

THE CONTINENT

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The Use of Surveys

"WELL, FIRST WE MUST MAKE A SURVEY."

If phonographic records of church consultations could be preserved for the study of historians, the date of any record so kept could be fixed instantly if an inquirer listening to the reproduction heard this telltale sentence.

The reference to a "survey" would unmistakably indicate its origin—according to the formula of history-writers—"circa A. D. 1919-21."

So great a craze has the survey method become in late years that church leaders have plunged without rhyme or reason into numberings and diagramings and tabulating innumerable, just because "everybody was doing it."

Of course, under such circumstances a large proportion of surveys prove totally useless. The hit-and-miss employment of any expedient is bound to miss considerably oftener than it hits.



The uselessness, however, is not always in the survey itself.

In thousands of instances the facts returned by such a canvass are allowed to lie unstudied in the possession of the very people who were most insistent on having the facts collected.

Families and individuals by tens of thousands, visited once by survey committees asking all manner of intrusive questions about their private affairs, have never yet been visited by any one coming later to offer friendship, comfort or assistance.

Surveyors suffer afterward from "weariness in well-doing."

Certainly the church ought to realize that when it has first gone about a community to find out about the community, it is under an obligation of decency to go again with at least enough helpfulness to verify the appearance of unselfish interest which alone could render excusable its earlier inquisitiveness.

Moreover, it is frightfully poor economy to spend a lot of money collecting information and then do nothing with it.



This, though, does not get to the marrow of inquiring what surveys are really good for.

Still less does it decide the kinds of facts worth collecting at the cost of time, pains and money that surveying requires.

Asking that brings into sight the difference between two types of mind dealing with the practical affairs of the world—the statistical type, as it may be called, which is all for details, for counting things and arranging them in order, and the generalizing type, which sees big surfaces of life at a glance and fits purposed action to conditions more by intuitive imagination than by exact plans.

One may not in good common sense doubt that both these types of mind are useful in the church—indeed necessary.

But in this matter of seeing straight the world and its realities the statistical mind has a grave limitation.

It is useless to seek for a better description of what hampers such an observer than the immemorial proverb supplies:

"He cannot see the wood for the trees."

And the honest truth is that just this sort of people are the people who, in face of a puzzling situation, propose a survey.

They want to count the trees immediately. But when they get through they have forgotten the forest.



Of course, on any principle of fair division of time the Christian who sees in units and thinks in units—or in the arithmetical totals of units—has a right to his innings in church.

The other sort has had a long predominance. Many a generation of Christians has gone through the world content to lump their irreligious neighbors as one mass of "the unconverted."

To insist on individualizing this mass into so many counted persons has been a very considerable service to religion—albeit it makes an odd anomaly that this development goes along with the "social emphasis" on the gospel while the older mass view belonged to what is now called an individualistic age.

However, in society there are both persons and populations, and the survey habit became irrational only because it did not keep distinct the methods appropriate to reaching the one or the other.

On the face of things it is absurd to assume that the means by which a single local congregation gets acquainted with the people within five blocks of its church is likewise the best means for knowing a whole city, a whole county or a whole state.

The first condition calls for intimate and particular knowledge—specific information as to each family within parish lines, whether they are or are not in church attendance, how many children are in the home, even whether the family lives a harmonious life.

But if the question is whether an Italian mission should be planted in the Italian quarter of a given city, a house-to-house census is not the way to determine the matter.

The need of the mission and the prospects of the undertaking are not affected one way or the other whether there are 9,999 Italians in the neighborhood or 10,001.

The man to send therefore to determine the wisdom of such a venture as this is the man with the generalizing mind. He will "sense the situation" and not compile statistics; he will talk with typical persons in the territory instead of trying to see everybody, and provided only he is keen enough to know a typical person when he sees him—which is largely a matter of instinct too—he will return in two days a more trustworthy report than a band of "surveyors" would bring back in a month.



When it comes to wider areas—state and national—a combination of the two methods is the reasonable way.

