NEW WORLD NEWS

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□ A vision of what the theatre can do for the world.

□ A practical plan to raise the funds necessary.

□ And a galaxy of men and women of stage and screen giving of their talent to launch the fund on its way.

This is what a distinguished audience at London's Westminster Theatre were given last week at the Gala Night in aid of the Phyllis Konstam Memorial Fund.

J Bond

Nigel Goodwin interviews Stan and Margie Smith during the performance.

STARS PERFORM FOR THEATRE OF FAITH

This was a Gala occasion indeed. Dame Anna Neagle, star of musical theatre and film, and Nigel Goodwin, Director of the Arts Centre Group, introduced a panorama of talent—from comedienne Dora Bryan to cellist Julian Lloyd Webber; from actor Richard Warner to tennis star Stan Smith; from ballet dancer Cathy van Den Elst to French mime artist Michel Orphelin. The first item was the re-appearance of several stars of Peter Howard's long-running pantomime, *Give A Dog A Bone*: Donald Scott as 'Mr Space' and Neil Fitzwilliam, Tony Jackson, Gordon Reid and Roy Heymann—all as 'Ringo' the dog.

Climax of the evening was the first performance of *Love All*, a new musical by Nancy Ruthven and William Reed based on the life of Phyllis Konstam and HW 'Bunny' Austin. Cleverly written and staged for just two actors, with economy of setting and props, laced with song, dance and comedy, the action moved briskly from their shipboard romance through the storms and stresses of married life which followed on Bunny's decisive encounter with the Oxford Group, to Phyllis's decision to give herself completely alongside her husband in the task of remaking the world, in which they both believed theatre had a vital role. John Dryden directed the play with great inventiveness, and Ruth Madoc as Phyllis Konstam and Brogden Miller as 'Bunny' Austin gave truthful and sensitive performances.

Bordered on awe

It is in memory of Phyllis Konstam, Mrs HW Austin, who died two years ago, that the fund to assist with production costs of constructive Christian drama has been launched. The Gala Evening realised £1,200 towards the Memorial Fund, which now stands at £7,000. The target set by the Fund's committee is £250,000.

Many who took part in the Gala Evening did so because of their encounters with Mr and Mrs Austin, and some attested to the deep impact made on their lives.

American tennis star Stan Smith told the audience, 'Phyllis had the art of dealing with the needs of the people she met at a very profound level.' Interviewed by Nigel Goodwin as part of the show, he said that he and his wife Margie had been carrying on Phyllis's work—notably through speaking engagements in many parts of the world where Phyllis had made friends.

At the end of the evening, a noted Christian journalist commented, 'This night has confirmed something that has been forming in my mind for some time: that unless we win the media, we will not win at all.' The following day a young nun wrote to Mr Austin: 'If I said I enjoyed myself last night, it would be a great understatement. Rather I can say it was a deeply confirming experience: it bordered on awe and was filled with peace, care and gratitude at each level—from the delightful entertainment of the first half, to the ending, which is only a beginning.'

HSW

A RARE EXPERIENCE

J Bond

Alan Thornhill welcomes a group of Mother Teresa's Sisters of Charity to a performance of *Sentenced to Life*.

CWL NEWS, the publication of the Catholic Women's League, writes about *Sentenced to Life*, the play running at the Westminster theatre:

'Superbly acted, the accolade must go to Susan Colverd who plays the German "au pair". A fine performance which gives a feeling of complete reality, so much so that one forgets one is in a theatre. A very rare experience.

'Without giving away the plot, the third act is amazing that it actually "works" and John Byron's strength carries it through.

'Despite this most thought-provoking play, humour is presented in the masterly way one might expect from a former editor of *Punch*, and lifts the heart wherever possible.

'This play should be visited by every thinking person. To see ideas and beliefs personified and presented in tangible form so vigorously augments one's own inner convictions.

'Lastly, there is no more charming theatre than the Westminster with its own particularly friendly atmosphere.'

The President of the CWL, Mrs N Iversen, spoke at the fourth of a series of luncheons held at the Westminster Theatre in conjunction with the play.

The first speaker in the series was Dr Jonathan Gould, Master of the Guild of Catholic Doctors. *The Universe* reported his speech:

'There is much to suggest that in the last months of terminal illness, patients grow in composure and in philosophical maturity.

'The legislation of euthanasia would damage the trust between the sick and their doctors, nurses and families.'

