

The Church's Mission to Industry

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operate in a common approach towards Industry, on the regional as well as the national level. Second in importance is the making available of more information about the aims and objects and purpose of Industrial Mission, this to be done by making available the lectures and related material presented at the course. The third line of action is the preparation of suggestions for a limited pilot scheme on the Witwatersrand.

Looking to the future with the last aspect particularly in mind, there is a further group of long term objectives. Most important is the establishment of a widely representative body of leaders in Industry and from the churches to guide and advise those involved in setting up a pilot scheme. Supporting this objective it would be necessary to embark on a long term educational programme to promote understanding of Industrial Mission within the churches as well as within Industry. This would be essentially a two-way process, of Industry addressing and training clergy to enable them to understand the work situation and its impact on church members; of the churches helping the laity to respond creatively to their work situation. As well as this general interpretative educational programme both parties need to consider the selection and training of specific ministers to act as representatives of the churches to Industry. Overseas these ministers are called Industrial Chaplains and have access to the place of work by the mutual consent of all parties involved. In England, America, Germany and Japan this method has produced excellent results. The idea of "worker priests", ministers engaged by Industry as workers, does not at this stage seem a promising way of approaching the Church's ministry to Industry.

In conclusion it is possible to consider the backlog which remains to the churches in the South African situation. The pressing need for such efforts is apparent to all the churches. There is need for further discussion and planning before the churches will gain a clear under-

standing of their need to co-operate in this matter and to evolve a common understanding of the goals and purpose of Industrial Mission. This can perhaps only be achieved if in faith the Church and Industry agree to establish a pilot scheme which will be able to meet real difficulties as they emerge and to convey insights and information to those who stand to profit from them.

Finally we cannot but conclude on a hopeful note. Many regard the task as impossible — when the large and multifaceted complex of Industry, the intricate nature of human society and of industrial organisa-

tion in particular are kept in mind. This is to miss the object of this experiment in Industry. Already the Christian laity devote their life and service to their work; they are present there already. The main function of Industrial Mission is to enable these laymen to reach sustained understanding of their work situation as the content and context of their Christian life and service.

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THE CHURCH AS YEAST IN INDUSTRY

REV. IAN THOMSON

The kingdom of God is not confined to the so-called spiritual spheres. The Church, its agent, should not be concerned solely with its doctrine and ceremonies as a separate 'spiritual' institution. 'The kingdom of heaven', Jesus said, is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened.'

There is a warped one-sided understanding of the biblical view of life that thinks: the real issue of life is only the salvation or damnation of souls, the rest of this life on earth is only an unimportant framework for souls.

But God created the whole of life. 'God saw everything he had made, and behold it was very good'. Genesis 1:31. God evidently set great value on his 'earthly' purposes with man. 'Be fruitful and multiply' he said to man, 'and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' Genesis 1:28.

And evidently God does not only want to redeem souls, apart from the matrix of our ordinary earthly life, for in Col. 1:19 we read that God is striving through Christ 'to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven'.

EVERYDAY LIFE IMPORTANT

Our life at home, in factories and offices, in streets and banks, is of the utmost importance to God. **Here people live and meet, and say and do things that become part of the**

history of all life. Here men are helping and hurting each other. The very organisation and working of these influential parts of life mould men for good or bad, build them up or break them down, and influence their deepest attitudes to life, their neighbour and God.

And so, because God seeks to redeem all our earthly life to the goodness and blessedness it should have, therefore he asks his Church to be salt and light to the world. He asks us to take the quality of Jesus Christ into every sphere of life.

THE CHURCH AS YEAST IN INDUSTRY

One of the most influential parts of life today is industry. And the church should act as yeast in industry in two ways.

1. Here is one of the most complete meeting grounds of committed Christians with men who do not believe in God (in the New Testament meaning of believe). And Christians can here help their fellowmen to start on the road of discipleship.

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2. God has rich purposes with industry as such and Christians can help towards the fulfilment of these purposes.

These two ways are not ultimately separate but inter-connected. But for the sake of clarity we will begin by considering them separately. And while we are concerned with the whole world, we will here think mainly of South Africa's industry (in which I include mining).

The reader may be asking the question, through whom will the church act as yeast in industry? Mainly through the layman, though clergy must do their part.

