



18TH OCTOBER, 1968

FIRST THINGS FIRST

That the country is not altogether bereft of leaders who can rise above party politics, hunger for power, communal and racial and religious jealousies is its only hope now. One such leader made a forthright speech the other day at the annual meeting of the Productivity Association of Ceylon - its President, Mr. D. B. Ellapola. He pointed to several pressing problems the country is facing today, like unemployment and poverty of the 'less vociferous and emmeshed masses'; the instance of the many young men whose education has been unplanned, disorganised and misdirected, on the rampage, idle and unwilling to apply themselves to sensible effort; and the exodus of brains from the country because of frustration and denial of justice. He bemoaned that, instead of working hard to find solutions to such five issues, responsible people and those in positions of leadership and authority are intent on 'beating the drums that frighten and divide us'. He could not have used stronger and more appropriate words when he said: "We strain for position and the forces that will keep us in power. For that purpose, we get embroiled in conflicts of race, of religion, and of language. 'Koneswaram Temple' of recent memory is big enough to cause a stir that can even threaten the fall of Governments. Surely, what is sacred to my neighbour must be sacred to me. What is sacred to the culture and tradition of any one people must be sacred to any other...All this is done in the name of the common man, his heritage and his culture. Will all this not keep us for ever in the wilderness of strife, breeding poverty, ignorance and decay?" Because of this frenzied lust of politicians for position and power, the country has been turned into a veritable wilderness of strife since the Independence. All the time it is a case of various political parties vying with each other to take control of Government and each party striving to outdo its rivals in exploiting the easily moved masses through inflammatory communal, racial and religious propaganda. It has been particularly true of the two major political parties - the U. N. P. and the S. L. F. P. - which, though 'national' in name, have as their chief, if not their only concern to promote the advancement of the majority community. The minorities, if they would not be satisfied with the crumbs which they would design to throw to them from their seats of power, were welcome to be crushed under the juggernaut of their power. Just now with the general elections drawing nearer and nearer, the communal drums have begun to increase in their tempo. We ask, along with Mr. Ellapola, what then is the answer to these conditions? Here is his answer, with which we are entirely agree; "It is only for men of hope, faith and good-will to get together to stem the forces that disrupt. Men of such calibre who sit back and watch the caravan move on, themselves unwilling to raise a voice or a hand for the ends of justice will have an unforgeable debt to pay to posterity". Will Mr. Ellapola take the lead in marshalling together such men and inspiring them to positive action?

MR. MUGGERIDGE AND UPSALA

Some two or three months ago Mr. Malcolm Muggeridge put out a fiery article fulminating against the Uppsala Assembly of the World Council of Churches. In that article he contended rather violently that the reason why the delegates at Uppsala were able to agree on so many points was because they did not believe very much. Mr. Muggeridge's suggestion was that in previous centuries a theological assembly would have been characterised by violent controversies and by differences of opinion. Theologi-

cal controversies had then split the Christian world and people had undergone persecution because of their disagreement with others. No such controversies take place now and, instead, various amiable documents are issued. This means, according to him, that people have ceased to hold their convictions passionately and do not consider issues to be matters of life and death.

Mr. Muggeridge is in a state of legitimate reaction against much that he finds in the modern world. Everybody will sympathise with him in his lament about the decline of belief in the modern world and the decline in the intensity of the belief that does exist. And he is, of course, quite right in his suspicion that when people do not believe anything very strongly, it is easy to make them agree very mildly to anything. It is easier to say Yes than to say No.

But such a suspicion should not be used as the only explanation of the fact of agreements. That would mean that, whenever people do agree, it is because they do not care about the issue raised and do not actually mean what they say. This will be to try to unlock all doors with one key.

It may be seen everyday that many people who have had differences do often come to an agreement after talking things over. Various Conferences at various levels and in regard to various issues constantly meet; and if asked for the purpose members would say that it is to settle differences. It seems, therefore, to be generally assumed that differences can be overcome; and we must not imagine that all differences which are settled were bogus differences. At the Council of Jerusalem, reported in the Acts of the Apostles the Elders and Apostles had genuine differences to start with which caused much bitterness; but in the end an agreement was reached and conveyed to the Churches. When the Sinn Feiners in 1922 or so told the British Government that they would not go to a Conference in London because their views were different from those of Government, the Government replied that it was because of differences that a Conference was necessary. The Conference met and settled the Irish question. It is, therefore, obvious that it is often possible to overcome differences and disagreements.

