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Christianity in Modern Educational Trends?

There are many educational trends in England today and reasons for this state of change are not difficult to suggest. I shall select a number without claiming that no more exist; some of those I do not deal with I would claim to be derivative from those I do; others, I do not doubt, I have not noticed. It is possible that some will think of educational trends in the sense only of moral trends, rather than of trends concerning the organization of secondary schools or school architectural design; but, despite the correctness of Belloc's advice from Cardinal Manning that *all* problems are, ultimately, theological problems, it is not necessary to select specifically moral trends only. Nor do I intend to do so here; but simply to consider a number of interesting and very important tendencies in contemporary English education. These can then be examined from the viewpoint of Christian principles – which is, of course, to bring them into a moral perspective.

I shall limit myself to modern educational trends in England, though I may make references to other countries, because trends in other countries which appear similar to those in one's own may be deceptive, for they require for their correct appraisal an understanding of the history and the contemporary social organization of the countries concerned. This article cannot find space for so much. Firstly, then, I shall consider a number of educational trends in modern England. I shall then summarize them; and I shall conclude by placing these summarized trends in a Christian perspective, commenting upon the picture that appears.

II

The first trend to be noticed is the development of scientific and numerate studies and the emphases placed upon them, as opposed to the historico-classical and linguistic studies of the recent European past. By these terms I mean to suggest not only the long-standing public school and grammar school curricula, but the state primary and, to a lesser extent, the secondary modern curricula in which scientific and mathematical studies, outside 'nature study' on the one hand and 'arithmetic' on the other, have only recently developed. However much grammar school science has reached towards the many different courses provided at universities, its provision is notoriously inadequate in terms of engineering; that is, towards the practical and the pragmatic.¹ The unfilled places in science, the poorer students who choose these studies² while the better students choose arts' subjects,³ indicate clearly that, whatever the economic basis, let alone development, of England may require, the ambitions and aspirations of sufficient adolescents are not related to it. To the humanist, this may be a sign for which he is thankful; I am stating the fact, not evaluating it. The case is similar with mathematics. It is remarkable that, in a country which has trained teachers for more than a century, the psychology of learning of mathematical concepts is a matter, despite Piaget and many others, of which we are largely ignorant. The appalling results in the most elementary mathematical calculations of training college students as demonstrated by Professor Land⁴ makes the point. This is the result of eleven to thirteen years' full-time education. So complete is the inadequacy of these students that some training colleges will only train students in mathematics where ability is present. No attempt is now made to train all students to teach even the simplest mathematics in the junior school because of the ignorance and the apparent inability to learn of the students themselves. When Sir Geoffrey Crowther's suggestion that all citizens should be both literate

¹ *The Robins Report*, 1963.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ F. W. Land, *Recruits to Teaching*, 1960

and numerate is examined, one of the prior conditions required for achieving this is absent. This trend, then, is at the moment one of official intention, rather than in existence.

The trend to scientific studies and to numerate ones is closely related to a second; the change towards the vocational approach to education at higher levels in the educational system. In the cases of the working and the lower middle classes this has always been true; no society could exist unless an important part of its educational syllabus related to the tasks which have to be performed by each generation in order that the society may be maintained. Forster's Act of 1870 made provision, as has often been pointed out, for a supply of adequately literate and numerate artisans and clerks. The middle class grammar school and upper class public school, however literary their education may seem, however much it appears to provide for a leisure class, in fact provided professional men for what, in those days, were the only professions and civil servants and administrators in spheres beyond the home government. Today, when the aims of the universities are confused, even the sons of the wealthy – their daughters have always been less considered – find a tendency to early specialization forcing them towards vocational studies. Even if, as Mr. John Wilson has written,⁵ boys can enter Oxford with only four O level G.C.E. passes, the majority require two or three A levels, sometimes to be gained only after a third year in the sixth form. Even here there is no guarantee of entry to the university, though Oxford and Cambridge seem to provide easier access to public school applicants than do other universities.⁶ The one or two subjects to A Level constitute the vocational trend which is usually referred to as 'specialization,' but this term misses the point implied in its own connotation of 'narrowing' towards a job – and university students see their future in this way. We have come a long way from the cultured men of wide knowledge and deep sensibility, the sources of sweetness and light. Concentration on studying for the job removes the breadth of an undergraduate's intellectual experi-

⁵ J. Wilson, *Public Schools and Private Practice*

⁶ *The Robbins Report*, 1963

ence – experience which is part of one's studies, not derived only from one's social life. However much, as has been claimed, the nineteenth century English university course turned out to be a form of vocational training by virtue of the occupations followed later by its recipients or participants, the content of the study itself must be seen as much less specialized than most courses today. The nineteenth century's paler reflection today is seen in 'foundation years' and in grouped and related subjects in, particularly, the newer universities which have been established since 1945.