HELP REDEEM PERSONS

Firstly, then the church should be as yeast in industry so as to help redeem persons. Some sophisticated sections of the church have so concentrated on the value of industry in itself and how the church can contribute to the fulfilment of the purposes of industry, that they seem to have forgotten Christ's commission to us to go out and tell the Gospel to every creature.

Our sophisticated friends point out that the layman's service to God in industry is to do his particular job well. This is true so far as it goes, and we will come to this most vital task of the church in industry later. But it is not the whole truth.

And here I must draw on my experience while working in a light metal works, a bakery, and now a ferrochrome works. The Christian layman working alongside the rebellious, the backsliding, and the perplexed, can — over a period of time — definitely minister to them in the things of God. Again and again during the many hours spent at work the natural moment to witness to God arises in conversation or out of the working situation.

Indeed, if one does not use this time to speak of the things of God it will soon enough be grasped by fellows to put over lower, and even bestial, things.

Often at work it is a case of nature abhors a vacuum. There is the moment when you may speak very tellingly of our Lord, and if you let

it slip by the next fellow will jump in to put forward the claims of some of the destructive idols of the world — money, cheap sex, my race right or wrong, etc.

At this point let me mention that there are now over 2,000,000 people working in South African industry. (September, 1965 — 2,023,000 workers of all races). Thousands of these are straying very tragically from God.

Parish ministers are so busy in the circle of their members that they never manage to reach out to many of these folk. And when they do, people are inclined to put on a special front for the minister that bears little relation to their life in the workshop, mine shaft, or laboratory.

The Christian layman, on the other hand, is brought into close relationship with these folk day in and day out, and he knows them as they are for a very big part of their daily life. He is the logical one to be yeast in these measures of dough.

And there is many a Christian who is doing just this to the best of his ability. But he ought to be further inspired to it, deepened in Bible study and prayer, and guided in the approach he should take. Thus the minister and congregation must become conscious of and concerned with the industrial world, and, of course, with the world of commerce, education etc., the other measures of the dough.

TO FULFIL PURPOSES OF GOD

Secondly, the Church should be as yeast in industry so as to help it fulfil the purposes God has for it. When we consider the teaching of the Bible as a whole, and look at industry in the light of this, we begin to understand something of what God is striving to do in industry. Men, of course, have a whole range of purposes of their own in industry. We should take men's purposes in industry seriously, for after all, God gave men freedom to work with the world and use it. **But surely the vital thing to do is to try to catch a vision of God's underlying purposes for us in this, as in all spheres, and to see how the purposes of men tie in and conflict with the purposes of God.**

The New Testament does not give much specific teaching about work and God's purposes with 'earthly'

work. It is so single-minded in its concern for the saving of men that it does not theorize much about anything. It says only such things as 'Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men —' Col. 3:23. Yet it would be a silly person who believed that because the New Testament says practically nothing about sport that God has no purposes with sport in itself. Even sillier it would be to hold that God has no specific purposes with industry as such. The Bible does not give theories about everything in life — it gives the heart of the matter, and we are free to understand the rest of life in a way that fits in with this. To give all the Biblical background for what we are going on to say here, would require a separate article on the Bible's teaching about work, and I am eager to write it. But here we can only share a general approach that I believe you will confirm.

1. It is surely part of God's purpose with industry that men should 'subdue the earth' and use it to sustain human society and make it prosper. Gen. 1:28.
2. Men are thus to be creative in using the earth. They are to use their varied talents to the full. They are to find a degree of fulfilment in doing their share well. Matt. 25:14-30; Mark 9:35.
3. In order to achieve the above two, men are to learn to co-operate with each other. Mark 12:31; Gal. 6:2-5.

I realise that some of the passages referred to have a primary 'spiritual' reference, eg. 'bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ' (Gal. 6:2) refers first of all to life in the Christian congregation. But it is surely also the spirit that God wishes to spread through-out the whole of life.

CONTRIBUTION BY LAYMEN

Now, in industry seen in this way Christian laymen have a tremendous contribution to make. **They are called to be yeast till the whole dough is leavened with these purposes of God.** Men without Christ also want these ends in some sense. They also want to 'subdue the earth' and use it (unfortunately, often to exploit it) so that men may prosper. But to be truthful they are more concerned with their own enrich-

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ment in all this than with the prosperity of society as a whole.