It is to be hoped that Mr. Muggeridge does not think that there is any intrinsic merit in disagreements. Disagreements represent a temporary stage before an agreement is reached. Agreement is symbolic of the acceptance of Truth. It is because there is an imperfect grasp of that there are disagreements. There is, therefore, greater merit in transcending disagreements than stopping with disagreements. It is because the Roman Catholic Church saw the point of this that for centuries it tried to impose an artificial agreement in belief. The glorification of disagreements began with the Reformation; but it began as a matter of necessity and not as a matter of virtue. The Reformers wanted to uphold that they were right in this disagreement with Rome.

There is also another kind of agreement, not one where difficulties are overcome or transcended, but where people deliberately and of set purpose move out of the area of disagreements and seek areas of agreements. Here agreements are reached not over differences but in spite of them and away from them. For long theologians and religious leaders were being scolded so much for indulging in their squabbles, while the world was going to ruin, that now there is a great desire among them to seek agreements in areas where agreements are possible. Protestants have many differences with the Roman Catholics; but are there not areas in which they can agree? I do not think any of the Bishops at Lambeth agreed with John Robinson on fundamental theological points, but all could be unanimous on other points. After a Lambeth conference the Archbishop of Armagh (Ireland) put the point humorously when he said that, if there was a controversy about the colour of an apple, they ended up by agreeing unanimously about the shape. Agreements of this sort are sought to bring a little peace into a world beset by too many conflicts.

It may be observed that this procedure is not peculiar to

CHURCH, HOME AND FAMILY

(Address given by the Ven. James L. H. Amarasekera, Archdeacon of Kurunegalle, at the J. D. C. S. I. Festival on 28-9-68.)

(Continued from last issue)

1. Through attendance of the family at the worship of the Church. Sunday worship is a regular weekly appointment which they are in honour bound to keep - "Keep holy the Sabbath day"; it is a command - and as often as possible at other services which it is their privilege to attend.

And just as we make an appointment with an important person we are careful to be punctual and not to break that appointment, so also should be our appointment with God, where he makes Himself known to us in His own House, to the Family of Families in the local Church. The importance of disciplined regular attendance at Church every Sunday cannot be over-emphasised. The habit of participating in Christian worship on Sundays is a necessary habit, it is very important. It is easier to go to Church every Sunday than occasionally. You form a good habit and keep it on. It is a habit. But you make it an occasional thing and you are tempted to stop off more frequently - "I will go next Sunday. I went last Sunday", and so we put it off. But where we have certain principles - "I have an appointment, I must go there" - "I have an obligation to God" - then it becomes easy to attend Sunday worship regularly.

When friends come on a visit or to stay, going to Church on Sunday is not a lack of hospitality, but a witness to the family's responsible sense of obligation. Now, that is very important in the training of the children. If we stay at home as parents, because friends have come, if we do not go to Church on Sunday, then why should the sons and daughters go to Sunday School on Sunday? They will perhaps say "Well, perhaps we have to go because we cannot say 'no'". "When I am as big as Daddy and Mommy then I will not need to go to Church". You see there should be witness in the home, and it is a witness to our friends. Sunday by Sunday the Christian family express their common loyalty to our Lord.

2. By participation in the Church activities by Christian families: The Church relies on Christian families for the work it has to do and for leadership in its work. The pastor can be

the theological world but to the world in general. With how many people we see around us do we agree on all points? Yet we manage to live with them, by the simple procedure of stressing agreements. Theologians cannot, of course, be always stressing agreements; but, when the air is full of strife, they will fail in their duty if they fail to point out that, while there are disagreements, there are also agreements.