In the schools we see two aspects of the vocational trend; one is the great concern with examinations which, in so far as their results are important for a pupil's future, tend to promote specialization – and, hence, vocational tendencies and interests – in the timetable. These appear in the secondary schools where C.S.E. is added, but vaguely related, to the G.C.E. Secondly, there is the apparently opposite tendency: the removal of examinations at the age of ten or eleven years to decide a child's future secondary school and in consequence reduce specialization and widen the range of future vocations. This paradox is not complete because there is nothing to prevent a narrowing of studies once the primary stage has been passed; this happens in schools which, although comprehensive, are organized internally in two, three, four or more ability streams with appropriate specialization. The school which favours breadth risks rejection by parents and, possibly, poorer academic results as measured by examinations. No clear information on this latter point is, unfortunately, available. It runs counter to one of the findings of the American Eight-Year Study,⁷ namely, that undergraduate success is determined, not by earlier schooling, but by the student's motivation. Those who begin studies in college are as successful, and sometimes more successful, than those who began their studies several years earlier in high school. If basic ability is there, desire to study is the important factor. This is, in fact, tacitly recognized in those British universities in which a graduate in, say, classics, may be admitted after two or three

⁷ Aikin, *The Story of the Eight-Year Study*

terms' successful study to a higher degree in, for example, economics. Our schools, unfortunately, do not share these beliefs.

A corollary, and a paradox, which follows from increasing concern with science and, more especially, vocation, is that things and jobs become more important than people. It is true that some jobs, e.g. shop-keeping, are partly conditional for their successful pursuit on an ability to deal with people, though the customers tend, necessarily, to be seen as means to ends. At a time when, at long last, we become more consciously 'sociate,' it is not, as might have been expected, in reaction from an excessive concern with industrial expansion, large-scale organization or the so-called 'conquest of nature,' but to increase production and to make means of social control, whether by coercion or manipulation, more efficacious. As the English economy tends increasingly to the tertiary type, marked, not by primary production or industrial processing, but by marketing, selling, advertising, insuring, banking and transporting, the need to use people as economic factors increases. Fewer people make things; more manipulate others and symbols.⁸ The society for which children are educated, therefore, becomes one in which, increasingly, they learn to handle people for their own economic and prestigious ends; in which increasing attention is given to sociology, psychology and economics as subjects of study relevant to a vocation; in which people face and think of each other as little else but manipulable.

It is probably true to say that, for the majority of those who use the term, a 'meritocracy' is seen as beneficial and just. It represents a deserved success of talent or intelligence, with the implication that there can be no juster ordering of a society than that which lets the 'best,' who are identified most often with the intelligent as measured by objective tests, reach the high prestige, best paid, most influential and most enjoyable positions in society; the claims of birth and wealth are at a discount. Those who do so have missed the point of Dr. Young's satire.⁹ Firstly, a meritocracy ignores all other qualities but

⁸ C. W. Mills, *The Power Elite*

⁹ M. Young, *The Rise of the Meritocracy*.

that of talent as measured by I.Q. or ability tests. Secondly, it assumes a completely open society in which neither persons nor institutions are privileged. Thirdly, it requires completely free access, not only to educational institutions but to the other institutions which conduce to educational success. Fourthly, it means that those who are not born with talent or who do not develop it are at a lifelong disadvantage for prestige, wealth, power and enjoyment; and the assumption is that this is both just and desirable. To these implicit requirements it may be countered that qualities other than intelligence and specific talent are of great, some might say fundamental, importance in society and in life. Even if it is possible to prevent privileged institutions developing – and this would require schools to be state-licensed, if not state-controlled; even if it is possible to prevent the meritocratic élites from giving their children advantages in the cultural background of their childhood or in the acquaintances which they will have among persons of influence simply by being their fathers' children, the inequalities in the preconditions of educational success which vary from birth-order in the family through educational facilities in the area in which childhood is lived to a secondary headmaster's knowledge of available opportunities for school-leavers, would have, theoretically, to be taken into account to meet the requirements of a true meritocracy.¹⁰ To fail in this is to put a premium on fortune, as well as on intelligence and talent. How could these requirements be met?

