

living and what is happening to it 24 hours of the day all through its life. What can be done?

Dr Holt: There is far too big a gap between the specialist services in the hospital and the needs of individuals in the community. I liken this to the problem of the army in the field. There may be base headquarters and also troops in the field, but you do need intervening field units in the middle to be concerned with helping many of the individuals. I am afraid that as paediatricians we must take some responsibility for this state of affairs, because in past years we have concentrated too much on what has been described as the hard scientific aspects of medicine in contrast to the soft aspects of medicine. The somewhat nebulous social, psychological and learning aspects are of really fundamental importance. Instead of turning inwards and becoming a hospital-based speciality, paediatrics ought to look outwards more than it has done in the past. We have to create a group of doctors responsible for community health. These must be experienced physicians who can carry the clinical responsibilities for all the community problems of children and their families. This is something which is badly needed in this country.

The difficult teenager—can the community help?

The Rev. E. Marvin, M.A. (OXON) (*Member of the Iona Committee*)

On one of the several occasions when it has been my business to speak for naughty boys in court, after the recorder had dismissed the case, a policeman came up to me and said: "Why don't you stick to religion and leave us to do our job?" I do not know what image you have of the church and of the parson or where you stand yourself in relation to the faith, I simply want to get rid of one or two erroneous ideas that may be in your mind about my work. A favourite true story of mine concerns a railway journey from Swansea to London via Cardiff, where I had been conducting a wedding of a friend of mine. I had been to the excellent reception so I was feeling rather drowsy, I was in a compartment trying to have a little sleep when a lady schoolteacher got in and talked all the way from Swansea to Cardiff. Luckily she was not coming to Bristol and I breathed a very visible sigh of relief as she got off at Cardiff. She noticed it and apologized profusely for having monopolized the conversation to which I said, 'That's quite alright, I'll get a compartment to myself all the way to Bristol'. This seemed to puzzle her because the platform was crowded and she asked me why. I said that wearing a dark suit and a back to front collar was one way of getting a compartment to yourself on a train (the other way at the time was to be a Pakistani going up to Bradford). However, she did not believe this and said she was going off for a cup of tea in the buffet and would come back and see if I was still there by myself. When she came back I must admit the laugh was on me as I was still in the compartment but with me were five nuns.

This story has a point. Many people, especially young people, who think of religion are very tolerant towards it. They feel that if you like music you can go to a concert hall and listen to it, if you like pictures you can go to the art gallery and look at them and if you like religion you can toddle along to church. You can engage in this kind of thing if you want to and as long as you do not interfere with them, they will not interfere with you. The idea is spread abroad that religion is to do with a compartment of life, that religion is to do with that which does not matter at all. It never impinges

at any point on reality, but if you like that sort of thing, get on with it and if you like to have paid people who are helping to keep it alive then get on with that too. Don't bother us and we won't bother you. Within that context many people place persons like myself, and so when it comes to talking about community and teenagers what I have to say may at first seem to be coming from an amateur whose remarks must at the best be irrelevant.

Religion is not all that important. It is very hard to communicate to people that do not believe in 'religion'. I believe that religion can be part of life but it is the least important part of Christianity as far as I am concerned. The ritual that goes on in church is not of prime importance to me. The Christian faith is a way of life; for many of us it is concerned with politics, with people, with economics, with love, and love needs to be expressed through politics otherwise it simply degenerates into innocuous affability. I believe that Christianity is the most materialistic of religions, but I am not here to preach to you; I am here to try and say that I do not believe that religion itself is all that important. The church so often proclaims this kind of system of God-Church-World forgetting that it's God-World-Church. God needs no particular kind of church, He simply needs the church who will serve. When the church ceases to serve then she has 'had it' as far as God is concerned, because she is not revealing His presence in the world. So let us say right at the beginning that the world is the area of our activity and our involvement, and we are not attempting at all to remove people from where they are. The here and now is the important thing. In the here and now, this particular parson has found himself living in a typically post-war housing estate, Lockleaze, in the north west of Bristol. In this area everybody rents his own house from the council and there are 17,000 people there, four schools, five or six if you count the nursery schools and approximately 160 teachers. At 8.30 a.m. 160 teachers come into the parish and at 4.30 p.m. about 158 leave. No professional people with the exception of one doctor live on the estate, unless we can dignify the parson with the term 'professional person'. I have lived there for 11 years, I have a colleague at the Anglican church and two colleagues at my own church. We are faced with the problem not of getting 'conversions' whatever that might mean, but the problem of helping people to be as happy as possible and as human as possible, albeit perhaps revealing God's presence in the very act of doing all this. In the face of the problem the very number of our staff are as a mere drop in the ocean.

