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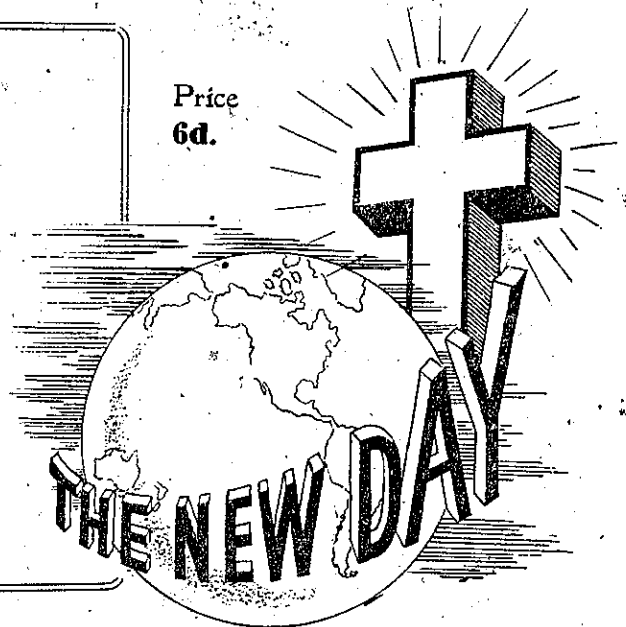
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MAN, SOCIETY and CHANGE

By A. P. Elkin, M.A., Ph.D., Professor of Anthropology, University of Sydney.

(Continued)

In the first portion of this article (June *New Day*) Professor Elkin described the relation and interaction between individuals and society, explained the terms "individual," "social," "person," "society," and "personality," and illustrated the differences in social personality, which arise from differences in environment.

These differences of social personality are the result of differences of social environment. This may be analysed into:

- (i) The economic situation (which controls the geographical situation—the neighbourhood—especially in town and city).
- (ii) Class attitude which is closely associated with the former and is sometimes a hangover from the social position of the family two or more generations ago.
- (iii) Occupational training and achievement.
- (iv) Political and industrial influences.
- (v) And in some cases, a religious factor.

To sum up:—Thus, we are made, or rather become, social personalities and are biased in various directions. This bias results from the groups within society, which think and feel and act differently from each other on important matters; there is no common ground, and this is all the more marked because the process of socialisation of the personality does not stop at 21. Indoctrination is continuous.

So while we are all members of our society—its representatives — we are also and more definitely, *personae of our groups* (class wage group, section, denomination, party), that is we think its thoughts, adopt its traditional attitudes, and outwardly at least reflect what it stands for. This is part of the fact of social segmentation.

Social Groups.

So we come to the problem of social groups. It arises with increase of population, diversity of

occupation, specialisation, with ideas of rank and status and privilege, wealth. But it gives rise to the problem of social unity and diversity. This is no longer a matter merely of the individual and society—but of the relationship to society of the various segments or groups, mostly of a secondary nature, which often stand opposed to each other.

Obviously there is (i) need of some institution, of some ethical sanction, which will make them co-operating segments, expressing inter-dependence, or else, (ii) some change in social structure is called for, e.g., class-less society.

Perhaps the development of the social personality in modern society could be as follows: through the home, neighbourhood, school and then through diversities of occupation, and political and religious affiliation—and finally towards society as a whole — adopting an attitude of respect for and co-operation with the groups to which we do not belong as integral parts of the total society.

This is impractical as is shown by the difficulty of different groups uniting in Australia in the war effort; hence we hear of the suggestion of deliberate planning and even of totalitarianism so as to ensure the unity of society.

But the important point for us at the moment is that segmentation, group-life, affects communal psychology; it does mould in many ways the thinking, feeling and willing attitudes and bias of each individual. To be a member of a class, a political group, a religious denomination, an economic section, means that we think its thoughts, accept its explanations and rationalisa-

tions and stand up for them — and we are thus, because we have absorbed and been moulded by a specialised social and economic environment and been subjected to propaganda of a certain ideology. We should consider this when reflecting on our own judgments and attitudes and our bias.

Further, when we feel that other folk are obtuse — like the Irishman who sees the argument, but won't be convinced — remember this same fact. Probably few of us are as logical as we pretend, nor as independent and rational in our attitudes as we often claim. We are most of the time non-logical. To bear this in mind will make for charity and for unity.