The answer, at first sight, lies in the detailed suggestions made in such reports as that of the Newsom Committee and in the recommendations of such authors as Jackson, Marsden and Mays.¹¹ Others would go further and require, as a prerequisite of social justice, a comparatively undifferentiated school to the age of at least fourteen years; others would say until sixteen. The Americans have long had a system of such elementary and high schools which vary in their leaving age according to the

¹⁰ *The Newsom Report*, 1963

¹¹ B. Jackson and D. Marsden, *Education and the Working Class*.

B. Jackson, *Streaming*.

J. B. Mays, *Education and the Urban Child*.

state's law; Sweden is in the process, after seventeen years of enquiry and experiment between 1940 and 1957, of developing a similar, though not identical, institution to the age of sixteen.¹² In Britain, a bewildering pattern is developing, though the basic types of school are clear. As practice in the United States has shown, however, the degree of equal opportunity of education – which is the first formal requirement of a meritocracy – depends upon the area in which the school is situated; so that a comprehensive high school in a wealthy district is more socially exclusive,¹³ since its catchment area is the wealthy district, than an English grammar school whose catchment is much wider than the residential area surrounding the school buildings. When it is remembered that the total Swedish population is less than that of Greater London and that Sweden is, with the exception of a handful of towns not large by British standards – Stockholm with a million inhabitants, Gothenburg with less than half a million, Linköping and Uppsala with less than one hundred thousand – predominantly rural, it must be questioned how far Swedish circumstances are comparable with England's. The point to be made in response to the last of the four factors enumerated above is that any society which so clearly rejects, without possible alleviation of their condition, all but the intelligent and the talented for positions of prestige, wealth, influence and enjoyment is providing, by such social exclusion in an open society, conditions for alienation, rejection and revolt. In a closed society this would not be the case, save in times of great tension, because social immobility would be the norm. In an open society the norm is the possibility of mobility and its restriction in operation to one factor only when others existed – for example, the appropriate use of one's inheritance of property – would prove impossible.

The next trend, to which I shall refer briefly, is the increasing tendency of the government of the day to control, either directly or indirectly, the field of formal education. Since the first grants to schools, the government has provided more and more

¹² Duhring, *The Swedish School Reform Act, 1950*.

¹³ J. B. Conant, *The American High School Today*.

funds and exerted more and more control over primary, secondary and higher education by paying an increasingly large share of teachers' salaries; by instituting entirely new systems of schooling in developing grammar schools after Balfour's Act of 1902 and, if the provisions of the Act of 1944 had been carried out, might have done the same for stillborn county colleges. It has unified the examination system by calling for a new secondary examination on receiving the Beloe Report – to the exclusion of a number of private examining bodies; has, by setting up permanent committees, prepared to exercise some control over syllabuses and teaching methods; and by, very tardily it is true, suggesting research to organizations such as the N.F.E.R., has put itself in a position to bring pressure on local authorities to follow policies stemming from the findings of research. The maintenance of private schools is on the sufferance of the Minister; local authorities' schemes of development and reorganization may be denied his approval and, at least under a Labour Government, the so-called public schools face the possibility of the formation of an educational trust for the enforced alteration of their entrance systems. The role of the central government in education has grown and is growing.

Lastly, attention must be drawn to two trends which involve staff more directly than the trends so far discussed. The first of these concerns the very large numbers of children who will receive education in the next twenty years from a teaching force which will be, numerically, quite inadequate. The reasons for the increasing numbers of children include earlier ages of marriage which result in earlier childbearing; larger families than have been expected by the Registrar-General; the increasing numbers of children staying at school beyond the minimum age permitted for leaving; and the raising of that age, firstly to fifteen, soon to sixteen. The reasons for the inadequate numbers of teachers are the poor image of the profession among possible applicants; the competition in the economy for scarce talent, so that enough suitable applicants are not obtained for teacher-training because equal pay for men and women was introduced at a level which was, fundamentally, a woman's rate and men find higher payment and better