THE LADDER AND THE CROSS

GRAHAM TURNER gave this talk at a 'Christian Responsibility in Public Affairs' lunch in London earlier this month.

I AM NOT QUITE A MEMBER of the generation of *The Glittering Prizes*, that fascinating television series. I went up to Oxford in 1950, and my generation were caught somewhere between an age of austerity and an age of affluence. Some of us still hadn't got over the fact that there were bananas in the shops again.

We went to university hoping vaguely that it would lead us into green pastures of one sort or another. The pastures we had in mind were not particularly lush. I thought that to be associated with the *Manchester Guardian* represented a supreme pinnacle of achievement.

Nevertheless, there existed among us a certain philosophy of life. It held that the main point of life was getting on.

Rich in ritual

No other motive ever disturbed my mind. The ladder was my emblem. Whether it was captaining the cricket team, or picking up the best scholarship one could, or trying—and failing—to be popular, that was what the universe was all about.

I'd been to chapel and church as a boy, three times on a really bad Sunday, but the idea that Christianity had anything to do with the way you behaved, let alone your motives for living, had not penetrated my skull. Chapel was a place where you met ladies with large noses and piercing voices, and thin men with hushed ones; and where you were given the same book, about a New Guinea missionary called William Chalmers, three years running as a Sunday-school prize.

The Anglican Church, to which I soon migrated, was the place where choirboys were paid threepence per attendance. Religion seemed to me like a sort of club, rich in ritual but intended mainly for the very young and the very old.

Grandiose schemes

At Oxford the criteria changed. Churches there were judged by the comeliness of the young ladies who attended them. After a brief survey, it was clear that a rapid switch to Methodism was called for.

There was the occasional zealot, one in my own college, a man with a double-barrelled name and a gleaming eye, who bore down upon you across the Quad like an insurance salesman. His life seemed to be made up of ready-made religious formulae, which he trotted out on every occasion; the last kind of man, sadly, with whom one would share the deepest things in one's life.

I drifted from Oxford to Stanford and thence to Singapore in the Air Force, fairly successful on the outside and lonely and inadequate on the inside. There I met a man who was to alter the course of my life.

I noticed, as the months went by, that he was almost indecently cheerful. Although he obviously had a profound faith, he wasn't one of those pale-faced purveyors of packaged, Brand-X religion. He listened a great deal and he talked about things which were on my own heart. What, for instance, were we going to do with our lives when we got back from Singapore? As a confirmed ladder man, that was right up my alley, and no doubt I bored him to tears with my grandiose schemes.

Dictator

One day he said, 'So you think personal ambition is a good thing, do you?' An innocent enough inquiry, but it provoked a volcanic reaction from me. Not only was it good, I retorted, it was also natural. My indecently cheerful friend just smiled and nodded. I think something told him he'd hit the bull's-eye.

A few weeks later he invited me to pop into his room for a cup of coffee. After we'd chatted for a while, out of the blue, he asked whether I'd like to listen to God. Just like that. I couldn't get out of that room quick enough. The trouble was, I couldn't think *how*! It was like being frozen to the spot. So, profoundly embarrassed, I said I didn't mind. Whereupon my friend presented me with a pencil and paper and told me to let a God I didn't believe in show me where my life didn't match up to Christ's standards.

I sat down expecting nothing, but a thought flashed into my mind, quite simple, and, in one way, banal: 'You are a dictator on the cricket field.' Although it had never occurred to me before, I knew that it was absolutely true; and I thought, 'Good Heavens, there is a God and He understands me far better than I understand myself.'

Exchange

Then I wrote and wrote. My second thought was of the superior way I'd treated my parents when I went up to Oxford. What would my friends at Christ Church think if they met my father, who ate his peas off a knife? God said, 'Write and apologise to them.' The third thought was about wrong relationships at school, and what I could do to put those right.

At the end of three-quarters of an hour, I was quite clear what I needed to do if I was to start living as this new-found God wanted me to live. I felt genuinely happy for the first time in my life. We sing in the hymn, 'Send us Thy truth to make us free.' That's what started to happen to me.

It was a road of concrete restitution and repentance. I apologised to the cricket team en masse. They were sceptical, but we soon began to find a new spirit together. I wrote to mother and father, and they were deeply grateful. And I started, hesitantly, to try to put other people before myself, to cross out the great big 'I' at the centre of my life. I didn't know then, but I had begun to exchange the ladder for the Cross.