Conclusion. — There are then: a social background to, and an explanation and cause of much of our thinking, emotions and attitudes. It is twofold; society-wide, and also sectional; and the task is to harmonise them.

The Individual.

But to return to **Man**, the **Individual**. You may ask, are we merely the creatures of society, thinking only the thoughts of our group or class? and are our best efforts at logical thinking only rationalisation of what society or our group has inculcated in us? No.

Each of us is an **individual—unique**—the result of our ancestry with all its possibilities of assortment, of hereditary factors (genes); the result, too, of our environment with its numerous variations, and of incidents in early and later life affecting our psychological behaviour. But that is not all. There is no society and no group without individuals. It is true that the culture and tradition of a people is built up through time and is not limited by the life time of an individual. But the traditions, culture and attitudes of a society or a group are built up by individuals—by their decisions, adventures, experiments, modifications and acceptances, and are being modified slowly—seldom quickly—all the time.

Thus, there is alteration in the social pattern, and consequently, in the thought and attitudes of the members of the society, and they in their turn will alter that pattern again. The rate of change varies according to historical circumstances, but **change is made by individual volition.**

Each of us is both a creature and a creator, of our social culture and structure, even though some of us do little in the creative line, in modifying and changing environment, but in so far as we are creators we are so on the basis of what we receive, of that which is created in us by society and its groups, by the educational system and propaganda, etc. And on the basis of that we decide this or that. On the other hand, even though we initiate little, we do, by our decisions, contribute at least to the *status quo*, or to changes into which we drift or are led.

But in addition, there is always a minority who for some cause or other — social, intellectual, psychopathological — endeavour to initiate

changes, and often succeed directly or indirectly, sooner or later. These leaders — by organisation and propaganda and personal influence — gradually change ideas, and even the *structure* of society as well as its institutions, and they do this because of their decisions and the decisions of those whom they persuade.

My only point here is simply that changes in society—its form or culture—are wrought by individuals, and individuals who constitute the intellectual, the imaginative and courageous *élite*.

Thus, the changed culture, which results, causes individuals in the future to have different thoughts, attitudes and emotions from those in the past, though they in their turn will change the social matrix. Thus, *we are made by our society*, and yet *we make it*, but most of us do so imperceptibly—a few markedly.

Change Individuals, or Society?

This brings us to the old problem: can we change man by changing his social, economic and political environment — make him good by Act of Parliament, or must we change the individuals and their moral and intellectual outlook, before a change in environment would be significant? The old conundrum of the hen and the egg!

But **they are two aspects of one phenomenon of change.** It is often said by way of analogy that a pig will remain a pig even if kept in a drawing-room. Perhaps so: try it — but though some men may be piggish, *human beings are not pigs* — but human, social beings. Change the physiological and economic environment (homes, income, food), change the social institutions; change the ideology which is inculcated in them, and you will set going in them thought processes and arouse feelings which in time will cause at least passive acceptance of the change, or else will bring about decisions to welcome and comply with, or, on the contrary, to resent the change. But change in thought and life will *come*, and in some cases will be *made*.

History reminds us of this fact, but in spite of that, many folk seem to think that the *status quo* is final, especially for those in less fortunate circumstances than they—*e.g.*, as so many still say: "It is no use to give people in slums better homes and grounds; they wouldn't be happy." What a comfortable doctrine for "the haves." Of course, to take individuals out of their accustomed slum neighbourhood and put them down indiscriminately in Bellevue Hill or Rose Bay would be like tossing a fish on to dry land, and expecting it to live, or taking a blackfellow from his own horde country—his spirit home — and expecting him to be happy.

But it is a very different matter to put our slum folk in better homes in their own neighbourhood, or with their own fellows, with some ground — at least good playgrounds — with regular or even compulsory medical service; better wages and greater choice of interests, and at the same time provide reasons for the changes, and

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Servicemen Speak up About the Church and Society.

The cruel testing of men's faith in the crucible of war may have the effect of purifying and refining the Christian heritage of those who were established in the faith before the war broke out, but it is certain that anything like a real revival of the belief and practice of Christianity, such as was fondly hoped for a short time ago, is not likely to eventuate. For some the war has meant a real facing-up to the fundamental issues of life, with a frank recognition of the God in Whose hand our life is, and a full surrender to His will; but it would seem that the suffering and carnage and destruction of war have had for many the effect of deepening their indifference to spiritual things, and of confirming them in an utterly materialistic and agnostic attitude to life.

