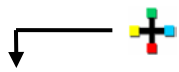
Of course our remembering is first of all the remembering of the events recorded in the Bible, with their centre in the dying and rising of Jesus. The centre of all our worship is that act of remembrance *which* we repeat at his command, when we remember and proclaim the Lord's death till he come. But if we put the events of the Bible into a sealed capsule and separate them from the rest of human history, we are, in effect, denying the revelation. It is the God of all history who is revealed in this history; his deeds and words which we recall in this history are the unveiling of the meaning of his deeds and words in all history. Therefore it is part of our faithfulness to the revelation that we remember *all* the way that he has led us, right up to this year 1973, tracing the hand of the living Lord who leads us now and calls us into the future which he has prepared for us.

Let us remember the birth of the CSI 25 years ago. On that day in 1947 three hitherto separated churches broke the bread and shared the cup together for the first time in our Cathedral here in Madras. On that day the Church of England could not join with us, for they were not sure that this was the way that God was leading.

Nine days ago in the same Cathedral, the Archbishop of Canterbury said from the pulpit: 'The CSI has led the way and we are following', and then standing at the holy table between two CSI bishops he celebrated the eucharistic liturgy according to the order of the CSI in full communion and fellowship.

Many of us who knelt together that day must have felt as I did: You shall remember all the way the Lord your God has led you these 25 years.

God is faithful. He leads on. If we are to be faithful to him, we must remember the way he has led us.



26

Future And Advent

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Phil. 3:4-7

Many of you, like me, have not been accustomed to making much of the observance of the Christian year. Apart from Christmas and Easter, we did not take much notice of other seasons. I have become convinced that there is a very great value in the observance of the Christian year. Without it, our preaching and our ministry is likely to become monotonous, because there is nothing to lift us out of the habitual orbit of our own thoughts. The observance of the Christian year can challenge us to think other thoughts and share other feelings than those which come naturally to us.

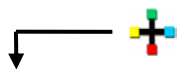
The feeling of Advent is one of excitement, hope, readiness, tingling expectancy.

I have never forgotten the feelings that I had as a child during the days before Christmas. As the great day came nearer and nearer the excitement grew higher and higher until it became almost unbearable, and on Christmas Eve we could hardly go to bed at all for fear of not being awake when Christmas came.

This text expresses something of the same feeling. 'The Lord is at hand.' He is just coming. He is just round the corner. If we run out into the road we will see him coming.

This sense of expectancy is the very spirit of Advent and it is part of the very stuff of the Christian faith.

The English language allows us to make a distinction between future and advent. The future is simply that which

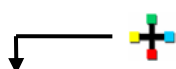


grows out of the past. Advent means that something radically new comes to meet us. Modern long-range planning necessitates elaborate calculations about the direction in which various factors will move – such as population growth, availability of crops and minerals and so on. With the help of computers these calculations can now be much more detailed than ever before. Consequently we have a whole science called futurology which is concerned with calculating the probable course of future development. The future is seen here as something which grows naturally out of the past, as a tree grows out of the seedling which we plant. There is no place for the idea of the radically new.

The idea of Advent is different. It implies a different understanding of human life. Advent means that something new is coming. It implies that there are new possibilities, beyond anything that could be calculated from our experience of the past. The picture of human life which it implies is not that of an unfolding process like the growth of a tree, but that of a meeting in which the lover is coming to meet and to rescue his beloved. There is a tremendous difference between these two pictures.

The Advent faith is the faith that there are really new possibilities for our world. It means that we have a certain scepticism towards this world. We do not act as if this was the only possible world. We do take this world seriously, and we acknowledge the necessity for futurology, for calculating as best we can the probable course of events on the basis of the experience we already have. But we are not limited to this. We have an altogether other basis for calculations about what is to come – namely the promises of the living God. We are sure that something radically different is possible, and that it is what God intends for us. We are sure that this other world is not just a dream, but that it is real and reliable, indeed that it is – so to speak – just round the corner, ready to break into our world and turn everything upside down. This is the Advent faith.

The task of the Church, seen from this point of view, and the task of the leader in the Church, is to make this other world credible; to make it possible for men to believe that this world as it is, is not the last word; to keep constantly alight in men's hearts the flame of hope and faith in the possibility of a different kind of world.



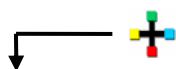
During the periods when the Church has been comfortable and prosperous, this Advent hope has become dim. During the long period of the dominance of liberal theology in Europe and America it became very unfashionable even to mention the coming again of Christ. This was left to the small sectarian groups on the fringes of society. For those in the main stream this was a crude and unnecessary belief. They saw God's purpose as something worked out progressively in an evolutionary way leading to perfection. The New Testament belief in the second coming seemed to them to be a bit of local and temporary baggage which could be discarded.

During the preparations for the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, on the theme 'Christ the Hope of the World', many American theologians were unhappy and even shocked to find that we were talking about the Second Coming of Christ, and when in one of the draft statements the text was quoted 'This Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world . . . and then the end will come', an Anglican clergyman moved that the last six words be deleted!

European theologians, who had been through the agony of the Nazi empire, spoke naturally in terms of a real Advent; American and – in general – British theologians did not want to do so.

The Advent season should come as a reminder to us that we can never be, and should not be, adjusted to the world. We are here to proclaim the reality and the imminence of a wholly other world, a world in which different powers rule and different standards operate. We are here to make it possible for ordinary men and women really to believe this, and therefore to live in hope and readiness.