Life became different. I made plenty of mistakes, but I was actually able to help one or two people. That went on for five years.

Then I decided Christ's standards were too tough and that I wasn't getting on in the world fast enough; and I went back to the ladder, to my career and my own way.

Quiet superiority

It didn't seem to work out too badly. I became the BBC's Economics Correspondent, although I didn't know much about economics. But the ladder exacts a very high price, particularly from the people round you.

By that time, I was married and we had three small children. They suffered most. I used to lose my temper about once a week. There were occasions when I lost it quite uncontrollably. I hit the children, I kicked the dog—and I think I'd have hit my wife had not I thought she might hit me back. Behind the facade of that respectable and successful marriage, there was violence and there was tyranny.

At work, the same selfishness minus the violence—jealousy of those I thought were doing better than me, quiet superiority for those I thought were doing less well. The philosophy of the ladder again, and the devil's hierarchy.

Flirtation

After almost ten years of that, I began to get so worried about the way things were going at home that I met my Christian friends again and, as I expected, they asked me whether I would listen to God. They didn't draw me to themselves, they turned me towards Him.

This time the thoughts were much more uncomfortable than on that first occasion. Number one, tell the income tax man you've been dodging on your taxes. Two, pay back £1,000 which you've stolen from the BBC by fiddling your expenses. For example, I used to put down, once a fortnight, 'lunch with the Senior Economic Adviser to the Treasury, 38s 6d'. But I never once had lunch with that man. And there was a flirtation with another girl which my wife knew nothing about, and which God told me to apologise to her for.

In trouble

So I started again on what for me was the way of the Cross. If you don't believe me, try going to the taxman and telling him that you've been defrauding the Revenue! The man I saw simply turned pale and said, 'We have no procedure for this.' That, and paying back the BBC, cost us £2,000, all the money we had at the very time when I'd given up my regular salary for freelance work.

I also felt I ought to tell my young son of

seven about my visits to the taxman. His comment was shatteringly blunt. 'Well,' he said, 'If you'd been honest in the first place, you wouldn't be in trouble now.' I didn't feel that was too helpful at the time!

Three months later, however, he came downstairs looking extremely worried. When I asked what was wrong, he said he'd been stealing sweets from the local shop. What did he think he should do about it? Pay back the money, he said. How much did he think he should pay back, I asked? All the money he'd got, he said. And how much had he got? '30p,' he replied. 'But,' I said, 'you can't have stolen so many sweets?'—this was 1971. 'No,' he said, 'but God said to me, "You've kept him waiting for his money."' I'd never told him about interest rates!

That morning, he went to the shop, told the grocer that he had been stealing and held out his 30p.

Three months later, quite out of the blue, I won a prize for writing; the prize money was £2,000.

Copper-bottomed

Now, when all this happened, almost seven years ago, I was contracted to write *A History of Money* for an American publishing house. Whether it was the visit to the taxman I don't know, but I felt, instead, that I wanted to tell the story of a group of modern disciples who, through God's help, had come through the most difficult situations in life and in death—cancer, drugs, a brutalising childhood, being fired from a top job, a woman who brought up a family of four from an iron lung, and so on. So, *A History of Money* became a book called *More Than Conquerors*.

It was one thing to have the idea, quite another to find the people, particularly since four had to be American and the rest spread around the globe. My criteria didn't make it any easier either. I was looking for a sense of radiant victory and for truth in the inward parts, a sort of copper-bottomed genuineness. St Benedict's biographer, Lindsay, says the saint was not interested in spiritual posturing but in 'truth in behaviour', and this is what I was looking for.

Parroted phrases

The first story was that of the wife of a friend, a woman in the terminal stages of cancer. I'd steered clear of her because I was afraid of death and afraid, too, of cancer. But I had a persistent sense that I ought to see her. When I rang her husband, he told me to come right away, because his wife wanted to share what she had found before she died.

When I met her, she was so free of fear that *she* freed *me* from *my* fear. We talked of death as you might a long journey. 'Someone,' she said to me with a laugh, 'sent me a book on the after-life, but I'm not really interested, I'd sooner live a day at a time.'

I learned so much from Myra and from each of the others, who were given to me one by one. From the Canadian spastic who asked me who was more handicapped, a man like him who couldn't hold a coffee cup steady or a man who lost his temper with his children? That question changed my attitude to the 'handicapped' fundamentally.

