

## The Church and Communism.

IT is beyond question that the present time is one of the great turning points in human history, that we are living in the midst of a crisis that affects not only our own national life, but the life of the world. The rising menace of communism is an almost universal phenomenon, but it cannot be isolated from the profound changes in thought and aim that have been gathering impetus for the last century, from the revolutionary advances of science and knowledge with their consequent results in the intellectual, religious, and ethical spheres, from the two world wars which were themselves the effects and liberation of forces long at work, or the great social revolution that characterizes the age. The Church today faces a situation as critical, in some respects more critical, as any it has faced in its long career. There has always been apathy and indifference to be overcome, but in the first age of the Church it is true to say that the world into which it came was waiting for and to a large extent even seeking for the salvation the gospel offered, and every great revival from the Franciscan to the Methodist could count on a response from the masses which, however sunk in ignorance and sin, accepted its basic assumptions. But today those assumptions are challenged not only by the intelligentia and the half-educated, but by multitudes of ordinary people, and the mind of this generation is preoccupied by hopes and aspirations which, not only among the communists, excite the warmest enthusiasm. Nearly twenty years ago T. S. Eliot summed up the situation as he saw it. "The Universal Church is today, it seems to me, more definitely set against the World than at any time since pagan Rome. I do not mean that our times are particularly corrupt; all times are corrupt. I mean that Christianity, in spite of certain local appearances, is not, and cannot be within measurable time, 'official.' The World is trying the experiment of attempting to form a civilized but non-Christian mentality. The experiment will fail; but we must be very patient in awaiting its collapse; meanwhile redeeming the time: so that the Faith may be preserved alive through the dark ages before us; to renew and rebuild civilization, and save the World from suicide."<sup>1</sup> It is a true account of the crisis of the world and Church at this present hour.

I tell you naught for your comfort,  
Yes, naught for your desire,  
Save that the sky grows darker yet  
And the sea rises higher.

It is not a time for small thoughts and chirping optimisms,

<sup>1</sup> *Thoughts after Lambeth.*

but for thought on a great scale and for Faith purified as by fire. The world is under the judgement of God, but, as was said long ago, "the time is come that judgement must begin at the house of God." For within the present situation so truly described there is God, and it is with God in the situation and not with the situation apart from Him, that we have to do. It is essential that this fact should be grasped, because it is only too possible that under the pressures of the hour and its concern with the immediate problems of the time, the Church should forget that its primary purpose is to witness to God in whose hand are all the times, and to proclaim an Everlasting Gospel. Our faith is not that there is a God, but that there is a living God who challenges the world in every crisis of its history, as He meets and challenges the individual in every crisis of his life; and that the living God has revealed Himself in judgement and redemption in the tremendous facts of the Incarnation, the Death, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The greatest possible event in history has already taken place in final judgement ("Now is the judgement of the world") and in divine victory ("Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.") If this faith seems dull, commonplace, unromantic, it can only be because familiarity has blinded our eyes and deadened our minds to its splendour and audacious challenge to our dull and commonplace souls. But in the searching judgement of the time it is this faith, with all accretions burned away, that must be recovered and reaffirmed by the Church in all its humbling, exalting, and vivifying power. That such recovery is possible no one can doubt who realises that the Church is not only the bearer of the gospel, but is indwelt by its living Lord, for the divine indwelling is the divine in action. "God's essence," as Traherne said, is "all Act."<sup>2</sup> It is true that the Church on its human side is weak with all the weaknesses of sinful men and women. The treasure is in earthly vessels. It is true that this or that branch, being dead, may be removed from the Vine, or in John's metaphor, the "lamp" of this or that local church may be removed. But the Church, and even apparently dead portions of it, have shown miraculous powers of recovery. A wind from another world has blown across the grey embers, and the flame has again blazed. And it is a fact of most impressive significance that in this very time when the Church faces its great ordeal the supernatural fire is burning brightly in the wide reaches of its missionary enterprise. To despair of the Church is to despair of God. There is no doubt that the Christian Church will survive this epoch in the world's history. It is even possible that it will be the only institution that will survive. It has happened before. "On this Rock will I build My Church and the Gates of Hell

<sup>2</sup> *The Anticipation.* :

shall not prevail against it," a "Rock of Diamond," says Dante<sup>3</sup>. It is of the utmost importance that the Church and its representatives, young and old, should confront the present situation with this great faith, and meet the confidence of its rivals with a confidence greater than their own.