But what is the basis for our assurance that a radically different kind of world is possible? It is that this radically different kind of world has already broken into this world and that its powers and its standards have begun already to work. Here we touch upon the other side of the Advent message. We do not merely – like Old Testament prophets – speak about an unknown day in the future; we speak about a known person who has already come, in whom Advent has begun. We speak about a new world whose powers are already at work in our own experience. What we look forward to,



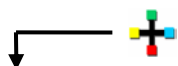
therefore, is not a wholly unknown event; it is the completion of what has already been begun in the coming of Jesus; it is the victory of the powers which are already at work in this world, grappling with the powers of evil; it is the public manifestation and acknowledgement of the reign of Jesus at the right hand of God which is now hidden, an object of faith but not yet of sight.

Therefore, for those who are in the midst of this struggle, the Advent message is a message of joy. It is true that Advent is also a time when notes of warning and even of terror are sounded. To those who are blind to the reality of a new world, to those who live as if this world was the only one and its standards the only ones to be acknowledged, the Advent message must be a message of warning. How can we exaggerate the terror of that day when it is discovered that the world you believed in and lived by has shrivelled up into nothing, like a paper burned in the fire, and that the world you did not believe in, whose standards you secretly scoffed at, is the one reality with which you have to deal. The Book of Revelation gives us in abundance a series of pictures of that terror.

But this letter to the Philippians is addressed to those who know that their citizenship is in the new world and who are faithfully trying to live the life that that citizenship demands. For them the message of Advent is one of joy and comfort. The Lord is at hand – therefore have no anxiety about anything, but ... let your requests be made known to God.

You know that there has been much debate about the correct translation of the petition ‘Give us this day our daily bread’ in the Lord’s Prayer. The word which we translate ‘daily’ is a very rare word and its meaning is not certain. The German scholar Jeremias has put forward the view that the real meaning of the petition is: ‘Give today the bread *of that Day*’. I do not know whether Jeremias is right linguistically, but he is making a very vivid point. The Christian life is lived every day in the power and joy of *that day* – the day when the Lord will come again to reign in love for ever.

Even now we taste the goodness of the world to come. And the Holy Communion reminds us that to do so means that we are glad to share in this world the broken body and the poured out blood *of our Lord*.



27

Growing Up Into Christ

That we may be no longer children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine.... Rather speaking the truth in love we are to grow up in every way into him who is the Head, into Christ....

Ephesians 4:14-15

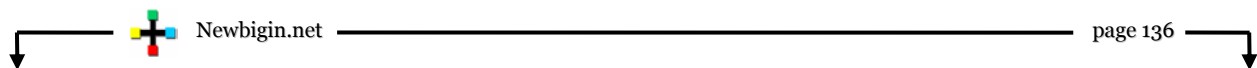
‘To grow up in every way into him who is the Head – even Christ.’ St Paul speaks very often about growth in the Christian life. In almost all his letters he urges his friends to grow up, to be no longer children, to press on towards maturity.

The same idea of growth is frequent in our Lord’s parables. To those who thought of the Kingdom of God only in terms of spectacular and cataclysmic signs, he spoke of it in terms of the quiet, almost secret growth of the seed.

People who live in an entirely agricultural society are accustomed to the fact of slow and secret growth. They know that there is a rhythm in things which cannot be hurried; that growth takes time. But those of us who live in cities are accustomed to what we call crash programmes. We are accustomed to engineering rather than to agriculture and we expect the engineer to be able to produce changes overnight.

It is therefore natural that the kind of religion which has flourished in modern industrialised society – especially in the United States where the consequences of the industrial revolution were taken to their extreme – should have little place for the idea of growth and should put all the emphasis upon sudden and dramatic change. Every few weeks I receive a letter from some American evangelist who offers to revive the Church in ten days if only we will give him a free hand. And there are Christian preachers who encourage their hearers to think that everything in the Gospel centres round that one moment when the dramatic change takes place, the moment of

decision, the moment of being born again. Apart from that, nothing else seems to exist. It is rather like the

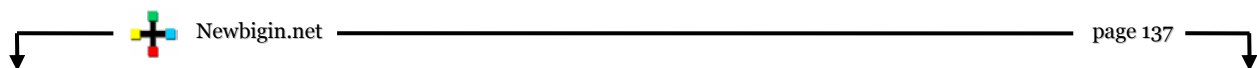


old-fashioned novels in which everything leads up to the moment when boy and girl fall in love – and after that they live happily ever afterwards and there is nothing more to report.

Now most certainly there is – or perhaps we should say there are – in the Christian life moments of decision, moments when a whole life is turned round and made anew. The word of our Lord to Nicodemus stands true for all men in the natural state: ‘You must be born again’. The life in Christ involves a radical reversal of the direction of the natural life of man. But nevertheless we do not rightly interpret the New Testament if we omit to note the very big place which it gives to language about growth. And growth is a slow, secret, unspectacular affair. You cannot have a crash programme for growing a field of paddy or a crop of mangoes. There is a secret process which depends upon the sun from above and the unseen flow of water from the earth below. For a long time there is nothing much to be seen. And the wise farmer knows that the best fruit is often that which ripens most slowly.

St Paul also had to deal with those who craved something more spectacular. We have a parallel passage to this in Col. 2: 18-19: ‘Let no one disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels, taking his stand upon visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God’.