There must be statistical work done, of course. In the recent Interchurch campaign, for example, the survey of numerous rural counties brought to light some startling facts about overchurched and underchurched and the wastefulness of sectarian rivalry.

But there is no need for anybody to feel disappointed because these surveys could not go on until all the counties of the nation had been covered, as was originally intended.

What was found out was just as useful as if it had been corroborated by the same sort of facts from the whole country.

If the church at large does not now realize the truth of the situation it is not from lack of facts but from failure of enough mental grip to grasp the meaning of facts already visible.



Summing up, this seems a fair rule about surveys:

Get enough facts, but don't go out for any facts without a pretty good idea of what you will do with them when you get them.

Nothing is a worse indictment of practical Christian efficiency than an accumulation of a lot of data which nobody is using.

And ordinarily it is far more important to know the meaning of what you have found out than to find out something else.

On the whole a much better watchword than "Let's count the people" is "Let's try to understand the people."

preacher, nor would I ally myself with a denomination that tolerated him. He's just as much a slave of his appetite as the man who drinks whisky or uses morphine.

"In various capacities about your plant I find men who are deliberately loafing on the job. There are others who declare that they are overworked and underpaid. Generally speaking, such men, unless they have a real grievance, should be replaced by others possessed of more enthusiasm for the work and a less exaggerated idea of their own importance. A chronically dissatisfied man seldom makes good anywhere, and he operates always to lower the efficiency of those who come into contact with him. The large body of fine-spirited and high-minded men which you have and on whom you must rely for future effectiveness should neither be discouraged by the persistent mouthings of these growlers, who are unaware of their own incompetence, nor should they be handicapped by the thick-skinned self-seekers who are only a detriment to your work.

"Now as to side lines. There is nothing to be said, of course, against a proper side line that pays a profit, but there is a tendency to spend money exploiting lines, which in the nature of things will never be profitable in themselves, in the hope that they will act as feeders to the main line of goods. This may work out all right in some cases, but more often it will not. There are plenty of people who will absorb your side line because it is underpriced, but they will not touch your main line at all in any case, and they

rob you just as directly, if not as deliberately, as if they came in and cracked your safe.

"Opinions will differ as to what constitutes permissible side lines and will differ also as to where the line shall be drawn between the permissible and the legitimate and desirable, but for our purpose, and without attempting to formulate exact definition covering the whole matter, I would apply the last terms to anything that educates people, young people especially, up to desiring your main line. Your whole problem lies here, I think. In short, you need to get more people to want your goods. You must induce the children—your principal and most promising prospects—to regard what you have to offer them not merely as a species of after-death insurance (most people appear to look upon it as such) but as a priceless possession that they may use and enjoy all their lives.

"Finally, cut out all the non-essentials of your creeds. A lengthy and resounding statement of belief may interest theologians, but the people to whom you must appeal, both children and their parents, are not in this class, and dogmatic assertions regarding undemonstrable facts, if facts they be, serve only to mystify and discourage those honest souls, who hesitate to subscribe to something which they cannot understand. These are the very people that you must reach if you would gain ground, and I submit that an expressed belief in God the Father and a desire to love and serve him is sufficient."

Southern Opinion and the Race Problem

BY S. J. FISHER

THE VALUE OF the following statements lies in the fact that they are all made by southern investigators living in the south. They picture the Negro problem in many phases. The first class of statements was on "The Need of Schools":

"The reports of state superintendents are practically unanimous in their presentation of the poverty and inadequacy of the elementary schools."

"The greatest need felt among southern negroes is that of competent teachers. The teachers are so poorly prepared and paid that the negro schools are seriously handicapped."

"In the problem of negro education the keystone of the arch is the rural school, which has been shamefully neglected."

"Practically all the teachers are incompetent, possessing little or no education."

"It is impossible to pass over in silence the fact that the negro child in the south does not have, and never has had, a fair chance for training."

"Negro education has never been actually tried in the south."