They also want men to find fulfilment in their job, or to be truthful, they want self-expression and satisfaction for themselves in their job. They also want co-operation, or to be truthful, they just want 'no unpleasantness' to disturb their hours at work. They want a shadow of what God wills but they want it for mainly selfish reasons. **And, God indeed works through them despite their sinfulness to work out his purposes steadily.**

But committed Christian laymen by their faith, their worship, by the love and understanding Christ has awoken in them, have a great contribution to make to see that industry really fulfils God's deepest purposes for it. Consider a Christian personnel officer. He will be concerned that the factory will truly work well, 'subdue the earth', produce successfully, so that all may prosper. He won't be wanting to get the best out of the men only for his own fame and gain. He will do his utmost to find the best creative channels for the men to allow them to find fulfilment in serving well. He will sincerely help to get co-operation between all in which love may find expression. All of this he will pursue with a deep sense of responsibility. **Because life and work are meaningful to him he will pursue it all with zest and with study. And consider the far-reaching effects of his offering all of this to God in prayer!**

I wish I had space to show the same for the Christian as manager, foreman, fitter, labourer, and so on. The Christian as a fitter, e.g. will be concerned to serve Christ well in the factory. He will be really concerned to see that the section of machinery he looks after is kept in tip-top efficiency and safety. He will be concerned that he and his labourer should find interest and satisfaction in their work together. His approach in worker politics will be towards co-operation, reconciliation; justice. — yes — but not war for selfish advantage.

Christians in industry because they begin to see God's purposes in

it all, will take a lively and responsible interest in the many sides of modern industry: — management — worker relations, the structure of industry and the economics of it, communication along lines of authority and between departments, automation, computer control, race and group relations, training, safety, overtime, rates of pay, etc.

RÔLE OF THE CLERGY

In all this laymen will find great inspiration and guidance if the Church as a whole organises a wide-reaching industrial mission with keen, suitably trained clergy leading them. **These clergy should concentrate on raising up and training the needed Christian laymen — who may come from industrial workers already in the Church ranks, and from those with no previous organic connection with the Church (who will thus be won to the Church).**

But these clergy should also give a lead to the leavening in the factories as they gain entrance and the confidence of the people concerned, i.e. lead in personal and group conversation. And further they should organise courses, groups and whatever is most helpful to train the institutional church, and especially young men becoming clergy, to become deeply concerned with men in their working life and daily affairs, so that these clergy may in turn equip their flock to follow Christ in their daily life in industry, commerce and so on.

PRESENT WORK IN S.A.

What has been attempted in this direction so far in South Africa? I don't think anyone knows the full picture. There is a mission to miners. The D.R.C. have a chaplain to railway workers. D.R.C. ministers and others minister to various staffs e.g. Post Office and nursing staffs. The Catholics have 'The Grail', in which young women live with fine spiritual devotion and discipline and go out to apply it in daily affairs. I have known of one or two men functioning more or less as 'worker priests' on their own. **And let us not overlook that thousands of Christian laymen throughout the country are striving to live out their Christian faith in industry.** But clearly the work so far in this way has not been adequate.

1. As an **organised** effort of evangelism it has been limited to certain small sections of the Church.
2. It has been severely limited to certain sectors of industry as e.g. mine compounds.
3. And not enough emphasis has been placed, as far as I can gauge, on helping industry to fulfil its own finest purposes in God's eyes.

In a following article I hope to consider the Church as yeast in communal affairs. Later I hope to return to industry in South Africa — its distribution, its particular opportunities and problems, and the specific steps industrial mission should take to leaven it.

(Vervolg van bladsy 5)

KERK EN NYWERHEID

Daar wag 'n groot taak op die hele Kerk in Suid-Afrika om in geloof, met visie en met nugterheid die uitdaging van hierdie industriële tydperk te aanvaar. Mag die hele Kerk in Suid-Afrika, soos verteenwoordig deur alle denominasies, en deur alle gelowiges (leraars sowel as lidmate), die roepstem van God hoor soos dit ons toeklink uit die gewoel en gewerskaal van kantore en besighe- de, fabriek en myne. Want ook daar — ja, juis daar — wil Christus sy koningskap oor die menslike lewe met vreugde laat geld.

CHURCH AND INDUSTRY

A big task awaits the whole Church in South Africa, to accept the challenge of this industrial age in faith, and with vision and clear insight. May the whole Church in South Africa, as she is represented by all denominations and by all the faithful (clergy as well as laity), hear the call of God as it comes to us in the hustle and bustle of office and business, factory and mine. Also here, particularly here, Christ wants to realize his kingship with joy.