There were those in Colossae who taught that a real Christian should be able to talk about visions and about angels and to point to their own achievements in ascetic devotion. Paul warns his friends to beware of them, because they do not hold fast the Head upon whom the whole Body depends. Similarly in the Corinthian Church there were those who placed all the emphasis on speaking with tongues, and again Paul answers them by speaking of the Christian life as a life of growth in one Body – the Body of Christ – in which none of the limbs can claim to be superior to the others. From the latter part of 2 Corinthians we also gather that Paul was up against preachers who claimed that they had superior spiritual powers; Paul answers that he prefers to be weak in order that the power of Christ may rest on him.



All of these teachers with whom Paul engaged in controversy had this in common: They pointed to something beyond Christ. It was not enough for these people to have Jesus: they must have something more – some spiritual gifts or powers, some visions, some extra amount of piety and devotion, some additional obedience to the Law. None of these people taught anything against Christ; they all acknowledged him as Lord. But they thought that this acknowledgement was not enough. They thought that something additional was needed and they offered to supply it.

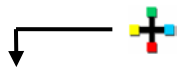
This is why Paul speaks so emphatically about growing up into Christ, who is the Head. In this letter and the Colossians he repeatedly speaks of Christ as the Head – Head of all things, of the universe, and Head of the Church which is his body. There is nothing beyond Christ, nothing greater than Christ. Therefore the task of the Christian is to *grow up into him*. It is not to run after every new teaching that offers some new gift or experience; it is to grow up steadily into full maturity in Christ.

The same teaching with which Paul had to deal is with us today. There are many different sectarian groups, but they all have one thing in common. They teach that it is not enough just to be a Christian-to belong to Jesus Christ. There must be something more. Some describe this in terms of a further baptism-baptism in the Spirit as a further stage after baptism unto Christ. This is the explicit teaching of our Pentecostal friends. Others have different versions of the same idea. Against all of these we must follow Paul in insisting that there is nothing higher than Christ,

nothing greater than Christ. If we try to get for ourselves some spiritual power or endowment beyond that which is available to everyone who simply believes and follows Jesus, we become-to use Paul's words-like children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine....

Against this temptation he gives a description of growth in Christ which has four characteristics.

(a) It is growth in one body. It is not a question of my personal spiritual growth, but of the way I am sharing in and contributing to the growth of the body of Christ in which all my fellow Christians are members. This means that the very essence of it is that I am as much concerned about the spiritual progress of my brother as I am about my own.



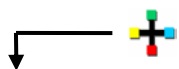
(b) It is growth in Christ, who is the Head of the Body. One cannot go on too much repeating that it is Christ who is the Head and Centre of everything. The error in those teachers about whom I was speaking is that Jesus Christ is not given the central place. Of course they would all say that they honour Christ as the Head, but they do not. It is something else that occupies the centre, some powers or gifts or experiences or spiritual achievements-but not Jesus Christ in his full divine manhood. To grow up into him means that he himself is the absolute centre of my attention, his words, his deeds, his dying and rising from the dead.

(c) The way of this growth is by 'dealing truthfully in love'. The Greek verb does not refer only to speaking the truth – though that is essential – but to doing the truth, to being truthful in all our ways. We grow up into Christ who is the truth, by being utterly truthful in word and thought and deed, by dealing with reality as it is and not with our own make-believe world. But this truth-dealing is to be in love, dependent always on the love we have received from Christ. This integrity, honesty, truthfulness in love, is the prime condition of our growing up into Christ.

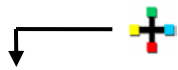
(d) Fourthly, we are to grow up 'in every way'. This growth concerns the whole of our life-not just our religious life, but our whole life in family and work and society.

This, then, is the picture that Paul gives us of our growth into mature Christians. As I said before, there is nothing spectacular in it. It is slow and it requires long patience. Our high-speed evangelists will not recognise it at all. They will lump it all together under the convenient heading 'nominal Christianity'. That should not worry us. If we have Jesus Christ, we have enough. But we should be ready for patient endurance, doing the truth in love, and so growing up in all things into Christ who is the Head-the only Head of the Church and the Universe.

Let me confess that I was moved to take this subject for our meditation today by the experience of reading for my daily devotions over the past two months Pope John's spiritual autobiography the *Journal of a Soul*. It consists of the notes made by him during the retreat which he made each year from the time of his theological studies until his death in his 82nd year. I have found it very moving to follow this humble and simple man as he tried to 'deal truthfully



in love' with all the experiences – some very painful – which came to him during this long life, and to see the steady growth of a man in simplicity, obedience and love to God. There is nothing spectacular about it. But who can doubt that it is through this kind of patient discipleship that we grow up into the fulness of what Christ intends for us?



28

The Hidden Life Of The Pastor

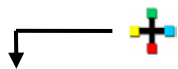
Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples.

John 15:4-8

As ministers we are called upon constantly to lead other people in prayer. We are expected not only to lead the regular public worship of the Church, but also to lead the prayers of others on many occasions every day. But even while we are busy with this work, it can happen that our own life of prayer dries up and becomes dead. When that happens, our public ministry of prayer rapidly dries up too. It becomes a dead routine which is soul-destroying both for ourselves and for our people.

It may safely be said as a general rule that the more time we have to give to the ministry of public prayer, the more time we need to spend in private prayer – in that kind of prayer where we go into our room and shut the door and pray to our Father in secret. I want to speak to you today about this unseen dimension of our ministry, about the hidden life of the soul with God.

In this passage which we know so well, our relation to Jesus is described in terms of the parable of the vine and the branches. The absolute condition of fruit-bearing is that the branch is linked to the vine by the multitude of hidden channels through which the life-giving sap can flow. If this hidden flow should stop, the outward appearance of the



branch may remain for a time unchanged. It may still have its leaves on it. But there will be no more fruit.