working conditions elsewhere. At the same time, the number of women applying for teacher-training is affected by widening opportunities in an economy which is experiencing a general shortage of labour. Concurrently with these tendencies has come the pressure on the universities from qualified pupils seeking higher education; thwarted, many turn to another institution which will provide a form of higher education and find it, especially where they are women, in the colleges of education. Only a proportion of these men and women teach for long and some do not teach at all. To this loss is added, almost unbelievably within five years of their training, four-fifths of all women trained.¹⁴ The majority marry and rear families. The extent to which they will return to teaching, even in a part-time capacity, is unknown. In these circumstances of too many students and too few teachers, recourse is made to aids to education to enable large numbers to be taught. Closed-circuit television, broadcast television, film, radio, shift systems, team-teaching, teaching machines, correspondence courses, re-designed buildings, non-teaching auxiliary staff – all are mooted, treated briefly as panaceas and then largely ignored. Those which are not too expensive for use meet considerable resistance from teachers, even if that resistance is often apathy. Of one thing it is possible to be sure; the problem is not solved and there is no sign that it will be. Sir John Newsom, in a public speech, forecast the complete breakdown of primary education within ten years;¹⁵ in this phrase he presumably foresaw classes of sixty pupils and more. A few years later, secondary education would follow the course of primary education.

The second trend concerning staff is not the obvious conclusion which follows the matters just dealt with; namely, that teachers will become less and less involved with students, more rigid in their mass-production system, more addicted to the formal imparting of formal knowledge, but concerns the contradictions between their work as teachers and the aims which society, and to a great extent they themselves, think

¹⁴ *Ministry of Education Annual Reports.*

¹⁵ In 1964: reported in, for example, *The Times Educational Supplement.*

desirable for adults. England, as was said earlier, emphasizes mobility by intellectual merit; the former requires, for success, physical mobility; society increasingly encourages the migrant, the seeker of the new experience, the man on the move; it expects him to give but brief periods of service before taking the next step upwards. Increasingly, the good teacher is encouraging this through the school system. Yet he himself, if he is a good teacher, is recommended not to move much, for the best service to teaching lies in a degree of permanence extending over ten years at least. Except for the one man or woman in twenty-five who becomes a headmaster or headmistress – and the increasing size of secondary schools is widening this proportion – little promotion can be expected. After sixteen years there is nothing to look forward to financially; one can only draw nourishment from one's days of work. It can not even be said that the few rewards come to those who stay, for it is more likely that they will go to those who move after a year or two because they are generally, and practitioners of certain subjects are specifically, in short supply. The teacher finds himself in a dilemma: to move or not to move. One choice may make him a better teacher; the other widens his experience and opportunities. Professionally, he should, for much of his life, take the former course; practically, he will choose the second. It is a sociological axiom that groups maintain themselves by allegiance to group norms of conduct. These include aspirational norms. Where the likelihood of these norms being met is interfered with, dissatisfaction arises; men feel failures and lose their sense of personal worth. Teachers, men teachers especially, have felt this loss for many years; current trends and, more regrettably, current policies, do nothing to reduce this experience. Rather, both acerbate it.

The several trends considered suggest the development of a society which is concerned with the advancement of meritocrats to scientific and vocational ends in which things and persons seen as things predominate. Non-meritocrats are ignored. The education system which formally moulds such persons is under increasingly centralized control, is staffed with insufficient numbers of teachers for an increasingly large number of students in a system in which teachers will have to rely, tardily and

unenthusiastically, on a variety of untried technical aids, rather than on genuine techniques; and while they feel themselves remote from the current ambitions of society, any attempt to achieve these ends brings them into conflict with their own professional beliefs.

