

CHRISTIANITY AND INDUSTRIAL PROBLEMS.¹

BY THE REV. E. A. DUNN, Vicar of Harlesden, N.W.

AT one period of the War Mr. Lloyd George said that many of our greatest efforts in it were just a little too late. They were magnificent enterprises, thoughtfully planned, bravely carried out, but—too late! One is at first tempted to use the same words of the Report of the Archbishops' Fifth Committee of Inquiry—Christianity and Industrial Problems. The words "At first" are used advisedly, for an expression of genuine repentance is never too late, and though the past cannot be undone, and though lost opportunities will never present themselves again, yet it is not too late even now to do something which to some small extent may atone for the past, prove the sincerity of that repentance, and help to usher in the new era which is slowly but surely coming. But at the same time we might almost weep to think of the ground lost which might have marked the position of the Church if only the Report had been published twenty years ago or even ten. Now it will be claimed by most of those Trade Unionists who may trouble to read it, that it is practically an instalment of the Labour Party's programme and is set forth at a time when after work, suffering, persecution, organization and publicity, the Trade Unions have secured a partial recognition of the just demands of labour and the Church comes in, as so often, nearly at the last ready to give its blessing to the victors when the battle is well-nigh over and the victory nearly won. If the Church had presented such a report when Trade Unionism was fighting with its back to the wall, it might have had the honour of being regarded for all time as the

¹ With this article we conclude the review of the Reports of the Archbishops' Committees of Inquiry. The Committee on "Christianity and Industrial Problems" was the last of the five. Its members were the Bishop of Winchester (Chairman), the Master of Balliol, Mr. H. Barran, Rev. G. K. A. Bell, Lord Henry Bentinck, M.P., Mr. S. Bostock, Mr. W. C. Bridgeman, M.P., Miss Irene Cox, Mr. M. J. R. Dunstan, Mr. W. A. Durnford, Mr. F. W. Gilbertson, Col. Hesketh, Mr. W. L. Hichens, Mr. F. Hughes, Rev. R. R. Hyde, Mr. H. E. Kemp, Mr. G. Lansbury, Bishop of Lichfield, Canon Lovett, Mr. Albert Mansbridge, Bishop of Oxford, Bishop of Peterborough, Mr. R. H. Tawney, Mr. Christopher Turnor, Miss Constance Smith, Dean of York, and Rev. J. B. Seaton (Secretary). The Report is published by the S.P.C.K. at one shilling net.

defender of the poor and the champion of the worker's liberty. It would have commanded the admiration and called forth the love of the toiling millions of our land, whereas now she can be but an ally who comes in, to give timely help, it is true, but help which would have been worth so much more a little earlier in the struggle.

Having said all this, it must be admitted that there is scarce one word of adverse criticism which can be levelled at the report itself. The subject has been handled in a masterly way and considered in all its bearings. In a mere pamphlet of 147 pages a real classic has been presented which, looked at from either a literary or a practical point of view, forms a valuable contribution to social economics. It is well set out, easy to read, and conveniently arranged for reference and may be regarded as far and away the best of the five reports issued by the Archbishops' Committees. Nor must we forget that perhaps its chief value lies in the fact that it may be read and considered and its teaching absorbed by those who would give no attention to it were it published under any other auspices.

The Report claims that the principles it expounds and the demands which it makes are nothing else but the doctrines of Christianity applied to modern social conditions. If this claim should command a wide recognition it is probable that it might help to usher in speedily and peacefully that revolution which is certainly coming, but which may otherwise be attended with much suffering and distress ere its objects are attained.

I.

The principal conclusions of the Report are as follows:—

The teaching of Christianity must be applied to social relationships as well as to individual conduct. And forasmuch as the existing industrial system makes it "exceedingly difficult to carry out the principles of Christianity," a fundamental change in the spirit of the system is necessary.

Instead of co-operation there is merciless competition which causes the workers to be regarded as mere machines and allows them not the smallest control over the conditions under which they earn their livelihood, gives no sense of responsibility for the results of their industry, and evokes no human interest on the part of the worker. At the expense of the community output is limited, prices

are raised, and quality deteriorated. Preventable poverty exists side by side with excessive riches. The livelihood of the workers is very often precarious and uncertain, and a spirit of antagonism is fostered between the parties engaged in industry.