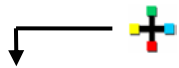
‘Apart from me you can do nothing.’ At first sight this seems a harsh saying. Are there not many things we can do? We can have splendid and well-attended services, we can have conferences and evangelistic campaigns and programmes of social action. We can do all this – and it may add up to zero. The real fruit of the vine isn’t there. It is all dry sticks and leaves, but there are no real grapes. The life of Jesus himself, the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control which men instantly recognise as the life of Jesus himself – this is not there.

By contrast there are some situations where we seem to be able to do nothing. There is simply no scope for our activities and our programmes. But it can happen that it is just in such situations that we have the joy of bearing fruit. When I was in Russia there was one question which I wanted to ask of all the younger Christians whom I met. ‘How is it’, I asked, ‘that in a situation where the Church is absolutely forbidden to use any kind of public communication; where printing press, radio and public meetings are forbidden, and where even parents are not allowed to teach religion to their children, the Church goes on winning converts?’ The answer which I received was ‘The attractive power of a holy life’. When the branches abide in the vine, they bear fruit. The real life of Jesus is reproduced.

He who abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. What is the fruit that he looks for? It is nothing other than the reproduction of the life of Jesus in the life of the world. In one sense there is nothing else that we have to do. Our work is not to create something of our

own, something that has the stamp of our originality upon it. It is just to be the means by which the life of Jesus is being reproduced in the life of the homes and offices and factories of our parish. And that can only happen if our lives are so joined with his that his life flows through ours.

What does it mean to speak of abiding in Jesus? It is hard to speak about this. 'It is not a theme for words but for the deeper apprehension of silence' (Temple). Yet we have to use words. Indeed our Lord says that his words must abide in us. We may perhaps take that as our starting point for thinking about what it means to abide in him. One form of



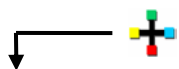
his abiding in us is that his words abide in us. This is a very important clue to the thing we are seeking. We have to make the words of Jesus our constant theme of meditation, to come back again and again to them, to listen afresh to them, to apply them to our situation as it changes each day. If we are diligent in doing this, we shall find that new depths are constantly opening up within these familiar words. There is a miracle here, but it is really so.

There is a condition attached, however. The whole of this section of Jesus' teaching is woven out of the two threads of love and obedience. We have not only to love the words of Jesus, but also to obey them. It is only as we obey the light that we see in them that we shall be granted further light. If we do this, if we both love and obey, we are led on to ever new ranges of understanding.

To abide in Christ means to let his words abide in us and constantly to refer everything to them. It means going back to them again and again and being willing again to start afresh like a child going down to the bottom of the class. It means, specifically, giving the first place in our time every day, and the first priority in our thinking, to this hidden life of the soul with Jesus.

If a man does not abide in me he is cast forth as a branch and withers, and the branches are thrown into the fire and burned. This is a harsh warning and it is an integral part of what Jesus is saying to us here. If you have ever looked at a vine, you will know that the wood is good for nothing except bearing grapes. If a mango tree does not bear fruit, you can cut it down and use the timber. But from the branch of a vine you could not even make a decent peg. While it is a living branch of the vine it serves one purpose only; it conveys the life of the vine to the fruit clusters so that they develop into full, ripe, sweet grapes. When the branch ceases to do that, it is useless for anything but burning.

Let us apply these words honestly to ourselves. If we do not do this one thing, if we do not convey this life-giving sap which is the very life of Jesus himself to men, what are we good for? A lawyer, a doctor, a carpenter, a driver, a baker – all of them may be bad men, but yet fulfil a useful function in society. But what is the use of a pastor who is not doing this one thing? As much use as a dead branch from a vine.



If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will and it shall be done for you. The result of this mutual indwelling is that our prayers will be granted. There is no promise that all the discordant and disordered petitions which are simply the expression of our own undisciplined desires and fears, even hatreds and jealousies, will be granted. If they were, this world would be hell. But the prayers which spring out of our abiding in Christ and his abiding in us are granted. Indeed systematic and un-wearying prayers for others and for the doing of God's will in the world is one of the essential forms of our abiding in him. Through this we become fellow-workers with him, sharing in his unwearied intercession for all men.


About this I would like to make two practical suggestions. The first is that our prayer has to be responsible and disciplined. It should express our serious commitment and not just our passing whims. For this reason I have found it helpful to write down the things and people that I want to

pray for, and not to desist until I know that the answer has been given. The answer may not be what I expect. It may be some time before I recognise it. But I should not cease until I know what the answer is. Mere courtesy should forbid the practice of tossing off unconsidered petitions and not waiting for the answer. Prayer is a serious matter.


The second suggestion is that each one of us should have a simple system to ensure that we pray regularly for every person in our parish. It is not possible to pray for everyone every day. But no one should be forgotten. The only way is to have a system which ensures that we do remember each one regularly-if possible not less than once a month.

This wrestling with God in prayer, like Jacob wrestling with the angel, is at the heart of our abiding in him. Through this we are changed. But that is the smallest part of it. Through this the world is changed.

‘By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples.’ The glory of the Father is the end of all things. The Father is glorified in the Son and in the disciples when they are true disciples and bear fruit. If we are seeking our own glory – and it is very very easy to do this in many subtle ways – we are separated from Jesus. Truly to abide in Jesus means to be content simply that the life of Jesus should be reproduced in the life of the world.

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That is to bear fruit. By that God is glorified. That is true discipleship. And the absolute condition of it is that we should abide in Jesus and he in us.