III

There is no single 'Christianity.' There are many Christianities, aspects, facets of the teachings of Christ; and as one, rather than another utterance is interpreted and applied to circumstances, the perspective changes. To the liberal Christian, tolerant in his interpretations, aware of the possibilities of a fundamental spirit manifest in many ways through different religious doctrines, through different religious experiences, whether mediated by the priest or immediate to the sufi and mystic, the subordination to a theocracy or to a church can no more be accepted than the control of education by the secular state. In both cases there occurs a concentration of power, secular and sacred, which is, for him, inimical, because the only errors such power commits are those it admits. For the liberal Christian, life is as much built on error as on truth. The Roman Catholic can not separate religion from education in any sense at all; the liberal Christian is quite capable of doing so. In the United States it is separated completely from public education in the fifty-one states. Through their family, social and pastoral organizations Christians find it possible to bring up their children as Christians. They assent to the view, a little unwillingly, that in a multi-denominational nation there is no logic for the expenditure of public funds on a single or, alternatively, on a variety, of doctrinal teaching. Private denominational schools are, of course, permitted and used by those who wish to do so – and the reasons for doing so are by no means always religious. In the nations in which Roman Catholicism is the predominant teaching, everything is done by its church to secure complete control of education. The logic of the demand, given the Roman premise, is irrefutable. Similar demands and similar arguments have been advanced by other churches and sects; for example, the Calvinists in the United States and in Europe. The basis of their argument

is the wholeness of life; if that life is Christian, education is Christian – not in part, but wholly; there can be no separation between the religious and the non-religious. From an English standpoint, not merely a Christian English standpoint, therefore, the increasing state control of education is viewed with concern because it is seen as an alteration in an elaborate system of checks and balances by which power is divided among many actors and many spheres of life, in which, if one source cannot override another, it can come near to nullifying it; in Riesman's phrase, it is exercised by a 'veto-group.' To many English Christians, such a system is preferable to any other because absolute power, of whatever origin, wielded in the interests of whomsoever, is liable to corrupt absolutely. To the followers of churches in more absolute states the same fears are not present because the church's power, having divine origin, cannot be wrongly exercised; only its servants are fallible. To minds in other countries, the fallibility of servants means fallibility in the work of the institution. Far better, then, to recognize its divinity but to counterbalance its power by that of temporal organizations.

It is tempting to consider that Christianity requires the development of what men of the Renaissance called 'the whole man.' It would be easy to examine the contemporary emphasis, first on science and numeracy, then on specialization and education for a vocation and conclude that in sum this was a denial of full human development; that studies in other subjects, proficiency in other skills, experiences in other realms, in the emotional, in the aesthetic, in the contemplative were omitted in favour of one or two aspects of thinking and acting. Yet further thought compels the admission that such views are classical, not Christian. In Hellenic thought they antedate Christianity. Indeed, it is far easier to make a case for education as Christian in the narrower view which fits a person for a particular life in a traditional society without educating him for choice between different roles, initially on his entry into society and throughout his life, wherever he finds it possible to choose. If Christians prefer a wider education, it is as likely that their thoughts and beliefs are affected by humanist thought of the classics as by any Christian teaching or commentary.

The particular emphasis on science and numeracy, however, requires further consideration.

It is difficult to resist the argument that concentration on science reduces interest in the particular and, consequently, in the human being. Scientific method deals with generalities, for hypotheses would be impossible without them; otherwise one deals with the unique which, by being such, cannot be grouped with similar occurrences. Increasingly men concern themselves not with individual suffering but with 'cases' and, later, with 'medical statistics'; interest and importance is transferred from the social worker to the research worker. In making this change the loss of the particular removes interest further from the human. 'Science shows' becomes another way of claiming that 'the system shows' and in consequence elements of inaction, of excuse, of pessimism develop; responsibility declines and, becoming apathetic, men cease to concern themselves with what can be done, become interested in the theoretical aspects of social life and withdraw with the implication that action is either beyond their powers or that the probability of success is minimal and the effort therefore not worth making. No contemporary situation can be traced to such a single cause, for matters of political organization and religious or ideological belief are relevant in providing explanation; but too great a concern with science as a mode of investigation is itself part of an ideology and thus becomes a relevant factor. Its partial replacement with humanist studies might countervail the influence of such factors as economic and political organization and lead to a willingness to act. On the other hand, such an outlook might be unable to withstand the tendencies and pressures of other factors; until the attempt is made, the outcome cannot be known.

The trend to remove obstacles to education must face the same argument as the earlier case of science and numeracy. There is no Christian view or doctrine that requires the opening of careers and enjoyment to all the talents, to all nature's geniuses and epicures. The narrowing of avenues is, as has been suggested, thoroughly Christian. It may be necessary, in the opinion of many, to take steps such as these to educate and train personnel to develop and maintain an economically

sound society with an advanced standard of living; but, although few Christians would require an advanced standard of living as a specifically Christian aim, equally few would dispute the need for an economically sound society. The soundness can exist at a lower – a much lower – level of life. Social and economic trends that require offering hitherto privileged opportunities to an increasing number of children, adolescents and adults are not, certainly, demanding action that is contrary to Christian belief; but they cannot expect the approbation of its doctrine.