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The Church is not of this world or of this temporal order, but it is in it, and it claims to deal with the *whole human situation*. Its first answer to its challengers, taken at their noblest, is that they do not deal with it and that their view of humanity, its nature, and its condition is partial and superficial. It ignores the great mystery of human life and in so doing it reduces all human values. The mystery of human life lies in its tragedy, and it is in its tragic sense of life that communism and its fellow-idealisms are most conspicuously lacking. Their charge against religion is that it is "dope," and it can be freely admitted that religion has often been used to justify or perpetuate old abuses, but religion itself springs from a profound sense of the tragic situation of man. Every religion, from the crudest fetich-worship to the purest theism, from the pantheism of India to the most wide-spread forms of Christianity, is in its degree and aim a religion of redemption, of redemption from the ferocious powers of the natural world or from the fierce contentions in the human breast. Not only religion, but the greatest literatures, the profoundest philosophies, have come out of man's passionate conflict with his fate. Suffering, sorrow, and death are in the world, and they mean to man what they mean to no other creature. These are facts of universal experience, to which all history bears witness. The favourite quotation of that great worker for humanity, General Booth, was Goldsmith's

How small, of all that human hearts endure,  
That part which laws or kings can cause or cure.

No change in the conditions of rich or poor, no conceivable reconstruction of society, can affect the central mystery of human life, its tragic situation. For it is essentially a tragedy of the spirit, of a strange being, not wholly of the natural order, wounded by the very conditions of his existence in that order.

Then again, these social idealisms ignore the significant mystery of human individuality. There is, for instance, in man's breast a recalcitrant element, a rebel against constraint, which breaks out against the most considered plans for his well-being. In *Letters from the Underworld* Dostoevsky, that profoundest of Russian writers, makes his hero say: "I should not be surprised

<sup>3</sup> Purg. ix. 105.      <sup>4</sup> *The Traveller*.

if, amid all this order and regularity of the future, there should not suddenly arise, from some quarter or another, some gentleman of low-born—or rather of retrograde or cynical demeanour who, setting his arms akimbo, should not say to you all: ‘How now, gentlemen? Would it not be a good thing if, with one consent, we were to kick all this solemn wisdom to the winds, and to send all those logarithms to the devil, and to begin to live our lives again according to our own stupid whims?’<sup>5</sup> It is this rebellion against restraint which necessitates a police-force in ordinary society, and the more highly organised and regimented a society becomes, the more pervading the restraining force must be, until at last, there comes into existence the police state and its universal tyranny. Dostoievski foresaw its coming in Russia. As his exponent Berdyaev says: “This enforced generally levelling, this transfer of the murderous law of entropy into the social sphere, does not mean a victory for democracy. There will not be any democratic liberty, for democracy never wins in revolutions. A tyrannical minority will govern, on the basis of this depersonalization and levelling down.”<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile it is to be noted that this innate rebelliousness may be merely wilful as with Dostoievski’s cynical gentleman, and is familiar enough in every group and family, or it may be motivated by the lowest passions of selfishness and greed, or on the other hand, it may be reinforced by the loftiest motives of liberty and justice. But in itself it belongs to the essential individual life and springs from the intrinsic freedom of the human will. It is the assertion of the free selfhood as against all constraint by other wills. It is the abysmal mystery of a being in nature and yet who rises into supernature by the power of choice. It is part of what we mean when we say that man is a spiritual being to be explained, if explained at all, not by what is below him, but by what is above.

In the third place there is the mystery of man’s failure to achieve his own ideals. His reach exceeds his grasp. It is not only that he fails; even in the degree to which he attains he finds a flaw in his success. Except on the level of mechanical and empirical science he is doomed to disappointment. “Ah! Vanitas Vanitatum!” sighed Thackeray as he concluded his greatest work, “Which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? or, having it, is satisfied?”<sup>7</sup> Sophocles, in the play of this name, represents Philoctetes the hero as suffering from an agonizing and irremediable wound in the foot which only a god could heal. He is typical of humanity. Phillips Brooks has a great sermon he calls “The Giant with the wounded heel,”

<sup>5</sup> p. 30 *Everyman Ed.*

<sup>6</sup> *Dostoievski*, p. 149.