As for the vehemence which Mr. Muggeridge finds wanting in the delegates, he is quite right in thinking that when people feel strongly they also express themselves strongly. But how strongly should they do so? There are many Parliaments in the world, including our own, where members occasionally lose all restraint of expression; but such occasions are always deplored. We are living in an age when it is expected that, even when differences are strong, expression of differences should be restrained and polite. This is far more necessary in a theological assembly. It would be no advantage to copy some of the early Synods of the Church in the matter of vehemence.

While all had Mr. Muggeridge's desire for deeper belief that prevails at present and wish that all could believe as strongly as people did in the past, we must also realise that it was much easier to believe then than now; then the world was very narrow. We are living in a much wider intellectual world. It is more difficult to believe strongly now than ten centuries ago. But whatever that may be, it is possible to believe as strongly as people did then without resorting to the same behaviour

relieved of the very heavy burdens he has to bear and enabled to get on with his more important work of the shepherding of the flock. And with regard to shepherding and pastoral visiting, you know our Lord laid great emphasis on the lost sheep. But what happens to the pastor really? He has to focus so much about the 99, that he has no time to go after the lost sheep. Where the pastor has to be by the sick bed, he cannot because he really must keep up with the social functions; where he has got to go again and again to an unhappy home, not very pleasant for him, he has got other people to look up. They complain "He goes three times a week, two doors next, but he has not called here for over a month".

The principle of our relationship to the Church, as of the community, is to give more than we take.

2. By contributing to the up-keep of the Church and the extension of its work. Unthoughtful and old patterns of giving must be revised in proportion to present day income and worth of money, as well as needs of the Church. It is a terrible thing for clergy to have to beg and beg. And we do beg, but it is so exacting. And we have to say "I am grateful for your contribution and generosity" and so forth, and it is a terrific burden to a clergyman to just keep on thinking of how to make both ends meet when all the time the man is hard put to keeping his parish going. And too often you see the Family of Families is just paying its way; just paying for itself. Where is the effort? How are we to reach out? We are existing just to keep, as it were, body and soul together. But that is not enough, and we have got to bring this home to the people and should not leave it to the pastor to bring it home to the people, because it is our job, the job of the whole family. I am not exonerating the pastor but still the people must take this up and say "What are we doing for the Kingdom of God? We have a man here in the ministry, are we helping him? Are we backing up? Are we using him? Are we treating him to do his work? What are we doing about it? Or are we just doing our bit to maintain the ministrations we require? Are we looking inward or are we looking outward - to the needs of Christ for the souls of men?" And our families have got to take this to heart, and when I say families I mean husband and wife, and growing children as well. They have got to talk it over "What are we going to do about this? What is our giving to God - is it casual, is it the nature of charity?" We have to think upon these things. These are some of the contributions that the family has got to make to the life of the Church - the Family of Families. Money is a stewardship and by careful endeavour the family can set aside month by month in the spirit of obligation their contribution to the needs of the Church. We must set aside a fixed amount of money that we will give to the Church. The house rent has got to be paid, the insurance policy has to be paid, and it has just got to be paid, and it is paid. Of course, we have got to pay our medical bill, but it is something else that has got to be adjusted to do it. In the same way we set aside for God our service of God, and we must do this conscientiously - "That is the minimum and that must be set aside". And whatever expenses we have, whether someone calls for it or whether we send it, it gets done. But if we just wait and see what is available at the moment, then there is the danger that it will not be done - "I haven't got change" - then that becomes casual giving. We must have planned giving. The family must constantly recall that, although the Church is a Divine Institution, it has to work through human agencies. This is the responsibility of the Family of Families.

(To be continued)



THE LATE MR. S. V. BALASINGHAM

(A tribute paid by Mr. Lyman S. Kulathungam at the Service of Thanksgiving for Mr. Balasingham at the Cathedral Church, Vaddukottai, on Sunday, the 13th inst.)