The trend for the number of teachers to be far less than required, with its concomitant of new methods of instruction, and the trend of teachers to be affected adversely by events in society which cause conflict between their personal interests and their professional values are both outside any particular church. There is only one satisfactory solution to the problem of good teaching and that is by research into different methods, different sized classes for different subjects and the time given to various media with each lesson, size of class and characteristics of children. It is ironical that insufficient teachers have brought more research and invention into teaching than any earlier consideration of teachers' needs. For generations, the teachers' approach has been limited, with comparatively few exceptions, to the use of literary methods; the size of classes has only changed from seventy to forty, thirty and less under circumstantial development and not according to any clear investigation that one size, rather than another, is better for a particular purpose. The great dangers now are, firstly, that so long as some piece of equipment enables a teacher to deal with more children, its use will be extended, irrespective of whether 'teach' includes stimulation of further interest and logical understanding so that further enquiry through the child's aroused curiosity will result; and, secondly, whether something will be taught because the device enables this to be done while some other matter, intrinsically more important, will be omitted because the device cannot deal with it. It seems incontestable that no Christian of whatever church can be other than suspicious, wary and highly critical of all attempts to 'produce more education' by an understaffed profession.

One point remains; the extent to which teachers' professional opinions conflict, not merely with society's aims, but with developments in their own. Too much emphasis can be placed on a teacher's remaining in the same school for a long time. After one's first school, in which the greater part of one's professional learning and its accompanying errors have occurred, periods of five years seem enough to give good service to a school. By staying too long one becomes rigid, not so much in one's own methods but in helping to maintain a given system in a school; by changing and allowing new teachers to enter, the school is helped to benefit from new personalities, new methods, new content and interests, sometimes by introducing a new subject or by developing another hitherto neglected. Obviously, we require a balance between ephemeral residence and ossification. When change, whether for promotion, experience or pleasure militates against sound education and the sense of security which long-service staff can give to a school, Christians can agree that an undesirable state has been reached. To some extent, increased salaries, by reducing slightly the need for promotion might reduce movement between schools; but the desire and the need for experience will maintain some. A reduction might be effected by a system of in-service training and secondment so that one's greater experience would be in part through visits to other schools and discussions with other staff, so enabling a teacher to introduce change into his own school instead of moving to another. While promotion is comparatively easy because teacher shortage is severe, the Christian cannot expect that teachers in a society which places so much emphasis on the acquisition of means and prestige through mobility within and between occupations will remain unaffected by such aims. We may also, then, expect movement out of teaching to increase as well as movement within it; whether the reverse of this will introduce increasing numbers of older people, themselves occupationally mobile, we cannot know, for the tendency in this direction at the moment may only be of men and women who have always wanted to teach but have never found means of doing so until the present. Such sources, once used, will not recur.

Circumstances emphasize different aspects of interpretable

doctrine. Trends in English education in the middle of the twentieth century are developed far more by circumstances than by educational theory and when theory is adduced it is invariably after the development, a transparent means of assuring respectability to an action. When we have clarified our minds on the meaning of Christianity to us as individuals and have decided whether we can, if the conditions of our earlier lives permit us any real choice, choose between authoritarian systems of Christianity in which, ultimately, decisions on doctrine and conduct are given to us, or whether, at the last, we find we must assume responsibility as individuals, then, when this is done, we shall be able to place contemporary educational trends in England in a Christian perspective.

If the relativity implied in this conclusion seems regrettable, the disappointment must be borne. It is implied in all transmitted doctrine whose nature is such that, unlike a scientific hypothesis, it cannot be subjected to frequent testing by unbiased means and impartial observers. The cost of such convenience, however, is that we must be content with probability. The parable, the gnomic utterance, the disputed translation are extreme examples of the difficulty of conveying clear meaning; forgeries, interpolations, mistaken commentary cloud the meaning of the word (the interpretation of acts not always clearly understood at the time), and make us less certain than we would like to be of what is truly a Christian perspective and what is our own gaze.