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29

When I Am Weak, Then I Am Strong

Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me: ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness’. I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities, for when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Cor. 12:8-10

I have been speaking in these monthly gatherings of various aspects of our ministry, but today I want to speak of a dimension of our ministry which is not visible, but which pervades it all.

We are at the moment passing through the period of the year when trouble in the Church always seems to be at its maximum. I do not know why it is that this period from February to April seems to be the time when quarrels boil up. Is it because the weather is getting hotter? Or because pastoral transfers are looming up? Or because too much piety in Lent spoils our tempers? I do not know. But I know that these quarrels sometimes seem almost unbearable. One feels a terrible sense of weakness and helplessness as one quarrel comes after another. How can I possibly take it? Am I a total failure? Is the pastorate going to be ruined? Is the CSI going to the dogs?

When these questions come, we are tempted to start trying to protect ourselves. One begins to see members of the Church as enemies to be outwitted, as rogues to be kept under control. You begin to think of yourself in the role of Moses trying to drive this rabble of baptised but unconverted heathen through the desert without being torn to pieces yourself. You think: ‘How shall I manage these people?’ instead of asking ‘What do they need to bring them into the fulness of God’s grace, and how shall I help them to find it?’ So you begin to



assert yourself, instead of being the humble servant of God and witness of Jesus Christ to them.

In this chapter you see Paul wrestling with a temptation something like this. The Corinthians had brought him almost to the breaking point. They had insulted him, rejected his authority, humiliated him. He is tempted to assert himself, to justify himself, to have his little bit of boasting-as he puts it. But in the end he leaves all this behind. 'If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show weakness', he says, and then, 'When I am weak, then I am strong'.

This is not just playing with words. It is a paradox which rests on the great paradox of the Cross. The Christian minister can use these words, because he is the minister of the Gospel whose centre is the Cross. He is called to actualise in his own life, and to help others to actualise in their lives that total surrender to the will of God which looks like weakness but is indeed the power of God for salvation. I cannot explain this; I can only testify that it is so, and the basis of this testimony is the Cross. The Cross of Jesus was the ultimate expression of a life which was lived in total surrender to the will of the Father as that will was disclosed in the circumstances of daily life. The death of Jesus was his total commitment to the Father in faith, even when it seemed that every ground of faith had been removed and that everything was lost. In so far as our ministry is grounded in the Cross we shall know the truth of this paradox, that it is in the weakness of the Cross that the power of God is made manifest.

Sometimes this weakness takes the form of sheer incapacity. There are times when I know that I can do nothing more – either through sheer physical exhaustion, or because my mind and imagination can conceive of no solution to the problem. Many times I know that I am at the end of my resources and can do nothing except commit the matter to God. Sometimes I have been driven to follow the example of King Hezekiah, taken a letter which I do not know how to answer, and 'spread it out before the Lord' leaving it on the prayer desk in my chapel until I learn what the answer is to be.

Sometimes this weakness is a moral and spiritual weakness. I know that I have myself failed over and over again, that I am a moral and spiritual weakling. But here also it is true that God's strength is made perfect in weakness. The Church is not an organisation of spiritual giants. It is broken men



and women who can lead others to the Cross. It is on men like Peter that Jesus builds his Church.

I spoke of this as a dimension of the ministry. For Paul it is almost a definition of the ministry. In 1 Corinthians 4: 8-13, and in 2 Corinthians 4 he defines the ministry in terms which show that the only true pattern of ministry is to be found in the Cross. For what is the work of the ministry if it is not to lead others in following Jesus on the way of the Cross? That is why St Paul, when his authority as an apostle is challenged, answers by speaking of his sufferings. It is the mark of the Cross that authenticates any Christian ministry.

Anthony Hanson has shown very convincingly in his book *The Pioneer Ministry* that this is the essence of Paul's understanding of the ministry. Its purpose is to lead the Church along the way of the Cross; to enable the Church to be conformed to the pattern of Christ's sufferings, by being conformed to that pattern itself. If this is true, then the list given in our text – weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities – belong to the very essence of the ministry and we shall not seek to escape from them. For it is in the midst of these things that the power of God is made manifest. All other power is only illusion.

30

Jesus, Saviour Of The World

From very early days Christians have spoken of Jesus as Saviour. This was a word that was full of meaning in the world where the Gospel was first preached. It was a title given to the Roman Emperor by popular enthusiasm because he had brought peace to a vast area of human life formerly torn by civil war. It was used also by the devotees of many private religious cults as a title for their gods who could – so it was claimed – save men from illness, or from the control of the stars, or from death. Among all these so-called saviours, Christians pointed to the man from Nazareth and said: This is the true Saviour, the Saviour of the world.

What did they mean by this claim, these first disciples who had known Jesus and seen him at work?

To answer that question fully would mean going deep into the biblical use of the word. The Old Testament writers can use the word Saviour to describe – for example – those doughty warriors who rose to rally the people against their enemies in the days before there was a king in Israel. But behind these human saviours, there is always seen the one who is the real Saviour – Yahweh, the Lord who saved his people out of Egypt and will save them from all their enemies. The Lord has shown himself as Saviour in the great act of liberation from Egypt, and in the rescue of the exiles from Babylon, as well as in countless acts of deliverance from danger and captivity and sickness such as those described in the Psalms. Yet none of these particular acts of salvation exhausts the saving power of God. He is Saviour in a sense which transcends all these, in a sense which will be finally manifest only when all evil has been banished from his creation, when all the enemies of man have been destroyed, and God's people live in peace, everyone under his own vine and fig tree. God shows himself as Saviour in concrete events of history-secular events, if you like to put it so-such as the deliverance from Egypt and the return from Babylon: yet

God, the Saviour, is more than the one who does these things, for to know him and to have fellowship with him is greater than all possible earthly blessings.

Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is nothing
upon earth that I desire beside thee.
My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength
of my heart and my portion for ever.

In the New Testament also the saving power of God is seen in events which we would call secular. When John sends his disciples to ask of Jesus whether he is or is not the promised Saviour, Jesus replies by pointing to his acts of healing and liberation: The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. In many places the word 'save' is the word used to describe the healing acts of Jesus. His saving power is shown in deliverance of men and women here and now from the evils which oppress them. It is not an invisible interior transaction between the soul and God. And yet it is also clear that these visible healings and liberations do not exhaust the whole significance of his saving work. There is a future tense in this verb; there are meanings of salvation which are not yet apparent. 'Whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospel's will save it.' 'He that endures to the end shall be saved.' To call Jesus Saviour means more than simply to say that he delivers us from our present distresses.

What does it mean to announce Jesus of Nazareth as Saviour here in India today? What is the frame of reference in which this can be meaningful – first to ourselves and then to those with whom we wish to speak?

At the present time the word has almost been appropriated for a very one-sided and unbiblical interpretation of its meaning. Those Christians who do speak about ‘being saved’ apparently use the phrase to refer to a purely inward experience between the individual soul and God, resulting in new feelings and intentions, but having nothing to do with actual deliverance from sickness or hunger or oppression or alienation. It is obvious that this is very remote from the biblical use of the word. I have emphasised the fact that in the biblical use salvation is not *just* deliverance from secular

ills: it is much more than this. But, on the other hand, a truly biblical use of the word salvation can never separate it entirely from this secular context.

In reaction against this distortion, there are many Christians who are unwilling to use the language of salvation at all. The question ‘Are you saved?’ makes them embarrassed. They are uncomfortable about directly evangelistic activities which have as their goal the conversion of non-Christians with a view to their being saved. They prefer to concentrate on service to the needy in a purely secular framework. But this also does much less than justice to the full biblical meaning of the word. When the New Testament speaks of Jesus as Saviour, this means, as one very famous verse reminds us, that he shall save his people from their sins. The ultimate enemy, the oppressor who stands behind all the particular ills of human life, is that evil power which leads us to turn away from God and to prefer our own glory to his, that power which Jesus called the devil, and which is a reality – by whatever name we call it. Even in relation to his ‘secular’ acts of salvation – the healing of the sick and the helping of the disabled – Jesus interprets these as being the consequence of the fact that he alone has been able to ‘bind the strong man’, the power that has held men in bondage, the devil, and is therefore able to liberate those who were before held captive.

Present-day ecumenical Christianity is rightly insistent that to preach salvation today must mean to act for the liberation of the exploited and for the restoration of the dignity of the victims of racism; these are not just implications of salvation, they are part of what salvation means in biblical terms. But are we equally clear that to preach salvation today means to be able to speak the word that will deliver the corrupt government officer from the love of money, deliver the drunkard from the demon of drink, deliver the quarrelling pastorate committee member from the devilish power of egotism? In the last analysis we call Christ Saviour not because he delivers men from this or that particular bondage or oppression: we call him Saviour because he, and he alone, has power to deliver men from bondage to sin, death and the devil. That, and nothing less than that, is the message we have to proclaim.

How are we to proclaim Jesus as the Saviour in India today? I want to suggest four lines of thought.

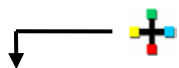
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We have to become engaged with the real needs of men in all their variety and complexity. Salvation has to do with all men and with men in all their needs; it is not a partial concern but a total concern. The picture of Jesus which the New Testament gives us – as it is summarised by Peter in his address to the household of Cornelius – is that he came with good news of peace, and he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil. Men and women of every sort crowded around him, beset by ills of every kind, and his word and touch were mighty to deliver them all. There is no single case recorded where Jesus said: Your sickness is God’s

will: you must just endure it, and I will give you patience to endure. No, in the presence of Jesus the devil and all his works were put to flight: healing, life, freedom and hope took control. The saving power of God was manifestly present, not just in the form of a new spiritual experience but in the form of a total victory over the ills that oppress men and deprive them of their humanity.

Men will not believe our preaching of Jesus as the Saviour unless they see something of the same kind happening. If we preach that in Jesus the reign of God has begun, men must see some signs of that reign. They must see at least some evidence that the power of Jesus is still available to measure its strength against wickedness and oppression, against despair and unbelief, against sickness and death, against the demonic powers that make men behave like devils. Let us at once grant that if men do see that, there will always be some who come with the wrong motives, who come wanting the loaves and fishes rather than the living bread that comes down from heaven. Yes, we will have to face that-as Jesus did; but let us not make it an excuse for running away from the real problems that plague men, the needs of the poor, the unemployed, the disabled, the sick in mind and body, the rich and successful and strong who are yet the pitiful victims of their own pride and folly.