And then there was the Indian landowner who had given away his estate and spent his whole life looking after men and women afflicted by leprosy. What angered him, he said, were the people who parroted phrases but didn't back their words with their lives. Christians, he added, did just as much parroting as Marxists.

Badge of office

When I read through all their stories and what God had done in their lives to try to write a suitable conclusion to the book, one central lesson seemed to stand out. If we are to become true servants of Christ, we have to let God penetrate to the core of our wills. Not just our words, nor even our external lives, those parts which we display to other men, but that ultimate bastion of self, the will.

That, if I may mix my anatomy, is the heart of the matter. Christianity is not about protestation, but about surrender. It is not a club whose badge I am entitled to wear because I use the name of the founder with suitable frequency—spiritual name-dropping. What do I do when a car-driver carves me up? When my plans go awry? When six more people get into my railway carriage? When God asks a major sacrifice of me? My score on such occasions is very low and when, by grace, I choose His will, there is usually such a creaking and a groaning as that unbroken will of mine struggles to conform itself to His.

But when I am ready to lay aside my will and accept His, then I am living the Cross. When, in moments of passion or when some glittering prize is offered, I by the grace of God can say, 'Thy will, not mine', the Cross reigns in my heart.

When I turn away from Him, when I insist that my will shall be supreme, then it is the ladder which reigns—*my* plan, *my* way, *my* end.

Then it is that I turn to judgement of others. I am reminded of the story of the two clergymen talking about the state of their church. 'You have to face it,' said one, 'there are just not many sound people around any more. In fact, there's really only the two of us—and, to be quite frank, I'm not quite sure about you!'

There are no experts. We are all novices, all amateurs, all failures. Our badge of office is our great need of Him. Our hope is His ultimate sacrifice for us. Our joy, when we let ourselves be joyful, is our total dependence on Him.

Workers for change

WORKERS from different parts of France were hosts for a weekend in Paris to 50 men and women from other parts of Europe.

Views and experiences were exchanged from a wide variety of situations, including Scottish shipyards, the British car industry, Swedish transport, German steel, Swiss railways and French heavy engineering.

A German steelworker wrote after the weekend:

'When one of the British said to me that I seemed more like management than the managers, I was hurt. All the more so as I feel how far ahead the German workers are in material and social terms, and how far behind are the British. I am sorry that I upset my friend and did not manage to see things from his point of view.'

Political terrorism

The writer went on to say how, the day after the Paris meeting, and because of the new attitude he had found there, he had had a meeting with management regarding six colleagues who were losing their jobs. Together they had found a solution so that each of the six men will be given work elsewhere in the plant.

An outstanding contribution to the weekend was from the only employer present, Alfred Nielsen, former President of the Danish Wood Industry. He told how, starting in 1936, he and a few friends were enabled to find solutions to the problem of unemployment in their country through, as each problem came up, seeking God's leading together in silence.

A further meeting on 'Dialogue for change' is planned (13—20 August) in the framework of the World Assembly for Moral Re-Armament at Caux, Switzerland. The initiators write:

'More and more people are driven into bitter confrontation and enmity. Often we talk *to* one another instead of *with* one another. In the media this has a devastating effect. Political terrorism casts its threatening shadow over us. Poverty is increasing in the developing countries.

'We who are working in industry and the public services are convinced that we have something to give to bring about positive changes.' **TJ**

UNITED STATES

Feuds solvent

THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD carries an 'Extension of Remarks' by .Congressman Charles Bennett in the House of Representatives on his return from commemorating the centennial of Frank Buchman's birth in Pennsylvania.

'Across America, this year sees a resurgence of Moral Re-Armament,' it reads, and details action across the continent during 1978. 'In August,' it concludes, 'Americans and Canadians will host a week's session of the world MRA conference at Caux, Switzerland, on the theme, 'Change in people: the uniting idea for our time'.

'Frank Buchman was certain that every man, woman and child could hear and obey God's inner promptings,' the *Record* continues. 'Each could try the experiment, testing his actions by absolute standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love, and putting right past wrongs.

'The redirection of one's will that follows, he demonstrated, brings lasting commitment to fight for God's government in every circumstance.

'The unfolding decades since has shown that this uniting purpose provides the solvent for industrial conflicts, family feuds, and class, racial and national confrontations.'