I am specifically asked to talk about the difficult teenager but I cannot divorce the teenager artificially from the rest of the community. Professor Roger Wilson of this university was engaged on a survey of Lockleaze and the neighbouring estate of Southmead a few years ago; it covered a span of five years during which several of his helpers lived in the area and came to certain conclusions about life there. They divided the people into three types of person. The first were small groups of 'solid' people who were reliable, who could cope with their neighbours' problems. Because they were 'solid' their problems did not arise quite so acutely as with others in the community. They are a small minority in this community and I take it this applies to other communities besides housing estates. They are the ones to whom one goes if one needs counsel and support when living in the community. Then there are the 'difficult' people, again a small minority but they cause all sorts of problems out of all proportion to their number and their presence is always to be reckoned with. Thirdly, we have the vast majority of people who are 'brittle'. He came to this conclusion after 5 years and, after 11 years, I think on the whole he was right though one is loath to put labels on people. By 'brittle' he means that in the vast majority of folk in these areas the frustration level is pretty low. They can go so far and then something snaps, and the vast majority of people in the community are of that nature. People talk about the church being a healing community, but how can you start being a healing community if this cross-

section is in your own church membership as well. You draw the membership from the community and what right have people to point a finger of scorn at the church, saying 'Physician, heal yourself'. It's not a question of healing yourself, it's a question of reflecting in your own life the disease of the community. At least the church demonstrates some measure of community life in its body, and this provides a shaky foundation for future growth.

The teenager reflects the community

Of course you can say the same of an opera society or a ballet society if you had one on the estate too, so it's not a specific claim for the Church as such. The problem is that those communities which throw up the difficult teenager are precisely the communities which do not seem to have the resources within themselves to cope with and help such youngsters. Delinquents are prone to come mainly from these areas, and these particular kind of areas are the least able to help as a community. Everybody in the place is a problem, but some more than others. Is it possible to talk of a 'healing community'? I must confess that, in my pessimistic moods which occur pretty often, I think not, and a story may help to explain what triggers off this kind of pessimism of mine. Take a family who belong to the difficult class, a notorious family on the estate who for years have run riot in the place, a family with many children. There comes a stage when you ask yourself what can be done to stop this pattern repeating itself; this is when one is a little younger and a bit more starry eyed than one is at the moment. For the umpteenth time they are appearing in court, but along with them are two younger members of the family for whom it is a first appearance. So you say to the recorder at Quarter Sessions that if these boys go to an approved school, knowing the family, they are going to come back worse than when they went away. You say this as a person who knows them, as their pastor who lives in the community with them. These boys ought to be the community's responsibility, they are going to come back and the community is going to be less able to deal with them, the community is simply getting rid of these boys and will be glad when they go. You ask for them to be given one more chance, to see if the community can also take its chance. Much to my amazement the case was dismissed and they were given a conditional discharge. They came back into the community, and what happened was that there was nobody in the community to help. The community in a sense was myself, a very tatty community to say the least, and this meant a ton of cornflakes in the basement of the church, this meant all sorts of ramifications because I knew that if they were out of sight for an hour they would do something else which did not seem quite right in the eyes of the law and the police would be along with their threats. I am going to say some kind things about the police as well because they have one of the most difficult jobs in the community. But when these youngsters come back into the community, the community just cannot cope. It took months and months of sweat and a lot of money to keep them out of prison, but they have all been in prison since and that is the way it can go.

There was an article in *New Society* a few months ago about a group of New York social workers who took a group of delinquent boys and agreed that they would spend their time, one social worker to one delinquent boy. Each boy would be in their care every day, almost the whole of the day for six months. They would then compare the results of this group with that in another group of boys given the usual casual attention of hard-pressed social workers. Even over a period of six months the different results were amazing to behold. I have seen this proved again and again. The answer is obviously not to import scores of social workers.

A gang of boys came to wreck the church and almost succeeded three or four years ago, and we realized that if we concentrated on the whole gang we just could not cope. So we selected a leader as the person to whom attention would be given; this caring took place and Johnny is the one who has not been in prison since. It is as simple

and as difficult as that, but it is a knife edge all the time, and in the process of caring in the community we lay ourselves open to scorn by those in the community that we are really wanting to get help from. But can we expect the 'solids', not to mention the ordinary people, to get the community to give this kind of love and affection and caring? It is a full time job in itself trying to educate the community but I do not think you can educate the community in a vacuum divorced from these incidents; it is only by throwing people in the deep end that something from the mess does emerge which is of positive value. We have found through blind involvement that something has occurred which has been beneficial, even if at the level of learning from one's mistakes.