"It seems so tragic and such a waste". This was the thought of several persons that morning in June when they heard of the altogether unexpected death of Mr. Balasingham. It was a rude shock from which many of us have not yet recovered. With long years granted to many people today and life expectancy far greater than in our grand-parents' youth, the death of one in the flush of manhood seems tragic and unjustified. Why death comes to such a useful person, who had a bright future before him and from whom much was expected, and why others who are useless burdens to society continue to live is one of the deep mysteries of life. We recall that Moses, one of God's greatest servants, was denied the grand fulfillment of his dedicated life. Above any thing else he wanted to enter the promised land toward which he had struggled and led his followers for so many years. Yet we are told that the Lord withheld this glorious experience from His faithful servant. Something like this frustration was our dear friend's experience. He saw the land of promise, the alluring future in the responsible position to which he had been called. But he was not allowed to possess it. Yet we are met here in a service of Christian worship to give thanks to God for the life and service of Mr. Balasingham. What? Thanks to God at the death of a friend? Yes, not merely because we respond to the call of St Paul to the Thessalonians to "give thanks to God whatever happens", in whatever situation, but also because of our Christian conviction that God lives, that God loves and that He does all things well. Therefore we want to give thanks to the Lord for Mr. Balasingham's life, for what he did in this community, and in the wider community, and for the Grace of God that sustained and strengthened him.

First, thanks to God for the influences that shaped his life. His parents were from families with traditions of Christian service. His education was in Malaya, Ceylon and England. A third influence that came into his life was his wife, with the strength of Christian convictions.

Secondly, thanks to God for his work as a teacher. Those who studied under him and those who worked with him know what an excellent teacher he was. His knowledge of the subjects he handled, particularly History, and the method he employed to convey it to his students were truly arresting. He was not one who was satisfied with merely stuffing his students with knowledge. In his own fascinating manner he created enthusiasm, and even passion, in them for History.

A successful teacher has to possess another important quality; an understanding of his students, their likes and dislikes, their weakness and strength. This quality Mr. Balasingham had in abundance. He had also the skill to arouse the interest of his students in what they were called upon to do, without irritating them by imposing his will on them.

The service he rendered his fellow teachers not only in Jaffna College but also elsewhere was highly valued - for the improvement of their salaries and conditions of ser-

vice, for their progress and unity. He filled several responsible positions in teachers' organisations with great acceptance. He was much in demand for consultation and help by groups and individuals, and for representing them in the University Senate and in international gatherings. His acquaintance and contact with several persons of influence were helpful to him in discharging such tasks as he was called upon to shoulder.

Thirdly, thanks to God for his services in the College in other capacities. The last five of his 24 years of service in Jaffna College he functioned as Vice-Principal, as Co-Principal, and then as Principal. These could be described as a period of apprenticeship. He was slowly but surely getting into his stride as an administrator when death came to him. Undaunted by the problems that faced him, he studied each one of them seriously and tried to discover solutions for them.

As in all other dealings, in the task of administering the College too he never imposed the authority and power of his office on the teachers or the students. Utmost cordiality marked his relationships with them and won him their affection.

It was a full life he led in the school, serving, in addition to being a teacher, as Hostel Warden, Patron of the Academy, Editor of the Miscellany, etc., showing a keen concern for all aspects of the College work and identifying himself with its various activities.

We raise our hearts in thanksgiving to God for such a full and devoted service as his.

Fourthly, thanks to God for Mr. Balasingham as a person. One inimitable quality he had, which was the envy of many persons, was the enormous capacity for comradeship, and the ease with which he moved with people of all stations, age or religion made little effect on his relationships with students, his colleagues, the Alumni of the College; the parents and the public. Added to this was his interesting conversation, punctuated by brilliant retorts and filled with hearty humour. One was also struck by his simple ways and humility, never making an exhibition of his learning nor parading his power. It was, therefore, not surprising that he was 'Bala' to all.

In concluding, I want to pass on a thought to the College and the members of Mr. Balasingham's family, specially his aged father and his sorrowing wife. There is the story of the death of Prophet Ezekiel's wife in the Bible. The word of the Lord behead to him: "Son of man, behold I am about to take the delight of your eyes away from you at a stroke; yet you shall not mourn or weep, nor shall your tears run down. Sigh, your tears run down, but not aloud, make no mourning for the dead. Bind on your turban, and put your shoes on your feet; do not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of mourners". Then Ezekiel records: "So I spoke

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