If the Church is to manifest that kind of real engagement with the evils that beset men, one requirement is that we shall use our own eyes and our own wits to discern what the evils really are. It seems to me that one of our endemic national weaknesses is that we not only like to get our technical experts



from abroad to solve our problems, but we also seem to like to have someone from abroad to tell us what our problems are. We pick up from international and ecumenical writings the latest problems which we ought to be worrying about, and then proceed to become eloquent about them instead of being sensitive to the real problems on our own doorsteps. Our problem, for example, is not racism in the sense that it exists in the USA and South Africa; it is the problem of how we treat the Backward Communities in Kerala, the Harijans in Tinnevely or the Madharis in Trichy. Our problem is not land-reform, that traditional favourite of liberals everywhere; it is the redistribution of purchasing power so that the landless get their fair share of the product of agriculture. The problem of our young people is not the 'identity crisis' imported from the over-developed countries. Our young people have a very strong sense indeed of their own identity as the new generation of Indians who are now for the first time in charge of the country. The problem is how this strong sense of identity is to be related to the real needs of our country as a whole. So one might go on. You may quarrel with my examples, but I want only to make the point that we must use our own eyes and our wits to see what are the real problems. We must not be like those generals who fight magnificently, but fight the wrong war. We must be bold enough to use our own intelligence in discerning what are the real strategies of the devil in our own time and place, and how the powers of the Kingdom are to be deployed against them. To speak of Jesus as Saviour will carry no weight, unless we are really engaged all along the line with the real enemy.

II

This brings me to my second point. I think that we have to be very much on our guard against what Bonhoeffer called 'cheap grace'. The invitation of Jesus, while it promises peace, is at the same time a call to warfare. I do not want to spend time here exploring this paradox which is familiar to us. I want only to draw attention to the fact that men will not see the saving power of Jesus at work in the life of the Church, if we do not make it much more clear than we have done in recent years that the Church is engaged in a warfare, and that to join the Church means to enlist for a real battle.



There is too much evangelistic preaching which completely obscures this point. It is implied that what Jesus offers is simply a guarantee of peace, happiness and security – for this life and for eternity. The other notes of Jesus' preaching are completely muted: 'If anyone would come after me, let him say No to himself, take up his cross, and follow me'. When the rich young ruler came and asked – in effect – What must I do to be saved? Jesus answered by telling him to sell everything he had, give to the poor, and become a follower of Jesus. We have not sounded that note. We have become pedlars of cheap grace – thinking that if only our advertising stunts are clever enough, we shall have a good market.

I know that there is a delicate balance to be held here. Salvation is utterly free. We cannot earn it or be worthy of it. But this is why it is important that we talk not about 'salvation' but about 'the Saviour'. Salvation is God's free gift; but no one can come within reach of Jesus without knowing that one cannot be with Jesus except by giving up everything. Those who belong to Jesus, and are able to commend him as Saviour, will be those who are manifestly following him on the way of the Cross. To put it in another way, we shall not be effective ambassadors of Christ except in so far as membership in the Church manifestly involves a life-commitment to the kind of ministry that Jesus exercised in the days of his flesh, a ministry of healing and help to all who are oppressed by the devil. The Church must be seen to be that body of men and women which goes about with Jesus doing his work, his agents and helpers, not merely the recipients of his love but also the agents and bearers of his love – a team of workers rather than an institution for pensioners.

III

This immediately raises the third point which I wish to make. Most of us will agree, sadly and reluctantly, but inevitably, that the chief obstacle to the saving work of Jesus in India today is the Christian Church. We know that Jesus still draws men to him, that they are irresistibly attracted by him, even if they interpret him by inadequate categories. But we know also that the Church repels them, because they do not see in us what they see in him. It is appalling to have to say these things, but we know that they are true. I want to



try to identify more precisely what is the source of this terrible state of affairs.

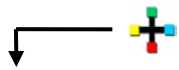
It is nothing new that Christians are sinful men and women; they have always been, so. The Church must always point men beyond itself, and say 'Don't look at us; look at him'. That will always be so. But our problem here in India is not just that. It is that we have allowed the communal character of religion in India to impose itself upon the Church, so that the Church has become a communal organisation. We act and talk and think as a 'minority community'. This is totally incompatible with being the Church in a biblical sense. Let me try to spell out more exactly what I mean.

I am not denying the obvious fact that Christians form only about 2% of the population – or 7% in Madras, or 30% in Kerala. In that sense, we are a minority. But – for example – doctors form much less than 2% of the population, but you never hear doctors talking of themselves as a minority community. It would never occur to them to do so, because they are thinking of themselves as people with a special responsibility for the whole nation, a responsibility in respect of its health. Of course, like other human communities – they will fight to safeguard their corporate privileges. All human groups do this. But the point is that membership in the profession is thought of in terms of obligation to the entire nation, and therefore you will never hear doctors talking of themselves as a minority.

Another example. The Christian Church in Indonesia forms a very small minority – similar to our position in India. But *you will never* hear the Indonesian Christians talking of themselves as

a minority community. It never seems to occur to them to think that way. From the beginning they have played a big role in the life of the nation. There have always been Christians prominent in politics. A Christian army officer was the Chief of Staff for the army that defeated the Dutch. Christians think of themselves as being *for* the whole nation. And the Church in Indonesia is the fastest growing Church in the world today.

Why do we have this 'minority community' complex? Why do we think that we should have places in cabinets, or on the benches of High Courts, because we are Christians – and not because we are good at the job? Why do we act as if we were a separate community primarily interested in our own

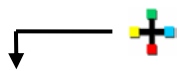


advance and not in the advance of the whole nation? Is it because the communal character of religion in India has imprinted itself upon the Christian Church? I do not know whether it could have been prevented. I only know that it is a fact, and that it is the greatest obstacle to the proclamation of Jesus as Saviour. There is an absolute contradiction between the message that Jesus is the Saviour of the world, of the nation, or the whole human family, and the impression we give by our way of life, that Jesus is only concerned to provide special privileges (in this world and the next) for a small clique.

