



REV. J. W. PLATT
The Word for the World

world. He cannot be manufactured wholesale by spreading information, whether false or true. Only one reborn personality can re-create another. That is where the Bible Society comes in."

"How so, Mr. Platt?"

"Well here is the world just starting—as an entire world—to read for the first time. What will they read? I think of the main street in Teheran with its three bookshops—one Moslem, one Marxist, and one Christian. And I think of the lunch-hour scene in any Indian city—the workers sitting in groups around the few among them who can spell out a newspaper or a book. We can't make Christians by propagandising these first-time readers with Bibles, and we are not trying to. But we are determined that they shall have the Bible available to them in every country, in every tongue, and at possible prices. Thereafter the experiences that it relates will speak for themselves."

"And is there a demand for the Bible?"

"Demand? Listen. Pre-war China took 4,000,000 copies yearly. We could sell 30,000,000 there next month—if we had them. India took 1,000,000 a year. Its immediate demand is around 25,000,000. Germany will take 30,000,000 as soon as they are available."

European Vacuum

"And is the demand of other European countries as large as Germany's?"

"It varies. But there is no doubt at all that Europe as a whole, which has not been 'Bible-reading' like the Anglo-Saxon countries, and where the workers and the Church have been seriously estranged, shows a new interest in the Bible and a new respect for its readers. Europe's foundations have been badly broken up—and not only those of its buildings. Its people are desperate for food—and not only the sort that UNRRA can bring. Anthony Eden has said 'Europe is a vacuum.' Dr. t'Hooft, Secretary of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, puts it that 'Europe is spiritually fluid.'"

"Europeans know that the great bulk of their people stayed passive before the Germans mainly because they just hadn't any alternative line left in them."

'The Resistance' on the other hand tends to prove more nuisance than help or inspiration now that the fighting is over. The more hero a youth was when duty meant deceiving the Germans and assassinating collaborators, the more social misfit or actual criminal he often is today. But everyone saw how well the practising Christians stood. Only 39 out of 1,139 Norwegian pastors, for example, joined Quisling. So they have to take seriously—those that take anything seriously—whatever it was that gave these people their patience and courage. And 'the Bible became the centre of resistance in the Church,' according to Niemöller and others.

"Incidentally the British Churches have launched CRE (Christian Reconstruction Enterprise) to supplement UNRRA, and £200,000 out of the millions subscribed to it is for replacing Bibles."

Youth Work in Britain

"What about Britain itself?"

"I'd like to quote another European on Britain," replied Mr. Platt. "He said, 'the difference between your country and mine is that your standards stood.' As the war went on more and more people in Britain found that they had for themselves personally to rediscover the sources of the national strength. That is one reason why, for example, the British Government is paying real attention to the education of youth—and I mean now education not technical training or literacy. Every child leaving school is now officially interviewed and told why he should join some youth movement. Some movement, I said, because there is no pressure on him to join any particular one. Most youth movements, in point of fact, are integral parts of local churches. The churches train and employ and spiritually back full-time 'youth workers' and the Government pays their salaries."

"Religion is becoming a more serious part of British schooling, too. Every school day starts with corporate worship, of course. Then in each part of the country an 'agreed syllabus' covering the historical facts about Christianity and the Christian interpretation of life is worked out between teachers and clergy. It forms an exam. subject and in all larger schools is taught by teachers who specialise in it. The Bible, you see, isn't dead in Britain. It is being taught more widely and more scientifically than at any time."

The BBC and The Bible

A radio paper is always interested in radio. Mr. Platt said the BBC very frequently presented the Bible "straight." "I mean," he continued, "that in place of a sermon about some Biblical statement the whole passage of Scripture may itself be effective read, or perhaps dramatised, by a cast of players. I am told that your New Zealand religious broadcasts are not greatly listened to. Ours in Britain, and we give more programme time to them than ever, certainly are—by audiences 6,000,000 strong, according to Sir John Foster. It proves one point, anyhow—if it needs proving: the Bible is as alive to-day as at any period of history, once people get past the superstition that because it is old it does not concern them."



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