<sup>7</sup> *Vanity Fair*.

based on Gen. iii. 15.—the enmity between the serpent and the woman and her seed. "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel," and he shows how in institutions, society, learning, religious and personal life, what is so noble in aim and striving is halted by some evil defect. Like Jacob, humanity always halts upon its thigh. All the great figures in Shakespearean tragedy have some fault which contributes to if it does not cause the tragical end. Yet not all of this failure is culpable. Some of it is due to the strange passion for perfection in the human mind, the power of dreaming dreams and seeing visions of something greater on before, of conceiving ideals which ever expand with the growing apprehension of them, and are never realised and seem incapable of being realised in time and space. Dora Greenwell's profound thought has at least a tentative justification: "Not only the change which we call death, but probably the whole of this our mortal life, is only a slow and difficult and painful birth into a higher existence; the very breath we draw is part of the travail of creation towards a yet but partially fulfilled aim."<sup>8</sup> This however, goes beyond any hope that an economic or social theory can advance. But when allowance is made for this frustrate passion for perfection there is a defect in man himself, a dark destroying element which entwines inseparably with his noblest parts and striving. "Is there any cause in Nature that makes these hard hearts?" cried Lear, but no answer is given. "When I would do good," wrote St. Paul, "evil is present with me," and the experience is so universal as to need no argument. "Out of the heart of men," said Jesus, "evil thoughts proceed, fornication, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickednesses, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness," and again no argument is called for. It is not that there is not good in the heart, generosity, sympathy, love, capacity for sacrifice, high courage, and striving for noble ends. If it were not so there would be no tragedy in man's moral failure. It is that with all this there is a fatal perversion, a taint in the blood, that betrays man at every step. It is Shakespeare's "vicious mole of nature . . . the dram of eale," Kant's "radical evil," Wordsworth's "poor humanity's afflicted will," Arnold's "Something that infects the world." Browning, the invincible optimist revolted from the flattering optimism that denied it:

The candid incline to surmise of late  
 That the Christian faith proves false, I find . . .  
 I still, to suppose it true, for my part,  
 See reasons and reasons: this, to begin:  
 'Tis the faith that launched point-blank her dart  
 At the head of a lie—taught Original Sin,  
 The Corruption of Man's Heart.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Colloquia Crucis*. 144.

<sup>9</sup> *Gold Hair*

The Bible story of the Fall traces it to human pride. Bertrand Russell, as quoted by Niebuhr<sup>10</sup> expresses the same conviction in other words: "Of the infinite desires of man the chief are the desires for power and glory. They are not identical though closely allied. Every man would like to be God if it were possible; some few find it difficult to admit the impossibility," or, as Niebuhr himself believes, it may spring from the inevitable anxiety which to the concomitant of freedom and finiteness.<sup>11</sup> But whatever its ultimate nature it is present as the perverting and destructive element in life. It goes deeper than the ancient struggle between body and soul, the natural and the spiritual. Indeed, the true antithesis is not between the natural and spiritual, but between the spiritual and the carnal, which is a moral term. There is not a power of the body which cannot be and is not abused, not a gift of the intellect that cannot be and is not perverted to an evil purpose. The love of beauty can be a dancing light leading to the bogs of sensuality. The love of truth has been responsible for cruelty and persecution. Even the pursuit of goodness may produce the poisonous fruit of self-righteousness. No discovery in science, no ingenious invention, but can put fresh powers of destruction in the hands of injurious men. Education is no barrier to the forces of hate and greed. As has been proved in two of the greatest wars in history, civilisation itself is a thin crust over raging and violent fires. The "something that infects the world" distorts and directs to a deadly end the noblest of causes. "O Liberty," cried Madame Roland on the scaffold, "What crimes are committed in thy name!" When the poor and oppressed demand justice, how much of their demand is inspired by mere envy of the wealth and security of their oppressors? And how often do they in their turn become the oppressors? How much ambition and thirst for power is disguised as philanthropy or even religious zeal, or perverts an originally pure intent to these personal ends? How much of love is love of self, of the service of others a ministering to self-esteem? In small things as in great the evil works, and in the bickerings, the jealousies, the envies, the malice and the selfishnesses, of the small group, the conflicts and conflagrations of the world are reproduced. The greatest crimes and the meanest, the most terrible oppressions and the tyrannies hidden away in the home or wherever there is dependence of man on man, tell the same sad tale of indwelling evil. And the mystery is deepened when it is realised that those most conscious of it are the saintliest and best of men. It is upon this submerged rock that the world makes continual shipwreck. It is said that a once-famous minister opened his morning newspaper

<sup>11</sup> *ib.* 194.

<sup>10</sup> *Nature and Destiny of Man*, vol. I. 200.

with the words: "Let me see how the heavenly Father is governing the world!" But one recalls the famous passage in Newman's *Apologia* in which he describes the human scene: "All this is a vision to dizzy and appal; and inflicts upon the mind the sense of a profound mystery, which is absolutely beyond human solution. What shall be said to this heart-piercing, reason-bewildering fact? I can only answer, that either there is no Creator, or this living society of men is in a true sense discarded from His presence."

