

What are YOU Thinking?

By R. R. Winton, M.B., B.S.

THIS troubled old earth has probably never been more bewildered than it is to-day. In barbarism or under the crude rule of other days, people had little realisation that there could be anything else. Social, intellectual and economic trends of the past few centuries have loosed a flood of new ideas. Intellectual enlightenment, economic security, self-realisation, international co-operation, New Orders—these are the phrases on everyone's lips; the lights intended to illumine our modern way. Unfortunately, they appear to be flickering candles, elusive will-o'-the wisps, whose main effect is to emphasise the surrounding gloom and the uncharted swampy wilderness over which they gleam so alluringly.

The Christian knows that there is only one point of sanity and stability in this chaos — the Almighty and Eternal God, especially as we know Him in Christ our Saviour. He is the great Fact, the one certainty of all the ages. Yet do we really appreciate that in Christ we have got down to bedrock? We say that we do. But surely we would be infinitely more awed, far more seized of our responsibilities, if we genuinely realised that, dwelling in the presence of God, we are in the one place of peace, of order, of meaning, in a whirling, mad

universe. Are we ready to live by this?

The conviction is growing in I.V.F. circles that it is time Christian graduates accepted their full responsibilities. Christ sent His own into the world. They are not of the world, but they *are in* the world. Obligations to our fellows must be accepted. To receive the rights and privileges of earthly citizenship, to earn a living in the ordinary walks of life, to enjoy the conveniences and amenities of the modern community—all this means accepting the responsibilities of citizenship. If we will not do this, then it were much more honest to retreat to the hills of New Guinea and subsist on yams, pawpaws, and wild pig—if we can catch it!

The trouble is that we have been scared off by the term "Social Gospel" and have then used it as an excuse to evade our responsibilities. Yet no citizens have a responsibility to the community if not those who have been given advantages of intellect and opportunity, who have enjoyed the highest educational facilities available, and who, above all, have come into a saving knowledge of God in Christ and are indwelt by the Spirit of Wisdom and Truth.

The first significant essential is to get our scale of values right. Most

"social gospels" get the order of events wrong side up. Any plan is doomed from the outset if it does not place as the first and most vital issue the need for men to get right with God. Likewise, the Christian must remain rightly centred. He must be sure of his salvation in Christ, he must know the indwelling power of Christ — Christ Who is our life. Above all, he must know the unchanging certainty of Christ, know that His promise never to leave us nor to forsake us is absolute. Shattered intellectual belief, tortured doubts in the face of life's seeming hideousness and futility, loss of emotional experience and feelings, none of these can upset the objective reality of Christ. It is possible to know this despite everything else, even despite ourselves. Thank God for the wonder of this knowledge.

Knowing then the unfailing Presence, knowing that His life is in us to grow, we must learn to think. When a parent teaches a child basic principles, he does not expect nor desire that the child bring every little problem back for a ready-made solution. The child must grow. So we must grow and, building on those truths that He teaches us, learn to face up to practical problems and to make clear decisions; to settle our life, our work, our conduct, our thinking in Christ.

Our service to Christ covers every aspect of our lives. Vital as is direct Christian work — personal soul-winning, active association with Christian and missionary organisations and so forth—this is not enough. Nor is it sufficient or necessarily right to adopt a negative attitude to community interests and problems under the guise of separation. The separation which God demands from the world

is much deeper and subtler than our common conception. We have tended to adopt a system of taboos, have arbitrarily classified certain activities as "worldly," have avoided these things and derived a good deal of self-satisfaction from our attitude. But is our separation any more real spiritually than the austerity of the Pharisees? In other words, is our conception of unworldliness the mere abstaining from certain forms of spare-time amusement, the avoiding of certain aspects of our community life? Or does our conception mean introducing Christ into the heart of our business and professional life, into our economic and political thinking, into our cultural and social life, bringing about a separation from the spirit of the world in all these basic activities?

If we are going to be practical, the following are a few of the points to face up to:

Politics: Our national political life would make the angels weep, but are we trying to do anything about it? If Christians abandon the political world to the devil, they cannot complain if legislation is satanic. Most of us have been content to adopt a blind conservatism if we have any attitude at all. What do we know about modern political thought? Do we not carry our share of the blame for the apathy and wishful thinking that allowed the growth of malignant political systems in Germany, Japan, Italy, Spain and elsewhere? Are we credulous followers of headlines and political fashions? Or are we reactionary diehards? Or do we think at all? Is our attitude to one of the most powerful political philosophies the world has seen—Communism—based on prejudice and credulity, or knowledge and honesty?

The post-war world will see much activity. Men in the Services are thinking more than ever. The Army Education Service, despite difficulty, has stimulated thought. Not all of the thinking is good or balanced, but it is going to issue in action. Shall we—and our Master—be left out of that action?

Social and Economic Life: Have we any real interest in the raising of our social and economic standards? What do we know of trends in education, slum-abolition schemes, national health and similar welfare services, employer-employee relationships? Have we even heard of modern townplanning schemes? Of the attractive pictures being painted of community centres? Do we realise that many such include practically everything in them except the provision to worship God? Are improvements that develop to go to the credit of humanistic philanthropy and mere human self-realisation? Or is Christ to be glorified in them? It is about time that we gave up quoting Wilberforce and Shaftsbury as our answer to the charge that Evangelicals have no social conscience.

Social Problems: Have we a positive attitude towards the national scourge of drunkenness? Or are we content with an occasional tirade against the breweries and a rigid personal teetotalism? May not the solution lie in the development in the community of temperance? Are we prepared to abandon to the devil one of the most potent influences in our modern life — the cinema? Apart from purely educational films which have found general acceptance, and the films now being produced with a direct Christian message, shall we refuse to countenance the stories of

the strivings and aspirations of men and women, of the laughter and living of ordinary folk? Good clean entertainment can be, and is, presented on the films. We can no more ignore them, or the stage, than we can ignore books or the other Arts.

Are we really satisfied to leave to the devil the whole sphere of entertainment, or shall we bring Christian influence to bear on it? This is heresy to many, but the questions are asked sincerely to stimulate fresh thinking—in the spirit of Christ, not of hide-bound convention.

Other problems — juvenile crime, prostitution, venereal disease — are urgent. Dishonest newspapers, financially immoral business transactions, a multitude of shady activities that are tolerated as "normal business methods": these are cankers in our national body.

It is not suggested that the Christian study circle or the pulpit is the place to expound political programmes or discuss economic problems. The programmes of the Evangelical Unions are full enough already and there is no need to add to the fundamental tasks of evangelism and the building up of the devotional life of members. The task of the Church is to win men for Christ and to build them up in Him, so that they will be capable of Christian living and think-

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ing. The fundamental message is still the Cross of Christ. The basic factor in any plan to help the community is still the conversion of the individual.

But to the individual Christian the

call is clear to accept his responsibilities in the community, and to bring his Lord into every aspect of his daily living. To no one is the call clearer than to the Christian graduate.

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