The police

Here I must mention the police, who have a difficult job to do. We cannot ignore their presence. My work at times seems to run counter to theirs and I do not see things the way they do at times even though my brother is in the C.I.D. I should be able to see things from a brother's point of view occasionally but this is not so. I saw some youths last night fighting outside my youth club. The way they fight makes me nervous all the time. I am just terrified of them although I hope it does not show. When it reaches this stage you can do nothing about it except to resort to force in order that property, other people and yourself, may be protected. I am not speaking about these hardened elements in our society who are sick and the police have to deal with them. The other week in our parish we saw an amazing 'punch-up', in which there were 30 police cars on the square after a wedding which had taken place in my church. The restraint of the police is amazing in a situation of that kind where I am wanting to lash out right left and centre at all the foulness around me. They handled the issue with great tact and a modicum of force. But the only way that we can come closer together in the community, police, and parson, is through the 'presence' over a period of time; in a sense it took this last 'punch-up' to bring church and police nearer together. In 11 years this was the first time I had really spoken to the superintendent of the division; relationships had been as bad as that, but the longer you are there the more things are bound to happen simply by presence. In these areas we need presence, we need the presence of a few of those 160 teachers who come in at 8.30 and leave at 4.30. Their presence there over a period of time will enable something to evolve and happen.

The Newsom Report has caused a gradual realization in our area that school premises have got to be open in the evening, for the educational needs of young people; youth work has not to be seen as something in which we all dabble and we all have our own little empires. For long enough my own church ran its own youth club and the local school ran its youth club and we duplicated all manner of things, vied with each other to get the best dances and the best 'punch-ups' and things like that. We have to see the work as a whole, and now that the Newsom Report is backing us up, things are happening and teachers are being paid to come back in the evening to give their skills in the school and to complement the work we do. We look upon our work as the social side, with the coffee bar and club atmosphere; we are channeling young people into school activities and they are directing them towards the social side. So we need the presence of a parson, although I can think of many parsons whose presence would not be of much help, and of many teachers and doctors as well.

But the greatest weakness in these areas is that there is only one class of society. This is the result of the post-war rush to get as many houses up as quickly as possible; not one person owns his own house in the estate, and it is not much use asking teachers to come into these areas to live if you cannot offer them the accommodation they require. Still one or two would make that kind of sacrifice and come into a council house: it can be done and it is a great strength to those living in the area to know that certain professional people are around. We have made the mistake in our area of importing people from outside, who thought it might be a good thing to go slumming in the area

while living elsewhere. We have often found that we spent more time helping them with their particular problems than the people in the actual estate.

There is a difference I think between the words 'involvement' and 'identification'. One is asking people to be involved but not necessarily identified. When the gang leader Johnny was in the club, winkle-picker shoes were quite the thing and I thought I would get a pair to identify myself with the teenager, even though I realized it would have been separating myself from my colleagues. I tried to get what I thought was striking a happy medium. Even so they were too 'way out' for a parson. I wore them once at a dance but nobody paid any attention at all, so I said to Johnny, "What do you think of these? Pretty sharp aren't they?" "Go on", he said, "They're still in the box you bought them in". If you are trying to identify yourself with people, the teenagers for instance, you end up by being ridiculous. They want you to be yourself, and to have something of yourself in your own culture and your own thinking to contribute. They don't want you to lose your identity; they want you to be involved, provided you learn the right to be involved. They will give you authority if you are prepared to work with them; real authority comes from below that which is given to you rather than that which you try to impose from a great height, in the pulpit.

If the money could be found to redress the balance in housing in these areas we would find that it would cost much less in the end than the rising cost of delinquency is going to cost us in the next few years. If the right kind of housing were found and placed in these areas then I am sure this would be a beginning, but a beginning not just for the more stable people who will be able to help these areas as they grow in confidence and ability to help themselves.

At the moment I spend my time with my best youngsters helping them to get away from this kind of society and to set their sights on buying their own homes and getting into the professions and doing well. Can any good come out of Nazareth? Well out of Lockleaze and such areas, many good people have come but they never return to live.

Discussion

Dr H. Cairns (*Cardiff*): Does Mr Marvin think that the difficult community and therefore the difficult teenagers which it produces result really because the community itself is too large? Is there any evidence to show that there is a significantly less percentage of difficult teenagers in small communities such as villages around Bristol for example, rather than in the larger estates or in the larger cities?

Rev. E. Marvin: I really do not know but I would say, with the comprehensive school in mind, that size is no barrier and it need not be a problem. With the sense of largeness, things can happen whereas one is too self-conscious in small units. The whole city of Bristol is a parish; there is no such thing as a parish or unit, for people travel over the whole city. In small communities with clearly defined areas people are not going to be confined to them; they will be seeking the bright lights or the wide open spaces. Size certainly is a barrier in the sense that we do not meet the size with the necessary resources to cope with it, but I do not think size in itself is a bad thing. It can be a good thing and can help to bring the sense of community and belonging and even stability within itself which a small community may not do.

Dr Evans (*Andover*): Nobody has yet dared to mention the old-fashioned concepts