This is the mystery of the human situation, man's inescapable suffering in this world, the assertion of his freedom from good as from evil restraint, and his fatal perversion. It is a tragic situation for which no political creed can provide a remedy, and the creed of communism least of all. On the contrary, the more the whole situation is ignored the more certainly will the costly experiments fail. We are not concerned here with these creeds, democratic, socialistic, or communist, as political or social ideals which can be discussed on their merits, but as, what some even claim to be, substitutes for religion. How can the mere change of external conditions, the replacement of one social order by another, meet the tragic state of humanity or satisfy the profound needs of a solitary human soul? "Men cannot get along without religion," wrote Macneile Dixon, and he wrote as a humanist not as a Christian. "If one is abandoned another is adopted. And all our humanitarianism, all our philanthropy and welfare work, are efforts to fill the great spiritual void left by the decay of faith, drab substitutes for the older creeds. The spirit of man craves for a friendly God, and you give him economics."<sup>12</sup> A "drab substitute" indeed. It is not that economics are of no importance, or that men do not need to be fed and clothed, or that social injustice or ancient wrongs should be tolerated. It is that to deal with these only is, as the old prophet said, "to heal lightly the hurt of the daughter of my people," to ignore the fundamental situation and needs of humanity. "What is man," asked Hamlet,

If his chief good and market of his time  
Is but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.

It is because man is not a beast to be contented with removal to a cleaner sty and especially if he pays too highly for it, but a being so great in nature and so deeply wounded that nothing less than a religion on the vast scale of his need can satisfy him. To offer him anything less as a cure for his ill is to throw husks before a prodigal in the far country.

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This is the radical criticism of communism as a substitute for

<sup>12</sup> *The Human Situation*. 186.

and avowedly, the enemy of religion. Over against it, and all social systems which ignore God, is set the Christian Church, the Divine Society with its revealed doctrines of God and man. It is one of the weaknesses, perhaps the chief weakness, of at least the Protestant defence, that the Church too often is ignored *as integral to the Faith*. The Christian who confronts communism in mine, workshop, or office, often confronts it as an individual defending his own personal belief and experience and not as a representative of the Church, of which frequently in his narrow individualistic religion he has the vaguest and most inadequate ideas. And yet the Gospel is inseparable from the Church and is emasculated when isolated. Without the Church there would be no individual believer for it is from the Church he has received both Gospel and Bible, and to the Church he owes his faith and its experience. It is not the lonely individual, but the Christian Church, the most significant society on earth, which God purchased with His own blood, with its sacraments and especially its Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, that faces the menace and crisis of the hour, and the individual as part and member of it. It is in the world, majestic, significant, spanning the centuries with its own life, and its own enduring, invincible power. And it is this in spite of appearances, it is this in spite of acknowledged and patent weakness :

Though with a scornful wonder  
Men see her sore oppressed,  
By schisms rent asunder,  
By heresies distressed.

It has been so from the beginning. Nothing can be more severe or justified than the judgement passed by St. Paul on the Church at Corinth, and yet—"Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are," and "Ye are the Body of Christ, and severally members thereof." The truth is the Church is *an object of faith* as is its Lord, and its real history is the history of the indwelling Spirit. Like other societies, as in the case of a nation, its external activities and institutions can be described, the story told of its councils, its creeds and controversies, its divisions and enterprises, all the matter that forms the study of the ecclesiastical historian. But the substantial life of the Church, as of a nation, is not in these things. It is the inexhaustible story of its confessors and martyrs and saints, of its evangelists and poets and workers in every age, of its conversions and self-denials, and most of all of the unrecordable experiences of countless multitudes of men and women who found in their faith consolation in grief, courage in hardship, inspiration in labour, strength in temptation,



forgiveness in sin, hope in danger and in death, and who lived and died in the consciousness of God. It is by the Spirit, by a supernatural power ever renewed in the obscure lives of unnumbered believers, that the Church has lived and still lives. And to all this the Christian of today is heir, and behind him is all the wealth and variety of the Church's experience of the Spirit, and of its witness to the truth to which he himself has to testify. He is not solitary.