Two expressions of opinion show that education of the negro is not a town but a country problem:

"As four-fifths of our colored people live in the country, the negro really presents a problem for the rural church."

"The one state of Massachusetts alone had forty-seven cities with a white population of over 10,000; all the states of the confederacy together have but thirty-eight such cities."

Concerning the cause of migration:

"In nineteen years Atlanta has gone backward in public school facilities for the negro. There is no negro high school in Atlanta, and there are only three in Georgia."

"The south cannot compete on a financial basis with other sections for the labor of the negro, but the south can keep her negroes against all allurements, if she will give them a larger measure of those things that human beings hold dearer than material goods. It is axiomatic that fair dealing, sympathy and other human virtues benefit those who exercise them even more than the beneficiaries of them. It pays to be just and kind. The south has nothing to lose and much to gain by adopting this attitude of justice."

"The initial steps for increasing the efficiency and usefulness of the negro race must be taken in the schoolroom. Our appeal is for a larger share for the negro."

"One reason why the educated, progressive young negroes leave the south is the lack of sympathy and encouragement from their white neighbors. We do not seem to get the point of view of the educated young negro today. We don't understand him; this lack of understanding breeds distrust. The ignorant negro is still exploited by white men."

"The ignorant white man's jealousy of and antipathy toward the well-to-do negro constitutes a problem of grave concern."

"The negro leaves the south because dissatisfied with the conditions under which he is forced to live."

On the home-owning negro:

"The ownership of property seems to curb criminality among

negroes. Among negro criminals there are very few who own property."

An editor of Macon, Georgia, says: "I have never known a home-owning negro to be guilty of the nameless crime." (What an emphasis this places on the Farms Homes scheme of the Freedmen's Board!)

As regards the value of negro segregation:

Professor Battle of the University of North Carolina says: "Segregation makes matters worse wherever and whenever tried. As to rural segregation, I believe a negro neighbor is a decided help rather than a hindrance to a white man."

Dr. A. M. Moore of Durham, North Carolina, says: "The negro objects to the treatment he receives after segregation is accomplished. Paving is poor, lighting miserable and sewerage a menace to health. All we ask is justice."

Dr. Reynolds, health officer of Asheville, North Carolina, testifies: "The burden of a high death rate is unjustly saddled on the negro. The negro is really immune to a great many diseases. The living conditions forced on negroes in many localities make adequate protection against tuberculosis an impossibility."

Some Spiritual Hints from Nature

BY ROBERT SPARKS WALKER

IV. WEEDS

IN NATURE no such thing is known as a weed. The word "weed" has been adopted by man to characterize a plant that grows where it is not wanted. If every plant grew where it belongs, there would be no such thing as a weed. The ox-eye daisy is highly prized as a flower when growing in the waste places, but when it spreads to the meadows it becomes a noxious weed. The beauty of the trumpet vine is praised in prose and poetry; flower lovers place it among the most charming wild flowers. Yet on many southern hillside farms it has become a pest so thoroughly established that to eradicate it is almost impossible. Yet so long as it remains in the woodlands and climbs trees and fences, it is greatly appreciated and serves humanity by making the earth more beautiful with its trumpet-shaped flowers and its powder horn-shaped seed pods.

One of the most damaging flower plants is known as sneezeweed or bitterweed. This plant has a beautiful yellow blossom, and as it grows in half-shaded woodlands and by the roadside it adds a peculiar charm to the surroundings. When it migrates to undesired places, however, it becomes a pestiferous weed; for when vegetation in spring is scarce the milch cows eat it, and as a consequence we get butter and milk that is so bitter as to be unfit for food. This weed is so powerful that when cattle feed on it its bitterness is transmitted to the flesh and renders the meat inedible. Indeed, this bitter property reaches even beyond the bodies of animals, for honey bees visit the golden flowers and gather the nectar. When this has been stored by the bees in the honey-comb it has a good appearance, but it is so bitter it cannot be eaten. Thus the pretty flower known as the bitterweed by growing out of place becomes a weed that (Continued on page 512)