I know that this is not entirely our fault. We are treated by the State as a community. When a person is baptised, he and his children lose many valuable privileges given by the State. We must fight to end this system by which the State grants concessions on the basis of religious affiliation and not on the basis of need. It is a system which can only corrupt the springs of national life. But we cannot wait for the ending of these evils to assert the true character of the Church. The Church is not a religious community in the Indian sense of the term. The Church is the place where Jesus is acknowledged and adored and served as the Saviour of the whole world. We cannot both proclaim him as Saviour of the world and treat him as the patron of our private club.

I do not have any simple remedies to suggest. I think our most urgent task is to discover those changes in the life of the Church which will transform it from a self-regarding, self-seeking clique into an open fellowship of those who are committed to Christ's saving work for all men. This cannot be done by dissolving the Church altogether, as some seem to suggest. There must always be a body of men and women utterly committed to Jesus, ready to follow him through good report and evil to the very end. The very first thing Jesus did at the outset of his ministry was to gather such a body around him; to the end of history that must remain a reality, and our commitment to the Church is part of our commitment to Jesus. It is and must be total and unchangeable.

But the Church must become something open, humble, disposable, ready to be bypassed if God chooses to work in some other way. It must never be jealous if it sees the work of God going on outside the Church, but only rejoice wherever it sees the love and power of God at work. There is a big



theological task to be done here. Our eschatology needs to be reconsidered, so that we can make it clear that in the end God's promise for mankind is a city and not a church – a civil community and not an ecclesiastical community. But even while we are working at our eschatology, there are some things we can do now.

We can decide, for example, that we will take every opportunity to work with and under non-Christian colleagues in everything that seeks to do the will of God in the life of the nation. We will seek to honour our Lord Jesus Christ in such enterprises, not by claiming proprietary rights, but by manifesting a more total and self-denying commitment.

We might consider – in the staffing of our institutions – what are the implications of the fact that, if we have to choose between a Christian who is selfish, dishonest and bad-tempered, and a Hindu who is unselfish, honest and eirenic, we shall be expected to choose the Christian; we might consider what are the implications of this for our proclamation of salvation for all men through Jesus Christ.

We might even consider abolishing our beloved statistics which are hopelessly inaccurate anyway, and which probably serve to emphasise all the wrong things about the Church. It is not very important whether the Church is 2% or 21% of the nation; it is very important whether the Church credibly represents Jesus as the Saviour of the whole nation.

We might consider whether we should administer the rite of confirmation to any young man or woman until we have clear evidence of a commitment to some kind of active service in the interest of the Kingdom of God.

Perhaps these suggestions are not the best ones. But we must agree upon a few concrete steps which could be taken to move us, in the next few years, a little away from the position of a ‘minority community’ and a little towards the position of a company of the servants of the Saviour of the world.

IV

In what I have just said, it might appear that I am reducing the Church to a merely functional level, making it merely a means to an end. That must never be done. The Church is indeed functional: its function is to bring men to



their Saviour. But it can only do that if it is more than a merely functional agency. It can only do so if it is itself the place where the Saviour’s presence is known and enjoyed, if only in foretaste. People must be able to get some idea of what it means to be saved by looking at the life of the Church. At least they must see here a foretaste of what Jesus is offering to the world. Otherwise ‘being saved’ has no clear meaning.

This means that, while the Church must not be a ‘religious community’ in the sense in which I have just been speaking, must not be a segment of the nation which is chiefly interested in its own advancement, the Church must very definitely be a religious community in another sense. It must be a community in which the love of God in Jesus Christ is known and tasted and shared and made available to others. It must be a place where men and women care for one another, as Jesus has cared for us.

This caring must never become a selfish, introverted affair. It must always be available to all in need, whether of the household of faith or not. But its reality will be most deeply felt within the household, where men and women are really caring for one another, bearing one another’s burdens, praying for one another, forgiving one another, building one another up in faith and hope. Unless people can see this happening, they will not believe what we say about Jesus as the Saviour.

Here I am thinking primarily about the life of our local congregations. Here is, I believe, the primary unit of the Church’s life. Our trouble is that these units have become too big – at least in the cities. They have passed beyond the size at which there could be this personal caring. You may have noticed Michael Quoist’s suggestion that when our Lord promised his presence ‘where two or three are gathered together in my name’, he definitely made no such commitment for gatherings of two or three thousands. That remark has more than humour in it. The test of his presence is always ‘If you have love one for another’, and love can only be known and exercised in a small community.

When we think about the ills from which Christ has come to save us, we are bound to generalise, to speak of broad trends and categories—such as unemployment, or the slums, or the landless labourers. But in the end it is human beings



we have to deal with, each of whom has his own personal struggle with the world, the flesh and the devil, and each of whom has to find and taste and know the saving power of Christ in his own way. This can only happen when the units are small enough to permit of deep personal encounter, prayer and the sharing of experience.

Our church structures were designed for days when Christians were a small handful, and a pastor could know all his people personally. Today our units have become much too large. Pentecostal and other groups of Christian brethren are making good the defects of our organisation by drawing people together in small groups again. We have to learn from them. The saving victories of Jesus are won on the battlefield of the human heart, which is a secret place accessible only to a few. We shall not speak convincingly of him as Saviour of the world, until our common life as a Church is such that men and women know they can find this sort of personal caring and praying and loving which will bring Christ's saving power right into the centre of their being.

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