Furthermore, this experience of the Church, is not a mere variety of religious experience, though the student of Comparative Religion of necessity treats it as such. It is distinct in its quality, and is the fruition of a *divine purpose*. The question of a purpose in human history has long been the study of some of the ablest historians, with ambiguous or negative results. The idea of inevitable progress so dominant in the last century has perished in recent conflagrations. The original Marxian notion of an inevitable social evolution from feudalism to capitalism and then to communism, and of economics as its mainspring, is not a notion of purpose. It is of a materialistic necessity. It is only in the light of a revelation, supposing one given, that indications of a real purpose in human affairs can be discerned. And of such a revelation the Bible is the only record in the world. The sacred books of the ethnic religions give no hint of it. But the Bible is primarily the book of a divine purpose, and it is this that gives unity to its varied contents. And it is the Book of the Church, the mirror in which it sees itself, its story from its remote beginnings to the vision of its consummation. The Bible is, of course, sustenance to the individual believer. It gives voice to his aspirations and laments, illumines his trials and sorrows, feeds him with its hopes and promises. But it is all this to the individual because it is something more. It is the record of the divine action in history, of the purpose which includes the individual, because of the community from which he derives his spiritual life and in which he is rooted. It is not simply the story of the gradual unveiling of God, or, from another point of view, the slow advance of ideas *about* God from, say, the crude notions of the historic Samuel or David, through the increasing knowledge of the prophets, one adding this and another that, until we reach the full blaze of Jesus, and all detached from the history in which it is embedded. It is the story of God's dealings with one particular people, in the course of which dealings the revelation is given of His dealings with and His purpose for all. Its subject is not man but God, and the underworking of His atoning presence in the world, afflicted in all its afflictions. It begins with myths of pre-history and it ends with an apocalypse of what is beyond history, both of universal significance; and, between these it traces the

footsteps of God as He moves onward towards the Church.<sup>13</sup> The Church, then, begins its story with the call of Abraham, follows it through the vicissitudes of a tiny nation, and then of a people "hewn" from it by the prophets into a small "Remnant" of believing and expectant souls, the Danielic Son of Man. And then at last the sudden appearance of a community which includes men of diverse races but which regarded itself as the heir of the promise made to Abraham, the goal of all God's dealings with Israel, the reason for all that strange eventful history. As St. Peter says: "The prophets searched diligently . . . to whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you did they minister these things," and the very great epistle to the *Ephesians* has as its subject the majesty, universality, and ultimacy of the Church as not only the fulfilment of "the commonwealth of Israel," but of a divine purpose formed before the foundation of the world. It is not possible to understand the Bible without realising that from beginning to end, and in the New Testament even more than in the Old, its theme is the Purpose of God to bring into being a redeemed people, a community, a social organism, created and indwelt by His Spirit. And in the New Testament the end is reached in the Church. And here, if anywhere, is to be found the clue to human history.

Once more, if the Church was the object of the longing eyes of the prophets and of the fulfilling of a divine purpose formed before the foundation of the world, then it has some relation to the Kingdom of God, because it is the Kingdom of God which, according to the Bible, is the divinely ordained end of history. The term "Kingdom of God" has been greatly and commonly misused to describe the goal of *human* effort, the improvement of society, the remedying of social evils, the prevention of war by the establishment of international councils, and so forth, in short, the furthering of humanitarian programmes and ideals. All of which is admirable even if it is haunted by the disillusionment that waits on a too optimistic belief in human nature. But it has little relation to the Kingdom of God from which it borrows its name. Because the Kingdom of God in the Bible is a supernatural reality, it is the Epiphany of God, the breaking into Time of Eternity, the long prayed-for Intervention of God who comes, in judgement and saving mercy, to establish His holy will in the world. And it is the good News of the New Testament, the burden of the preaching of Jesus and the Apostles that this Kingdom has come. Jesus does not bring in the Kingdom. It is the Kingdom that brings Him. There were anticipations of it. The light is in the sky before the sun leaps above the horizon; and in prophet and seer and saint, and not only among the Jews, rays

<sup>13</sup> cp Dodd, *The Bible to-day* p. 112.

from the eternal world had penetrated the world-darkness. The Spirit of God was always with men and in them. But now in the fulness of time the "day spring from on high" broke upon the world, and the Kingdom was here. And when men saw it they did not recognise it, or were purblind to its glory which was not of this world.