That, at least, is the impression gained by a study of the answers given to a recent questionnaire sent by C.S.O.M. to its members and friends in the Forces on the subject, "What do you want to find in the Church after the war?"

These answers come, presumably, from men who have had some experience of Christianity, and are anxious to see Christian principles put into practice in the post-war world. But the writers frankly admit that their faith is not held by many—possibly not by most of their comrades in arms.

Some months ago the Director of C.S.O.M. felt the importance of letting Church people and Church leaders know what is going on in the minds of loyal churchmen in the Services. He invited all the Servicemen who had been in touch with C.S.O.M. to express their views through answers to a questionnaire; a number did so.

This article opens a series in which their answers have been analysed and summarised by the Rev. H. E. S. Doyle, of Barraba (Diocese of Armidale).

The Post-War Church.

Three things stand out prominently in their answers to the questions put to them concerning the post-war church. First, that even among professing Christians there is a widespread and tragic ignorance of the deep, fundamental meaning and purpose of the Church. Secondly, that there is an honest contempt for anything in the Church's worship and practice which suggests cant or humbug. And, thirdly, there is a real desire

for a "practical Christianity" which will not only recognise and unmask social evils, but will do something definite to meet the needs of a broken and disillusioned humanity.

A brief analysis of some of the answers to the Questionnaire may prove helpful both in assessing the present situation and in the formulation of plans to meet its challenge.

1. What particularly do you want to find in Church Worship?

Here a wide divergence of opinion is to be found. Some wish to see no radical change in the forms of worship. Particularly is this so in the service of Holy Communion, but there seems to be a feeling that the other services of the Church are not flexible enough to give expression to the thoughts and needs of modern worship. There is a strong plea made for clarity of diction in the conduct of the services with "fewer droned and wheedling prayers," and less ritual and ceremonial—in other words, there is a longing for simplicity and sincerity in our forms of worship to which may be added a sympathetic attitude to the needs and problems of modern life.

Two quotations seem relevant here. A layman writes, "The primary need is a very definite spirit of worship. In the past there has been too much formalism." And a Chaplain, keenly alive to the needs and the possibilities of the times, says,

tention seems to be borne out by answers from other servicemen. One writer says, "There should be at least one point made by the sermon," and another pleads that the sermon must translate eternal truths in terms of contemporary experience. Another (who has found Christ and been found of Him in his Army experience) says: "In the past our clergy have not been sufficiently evangelistic. . . . If they had put the issue unmistakably to their people there could have been no excuse for not realising just what was involved in a decision for or against Christ. Men simply do not understand the fundamental principles of Christianity. They associate it with morality but don't realise that it goes beyond that. . . . The clergy should preach conversion until they are sure that none of their parishioners remain in ignorance of the implications of their faith."

"In the Army," says another Chaplain, "I find an appalling lack of knowledge of fundamental and foundation truths. Repentance, Faith, Baptism, Confirmation, and the beliefs of the Christian as expressed in the Creeds, are simply unknown. . . . Such a statement brings its own challenge, and emphasises the need for the post-war Church not only to ensure that its members have made a definite committal of themselves to Christ and His way of life, but that they are soundly and effectively taught what this way of life really is, that they may be "built up in our most holy faith."

In this connection, too, there is a desire for definite Bible-study, that the foundation principles of Christianity may be re-discovered and re-applied. "Men want something definite. . . . Give us Christian doctrine! Teach us the Faith!" is the plea of one soldier. Most others emphasise that there should be no hesitancy in applying the Gospel principles to current problems.

3. The Clergy, their Training, and the Staffing of our Parishes.

This is so largely a personal and technical matter that many servicemen did not feel qualified to deal with it. "I want to see in my clergyman a strong conviction of his faith, and enthusiasm and drive which will infect others. Their training should be such as to give them an understanding of people. I don't think theoretical psychology alone can do this." So writes a keen layman.

The general impression seems to be that the clergy as a whole tend

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MAN, SOCIETY AND CHANGE—Continued

get support from their trade unions and other organisations or groups with which they are connected. Do this, and I think you would find many acceptances of the change—many successful responses—and much change in personality in the next generation,

It merely requires venture on the part of society, and faith in one's fellows. They can be other than they are—and what they are depends on society as well as on themselves.

SOCIETY MAKES MAN AND MAN ALTERS SOCIETY.

(To be continued)