Outlook

'AS A PARENT of teenagers and a teacher, I recommend this book,' writes the reviewer in *The Outlook*, the paper of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, of Ernest Claxton and James Fry's book on sex education, *Tomorrow's Parents*. 'It gives a coherent philosophy of life, sex and purpose.'

Teigr yn yr Eisteddfod

Y FODRWY Â'R GARREG GOCH (*The Ring With the Red Stone*) and *Vibha a'r Teigr* (*Vibha and the Tiger*), two of the children's books of Indian authoress Anasuya Paithankar, were on sale at the Urdd (Youth) National Eisteddfod of Wales this year.

A review of the books in *Y Cymro* tells how Anasuya, the daughter of a village schoolmaster, in misery after seven of her 12 brothers and sisters had died, had a clear thought: '"Instead of all this self-pity why don't you do something for other children?" She decided to write stories.'

Alongside *Teuluoedd Dedwydd* (*Happy Families*), the Indian books in Welsh brought many children and families to the MRA stand.

Industrial power

'LIGHT THAT GUIDED PHILIPS' is the headline of *The Times* on a review of Frederik Philips' recently-published autobiography.

Describing his 'sustaining faith in God, which grew from an early encounter with Moral Re-Armament', the review concludes:

'It is to be hoped that industry itself will learn something from his views on its powers and, more particularly, its responsibilities.'

The Methodist Recorder chose *45 Years with Philips* as its 'Book of the Week'. 'It is interesting,' it writes, 'that a man who has played such an important part in electronic development can say: "Ultimate choice is based on more than facts. Experience and vision have a part to play. In the last resort the man in charge has to follow an inner prompting, a voice deep down, telling him what is right and what is wrong."'

45 Years with Philips, Blandford Press, £7.25.

Why keep house?

'WHY KEEP HOUSE?' 'Does God have a plan for the world?' 'How do you live out your convictions at home and on the job?'

These questions on the invitation brought together some 60 people from Holland and Belgium to the Moral Re-Armament centre in the Hague for a weekend conference.

One speaker, Digna Hintzen, said that adventure and obedience had seemed to be opposites, she had always thought. The one exciting, the other dull. But by learning to obey God—which often meant sticking to a simple responsibility or accepting painful separation from home and loved ones—she had found the adventure of being an instrument in God's plan for people and at times for nations. Then keeping a home and bringing up children was a very adventurous business! 'I don't want to say that we are terrific,' she concluded, 'but this way of life certainly is!'

Towards the end one young housewife spoke: 'Here I have seen that life is meaningful in itself. By caring for the job you do, you give material things a spiritual dimension.'

Flash from the North-East

BRITAIN IS IN DANGER of setting into a mould of confrontation: between young and old, rebels and the establishment, black and white, class and class. But does confrontation melt the steel in attitudes or does it harden them? Does it change the things that are wong, or allow our bitterness to be exploited?

In Newcastle-upon-Tyne earlier this month these questions were posed and answered in the premiere presentation there of *Flashpoint*, a play by Betty Gray, a local housewife. Her family lived through poverty in the thirties; her mother died because they could not afford a doctor.

Laughter and murmurs of assent punctuated the unfolding of the play's story. After it, a West African engineer representing all African societies on the Community Relations Council echoed what many felt: 'It isn't a script—it's reality.' The Deputy Community Relations Officer, originally from Pakistan, added: 'Could the play be presented at Newcastle's Cultural Festival next year?'

Forgotten cities

A Schools Inspector from Ghana spoke from her heart about the insults she had suffered in the streets and buses of Britain: 'When people prefer to stand in a crowded bus rather than sit next to you—that hurts.' Yet as English people told her of change in their own arrogance and indifference, a bridge of trust was rebuilt.

Discussions continued throughout the weekend as black, white and brown sought what should be done next. A young West Indian builder also in the cast spoke urgently: 'The timing of the play is so relevant. It mirrors all of us.' A bio-chemist from India supported him: 'We need plays like this which bring out peoples' deepest feelings.'

Certainly the North-East has the right to challenge the thinking of the country with its history of suffering, its 'forgotten cities', and its long tradition of hospitality to people from other lands.

They mean to go places with *Flashpoint*. Betty Gray says: 'The complete turn-around in my own life—when I shed the bitterness which was driving me—we want to see throughout Britain.' **FDE**

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