They all were looking for a king  
To slay their foes and lift them high :  
Thou cam'st a little baby thing  
That made a woman cry.<sup>14</sup>

And what men desired, and still desire, was the fulfilment of their earthly hope, the redress of their grievances, the satisfaction of the demand they make on their fellows and on life. And the kingdom they seek is a kingdom of their own world, with their own standards, their own methods, their own ends. And when the Kingdom of God came it had no beauty that they should desire it. Jesus, in whom the kingdom was incarnate traversed the judgements of the world, reversed its standards, rejected its methods, refused its ends. The Kingdom was the Kingdom of Heaven, of holy fellowship with God Whose Son He was. It was, if we must use spatial language, heaven come to earth. The ethics of Jesus are the ethics of the Kingdom, and in direct word and in parable He expounded its law of Love, "Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." It was not what Hazlitt called "the morality of good nature"<sup>15</sup> which often passes for it. It is the costly love which St. Paul called the most excellent gift of the Holy Spirit which goes out in reverential self-identification with its object. It is the Eternal Life of God. And it was the influx of this Kingdom which brought Jesus into the world. It was manifest in signs and mighty works, but they were all miracles of love. It shone in His vast compassion, in His unwearying toil, in His association with the outcast and forsaken as of infinite value to God, in His revitalising forgiveness of sin, even in His wrath against the harshness and religious pride of those who sinned against love. He Himself knew temptation, but He was tempted, as all men are, on His own level. It was to take short cuts to His high end, to work for quick returns of love, out of very pity for men to adopt means that fell below the slow and costing methods of love. But He put the temptation aside with tears. In this world the Kingdom of God can only exist and can only conquer, and so only save men, by the labour and suffering of love. For the price of inexorable love is pain. "If any

<sup>14</sup> George Macdonald, *That Holy Thing*.

<sup>15</sup> Essay, *Why the heroes of romance are insipid*.

man would come after Me," He cried, even to the multitude, "let him take up his cross and follow Me." It is the royal Way of the Kingdom, and there is no other. And so He gathered round Him a few men, the nucleus of the Kingdom, and these He taught and trained, and knit to Himself in bonds of loyalty. There were twelve of them, symbolic of the New Israel, the new fellowship of the Kingdom of God. They were firmly His before He entered upon His supreme and most solitary work, the Action in which the nature and power of the Kingdom would be fully manifested.

It is an invincible instinct of the human soul that evil must be expiated, and that when a sinner suffers for his sin he expiates it. It is also instinctively felt that he makes expiation when, at great personal cost, he renders some noble service, or gives his life in some heroic action. Some moral necessity demands that the evil must be atoned for in one way or another. But among the Jews especially the association of suffering with expiation created a serious religious problem when it was realised that suffering fell upon the righteous, and with the growing sense of the status of the individual the problem became acute. It was given to one prophet of profound insight to assert that the sufferings brought upon the innocent, because their lives were bound up with the guilty, might have expiatory value. Such innocent sufferers were the great prophet Jeremiah, and the "holy Remnant" who had been carried into Babylon among the exiles upon whom rested the judgement of God. And, in a series of oracle-poems, he described the great "Servant of God," the personification of the Remnant, the true and obedient Israel, silently and for sins not his own enduring obloquy and death, and so expiating the sin of his people and perhaps even of their enemies. It is not possible to rationalise either the common instinct or the prophet's inspired intuition. It belongs to the "image of God" in man. As Jesus said of His own sufferings, "It needs must be." It is most probable that what the prophet perceived by his inspired insight Jesus recognised apart from him, but the spirit of the "Servant passages" was too much akin to His own to be overlooked by Him. And there is ample evidence that they were much in His mind and that He gave them a Messianic significance. And so, like the prophet's Servant, He yielded Himself, in obedience to His Father's Will and in awful loneliness, to suffer at the hands of men the worst they could do, bringing upon Himself and so exposing, with the revealing which is judgement, the ultimate consequences of their estrangement from the life of God; and in darkness and death, but with a love the darkness and death could not quench, He made expiation for the sin, first of His own followers, then of the nation that had rejected Him, and of the whole world whose sin was focussed in the Cross. "He gave Himself," it is written by one

who denied Him, "the just for the unjust that He might bring us near to God." For God was in Him, and it was God Himself who bore the iniquity of us all. And in that sacrifice and last victory of holy love the Kingdom's deep foundations in the world were laid.

Then followed the Resurrection into enthroned power, the Return in the descending Spirit to the regathered followers, and the Church was launched into history. From now on the term "Kingdom of God" almost disappears from the New Testament, and the Church, the "Body of Christ," the "elect nation," the "Israel of God," takes its place. The Church is the Kingdom of God in so far as it has earthly embodiment. Its life is the life of the Kingdom, its laws and ideals are those of the Kingdom. Its Lord is the King Himself. The Church is the extension of the Incarnation and the Cross, or, as Mrs. Herman finely says, "not so much a school and temple of wisdom as an organ of atonement and redemption."<sup>16</sup> If she has no beauty that men should desire her, it is because, like her Lord, she is not of this world; if she is weak with human infirmities, it is because her members are human and sinful, and the Spirit has to strive against the carnal mind in them all and does not compel the will. But in all her weakness and sin she not only endures, but sends forth men and women of heroic fortitude and sacrifice. When Sian was bombed by the Japanese in 1939, 500 Christians gathered for the Communion service, and as the syrens wailed the Company sang :

This is my Father's world.  
Why should my heart be sad?  
The Lord is King, let the heavens ring.  
God reigns : let the earth be glad.

