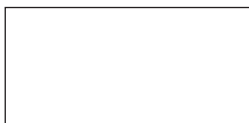


CONVEYOR- BELT CHRISTIANS



Conveyor-belt Christians

THIS is a day when the craftsman is often made redundant by the machine and mass production techniques. Many things which a generation or two ago were individually made, are today being turned out in hundreds and thousands in virtually no time at all as the result of technological advancement.

One may well justify the use of modern methods in a host of areas, but what we cannot and dare not seek to justify, however, is the introduction of the factory atmosphere into the Church and the use of production line methods to produce what we might reasonably term, “conveyor-belt Christians”.

It would appear in some circles that the only duty of professing Christians is to bring as many sinners as possible to the often specially arranged services. These sinners, of course, are the raw material upon which the evangelist will work, with the help of all his assistants. Men, women and children go through the door of the Church as sinners and emerge out of the inquiry room at the opposite end, supposedly as born-again Christians. Once the sinner goes through the door, he enters the great evangelistic machine. This machine is kept so well oiled

and lubricated that a break-down is unthinkable. It must always produce results.

The organist usually begins the whole operation by playing favourite hymns and songs in such a way as to make the raw material pliable for the next part of the process. Next on the production line, of course, is the song leader, who possesses magical powers, which when exercised, make the emotional temperature in the building rise and bring the evolving sinner-Christian to near perfect condition for the skilful touch of the evangelist. Sometimes a soloist is useful to squeeze a few tears from the eyes by his or her crooning. This is clear evidence to the evangelist that it is time for him to ply his skills. He has probably been through some college or seminary (conveyor-belt, of course) and has emerged as a perfect specimen. Since we are often finding these days that imported goods are of superior quality to those which are home produced, we discover that the imported evangelist is often much more attractive and produces greater results than the local preacher. As in the motor trade, the foreign article just seems to have those “little extras” that make all the difference. Everything is carefully programmed and various types of sinners are to be pushed into the almost computerised evangelistic machine at pre-arranged times. There is “bring a neighbour night”, for neighbour sinners, and the whole service has been programmed to make the neighbour sinner into a bright new Christian as quickly

as possible. There is a “bring a friend night”, a “family night”, a “sportsman’s night” — indeed just about any programme at all can be arranged. The whole enterprise has been so well organised that the sinner enters about fifteen minutes to eight and by half-past nine he emerges, hardly knowing what has happened, to be informed that he is now a true Christian bound for heaven. Everything has been programmed and activated so precisely. The strings of the heart and human affection have been pulled at just the right moment and the emotions stirred at the correct time by the story-telling preacher. When the well rehearsed address ends, the song leader takes over again, aided by a softly-played organ as all heads mechanically bow throughout the mesmerized congregation. The almost completed Christian soon finds himself moving with the other similar models up the aisle as if on a smooth-running conveyor belt into the inquiry room. This is often like the paint shop where the final touches are added and a nice bright new Christian arrives out into the Church show room for all to view, complete with booklets or pamphlets resembling religious manuals or servicing instructions. The new Christian even carries with him a guarantee card signed by the evangelist and bearing his photograph just in case there should be any future doubts or the factory model’s mechanism fails to function properly. A look at the evangelist’s picture on the little card should be

sufficient to put things right and the mechanical Christian is off again as good as new.

Perhaps what you have just been reading appears to you as sacrilege and you regard it all as a profane exaggeration. If so, then let us consider what God says in His Word. The prophet Jonah declared, "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9), and the Psalmist said, "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord" (Psalm 3:8). These texts are sufficient to show that men in the past were taught by the Holy Spirit to understand that their only hope for salvation was in God. The apostle Paul states, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). This makes it abundantly clear that any person who fails to come into contact with Christ by faith, is without a true Saviour. Let us hear what Christ Himself has to say: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). We learn from this statement that a sinner must be regenerated and made what Paul speaks of — "a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17). This great miracle of the spiritual birth is brought about by the faithful and effectual application of God's truth to the sinner's heart and conscience by the Spirit of God. The apostle Peter says the children of God are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for

ever” (1 Peter 1:23). The Church, therefore, truly concerned about the salvation of the souls of men will be engaged in the faithful and constant application of God’s Word to men’s. minds, in order that the Spirit of God might apply it to their hearts. Other activities may indeed have some effect upon men and women, but this does in no way mean they have a saving effect. In fact, they are likely to have a very dangerous and deceptive effect.

Let me ask you, Are you a Christian because of the work of the Spirit of God and the Word within your heart or are you the product of the psychological manipulations of clever men? I urge you with the apostle Paul, for your soul’s sake, “Examine yourself, whether ye be in the faith” (2 Corinthians 13:5). Remember the solemn words of the Lord Jesus Himself, “not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. . . . Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:21-23).

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