



# THE CHURCH HAS LOST IT

**'You know I am involved in the Christian faith?' I said to our plumber as he was fixing a broken radiator, 'well, I am writing an article for a magazine on how people feel about spirituality. What do you believe in?'**

'Ah', he said, 'I believe there is something up there but the church has lost it.' By which I don't think he meant that the church had lost whatever is 'up there' but that it had lost its relevance to, and even its part in, the world today. He went on to say that quite honestly this sort of subject was not what he or his friends thought about much: 'life is just too busy and Sunday is my only free day.'

This man represents one half of the great not-yet-Christian divide. He recognises that there is probably more than what this life has to offer but is not inclined to think more about it. Others with this idea might say that their spirituality makes them feel good and that is what is important. However, what they want is spirituality without commitment. The other half of the divide is consciously or unconsciously influenced by the 'New Atheism' - the effect that recent books by Dawkins, Harris, Dennett and Hitchens have had. The result is that many people are not simply dismissive of God but actually militant in their opposition to religion. Religion is seen as harmful. Sadly, people cannot see the difference between religion as a whole and the uniqueness of Christianity.

This campaign needs to be taken seriously because Dawkins et al are best sellers. Moreover, the media in general mirror their point of view

and have a huge influence on our culture. So, both halves of the not-yet-Christian divide effectively have the same problem.

This problem that Christians have to combat is where society is today. Either God (or something spiritual) is around, but irrelevant to us; or else religion is a menace and must not be allowed to affect our lives. Our neighbours live as atheists even if not all of them would acknowledge that description.

Our calling is to reach them with the Good News. So, what about my plumber friend? As he left I offered him a copy of CVM's Mota Magazine hoping that its gospel content would get him thinking. But he doesn't have time for reading and his own trade journal lies unopened on the coffee table. 'OK,' I said, 'Would you come to a meal with a Christian speaker?' He said he would, provided it was not 'his family day'.

I just hope if he does attend that the speaker actually offers him Christ. He mustn't do it aggressively, but it may be the only opportunity my friend gets so I would hate him to miss out. Come to think of it though, I do have other radiators!

**Fane Conant**