George Young goes on to relate in his *The Living Christ in Modern China*, a truly great book : "The singing finished and the Communion service continued. Soon we heard the sound of bombers approaching a still city. They passed overhead. Then came the whistle of bombs descending, and the church shook with the explosions. All was quiet again as the planes went home. With grateful hearts we partook of the broken Bread and the Wine, remembering the wounds of Christ," and he adds : "He came into our midst and filled us with His peace."<sup>17</sup> The tree is not dead or dying that produces such fruit as George Young and his heroic Chinese. But here is the Church, the Kingdom of God, in the world with inherent and supernatural powers, but not powers the world can use for its ends, with immortal hope that goes beyond the world of time and space, a Community that struggles here below until it joins the Community above, the

<sup>16</sup> *Meaning and value of Mysticism.* 377.

<sup>17</sup> p. 200.

Church triumphant in the heavenly places. It calls for faith, for devotion, for the daily carrying of the Cross of Christ, but it is a Creation of God of which no man should be ashamed. And it answers the whole human situation by the truth to which its very existence is a witness, because it brings God into the matter—God as revealed in Christ, having compassion on men and sharing their travail, appealing to men as free spirits to choose the way of His will rather than the way that brings distress upon themselves, and, beyond all, bearing the burden of human sin expiating and taking it away with an eternal sacrifice and a forgiveness that gives hope to all. He is a very present God, and the shadow of the Cross falls athwart the world, and in the shadow there is healing.

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This is the faith that overcomes the world, with varying emphasis and external forms of system and presentation, the faith of the whole Church of God. It is the faith of St. Peter, in his weakness and denials and pathetic love more truly representative of the Church and of humanity than St. Paul with his spiritual genius, his inspired thought, his iron endurance. But it was his faith too who strove to "fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ . . . for his body's sake, which is the Church." It is the faith of Augustine, and Bernard of Clairvaux ("Jesus, the very thought of Thee") of Francis the troubadour of Christ who bore in his hands and feet the wounds of Jesus, of Aquinas, the "Angelic Doctor," who had such a vision in the Sacrament that he said, "I can write no more, I have seen things which make all my writings like straw," of Luther and Calvin, of Hooker and George Herbert, and Richard Baxter and John Bunyan, of Wesley and Robert Hall, of William Carey and, Newman and Maurice, of George Macdonald, and Spurgeon ("He looked at me and I looked at Him, and we were one for ever,") of John Clifford, the fearless ("I felt that the reputation of the Church was in my keeping . . . and this consciousness drove me to God, so that every morning I sought with the utmost earnestness that I might be kept through the day from anything that would discredit Christ, whose name I had professed, and the Church into which He had brought me"), the faith of Bishop Hannington and Timothy Richards, and George Young, and a great cloud of witnesses. It is this faith in which the individual believer faces the challenge of his world today. And it is all gathered up and concentrated in his personal identification with his crucified and risen and indwelling Lord, "the same yesterday, today, and forever." "The Cross that Jesus carried He carried it for you." Yes, but it is the Cross not only believed in, but accepted as the principle of his own life, in the bearing it after

Christ, in the dying to self and in living the New Life of love and intercession whose springs are in God. Even the inescapable troubles and hardships of earthly experience become part of this self-offering. They have a greater object than the discipline of character, though, accepted as the will of the Father, they have this result. In ways beyond our understanding, as James Hinton maintained years ago,<sup>18</sup> they can be used by God. Not only apostles and martyrs, but stricken hearts and sufferers on beds of pain can, by their loving endurance, reinforce His world-wide purpose of redemption. "Since the suffering which is offered up to Thee," wrote Madame Pastorelli in her long agony, "is a force which it is in Thy power to utilize, here I gather into one sheaf my own sufferings, and cast them at Thy feet."<sup>19</sup> And the powers of the new life in Christ may have a deeper significance still. As it is said in that small masterpiece of biography *Lacordaire*: "There is many a loving, believing heart who never heard or read of *solidarity, reversibility, or expiation*, who yet lives and works and prays in the strength of thoughts to which it would not be able to give clear dogmatic expression."<sup>20</sup> But in a profound sense they are sharing in the Cross of Christ. In Christ or in Adam we are members of one another, and no man liveth or dieth to himself. All are responsible for all, and so Schweitzer, driven by the Spirit of Christ, goes to Lambarene avowedly to make some atonement for the colossal sins of Europeans against the natives of Africa, and Aggrey wears himself out in loving labour to heal the wounds made by racial contempt. Solidarity is a fact, and the Christian accepts that fact with all its consequences as explicit in the Gospel of the Atoning Cross. "As He is, so are we in this world." Where the Spirit of Christ is, there is He. The redeemed humanity, ever living on the one great Sacrifice as its daily Bread, is a redeeming humanity, and it is through the cross-bearing and expiating Church, which is the Body of Christ of which we are members, that Christ continues His saving work.

A willing sacrifice she takes  
 The burden of our fall within;  
 Holy she stands; while on her breaks  
 The lightning of the wrath of sin;  
 She drinks her Saviour's cup of pain,  
 And, one with Jesus, thirsts again.<sup>21</sup>

Is it too much to say that the world is waiting for the Church to

<sup>18</sup> *The Mystery of Pain*.

<sup>19</sup> Eustace, *An Infinity of Questions*, 95.

<sup>20</sup> by Dora Greenwell. See also her *Essay on Prayer*.

<sup>21</sup> R. H. Benson, *The Teresian Contemplative*; cp Wheeler Robinson, *Cross of Job*, 62.

realise more deeply her true nature, and in her members and in her community-life to manifest the atoning presence of Christ? As L. S. Thornton writes: "Only so far as the love of Christ, crucified and risen, is re-embodied in flesh and blood, in holy lives and in a holy society, will men be drawn to recognise and to respond to that love."<sup>22</sup>

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It is from the vantage-ground of this Faith, and equipped with the weapons of the Spirit, that we survey the world of today and its tidal movements. It was said of Thackeray that "he could not have painted *Vanity Fair* as he has unless Eden had been shining brightly in his inner eyes."<sup>23</sup> It is the light of the Kingdom of God that illumines the causes that now win the wide support of men. It enables the Christian to acknowledge and appreciate the good in the appeal of Communism, for it draws its strength from the miseries and oppressions of the poor everywhere, especially in the East of Europe where the wretchedness of the masses was greatest. It is not an accident that its Land of Promise is Russia, the home of age-long political and social despotism, and whose literature, from Gogol onwards, was the literature of pity. It is the hope that Communism holds out to the depressed and insecure of all peoples that gains the support of generous spirits and engages the enthusiasm of young hearts. The Christian sees this with understanding and sympathy, and he is condemned by his own Gospel if his compassion is less than theirs. But the Gospel shows him more than this and he remembers the warning of Christ. In a church in Orvieto there is marvellous fresco of the Last Judgement, and among the figures there is a remarkable group of Antichrist and his angels. They are noble figures, and Antichrist especially is stately and beautiful with a strange suggestion of Christ. It must indeed be so, how else could he "deceive the very elect?" It is only on closer inspection that the malignancy of the countenance is perceived. And it is to the closer view of Communism as it meets us today, with its repudiation of God and its reversion to the savage tribalism whose standard of Right and Wrong is what is considered the advantage or disadvantage of the tribe, that the features of Antichrist are revealed. It forges fresh chains on the human spirit and establishes a tyranny greater than any it displaces because it is wholly a Kingdom of this world. The true Christ does not crucify. He is crucified. With Communism of this ideology the Church can come to no terms. If need be, it can only suffer with Christ. The compassion for men which gives

<sup>22</sup> *Doctrine of the Atonement*, 161

<sup>23</sup> *Brimley, Essays*.



Communism its glamour flows in its true channel when it flows through Christian minds and hearts, and inspires Christian statesmen and Christian democracies. For it is only Christianity that teaches effectively the sacredness of men.

On Palm Sunday the Church celebrated what is called the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. But what a Triumph! Our attention has been focussed on the shouting multitude and the waving palm-branches. Do we sufficiently consider the tremendous irony of that Royal Procession, its derision of earthly power? The King comes in humbleness and poverty. The ass He rides is a borrowed ass. His regal seat is the weather-worn cloaks of His poor followers. And in His face is the shadow of fore-known ignominy and death. Misunderstood by the crowds and His own disciples, and watched by the scornful eyes of the powerful, He rides to His doom. Was there ever so great a repudiation of the things in which men place their confidence? But they are saved by what is above them and not by what is on their level, and it is so that Christ still offers Himself to us all. His Kingdom is not of this world, because it is not of the spirit of this world. But it is only in His Kingdom that, if ever, the world will find healing and peace.

B. G. COLLINS.