The fact is that a wrong ideal has been set up. Men regard the acquisition of riches as a laudable object in life, whereas the New Testament teaches that the possession of more than a small quantity of material wealth is a hindrance and not a help to the Christian life, and those who do possess riches must regard them not as a possession but as a stewardship. The true ideal is that of "Social Service" based on the effort of every individual to discharge his duty to his neighbour and to the community; and industry must be regarded in this light and judged by moral not material standards.

The New Testament teaches that every soul is of infinite and equal value, but in modern industry human beings are regarded more as "means" than an end. We cannot, however, blame individuals for evils which many of them deplore and are powerless to alter. The general character of the present industrial system is wrong. Workers are still too often liable to be treated as "cogs in the industrial mechanism."

The welfare of human beings, including not merely material comfort but scope for initiative and opportunities of self-development through education and labour, together with freedom to take part in the control of industrial organization and direction of economic conditions and policy, must be the first condition of any industry carried on by Christians.

The Church cannot pretend to solve economic problems, but it can insist that it is the duty of Christians to solve them and should appeal to principle.

If the New Testament lays an emphasis on individuality it is counterbalanced by the emphasis it lays upon the fact that Christians are members of a society. The ethical spirit of the New Testament is co-operative rather than competitive, and Christians should aim at giving rather than getting. Society may have to choose between being Christian and being rich, and if it is argued that loss of fortune might deprive the community of a stimulus, this might be more than made up by the impetus given to labour by the recognition of its just claims.

The New Testament teaches that Christians have a corporate responsibility for seeing that all members of society have the opportunity of a good life. The Church therefore must make its voice heard and must awaken the consciences of men with respect to the thousands of children and young persons who suffer from preventable ailments which undermine their physique and impair their education and are stunted both in body and mind by work in industry which is both excessive and premature. Many hundred thousand workers, all paid wages which make a life of honourable independence very difficult and labour for hours which leave but the scantiest leisure for rest or recreation. Nearly one-tenth of the whole population are housed under conditions which do not, indeed, prevent the growth of noble character—for nothing can do that—but make the words “lead us not into temptation” a perpetual mockery.

The Report illustrates its contentions from the history and teaching of the past, and shows that in most periods Christianity has been considered to have a social as well as a personal application.

“The Gospel spiritualizes the irresistible impulse which draws man to man and raises the connexion of human beings from a convention to a moral obligation.”

How then did the present state of affairs come into being? By the middle of the seventeenth century several causes had combined to depose, first religious and then moral considerations from their position of theoretical pre-eminence as the standards by which economic transactions were to be tried. Impersonal methods of economic organization, the growth of foreign trade and of the money market, capitalist agriculture and capitalist industry, made it difficult to treat economic life as amenable to the simple moral criteria of charitable and covetous dealing which could be applied when merchant and customer were neighbours and master and servant lived in the same house. As these conditions spread, economic conduct is no longer regarded as laudable or blameworthy, for men are no longer responsible for it. They are like men thrusting one another in a throng, or like the wheels of a clock in which “the first wheel, being stirred, drives the next, and that the third, till the last moves the instrument that strikes the clock.” The Church, no longer an intellectual leader, had no alternative theory to present.

So gradually things went from bad to worse and little protest was evoked. Lord Shaftesbury's account of the struggle in his day to obtain factory legislation is well known: "Out of Parliament there was in society every form of good-natured and compassionate contempt. In the provinces the anger and irritation of the opponents was almost fearful. . . . In very few instances did any mill-owner appear on the platform with me; in still fewer the ministers of any religious denomination." Thus it came about that the new economic world born of industrial and agricultural revolutions was not merely dominated by exclusively economic ideas, but that these ideas represented a very narrow and one-sided part of economics, and were unconsciously a mere reflection of a short-sighted view of their interests taken by the ruling class of landlords and manufacturers.

How could the age tolerate these abuses which are sickening even to read of? How could men who were really religious, men sincerely patriotic and personally benevolent, how could men even of common sense defend as a quite natural state of things such facts as children of six kept at work in factories from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m., girls under eight crawling through coal seams eighteen inches high, boys of four sent up flues seven inches square in "a country renowned for its humanity"? The answer given in the Report to this question contains several considerations. Perhaps the one we shall best lay to heart is this: "Men took the world around them for granted, as we are doing in this our own age. They assumed that the proper thing was to accept that station in life unto which it had pleased God to call them."

"In the fifty years which laid the foundation of modern England the influence of the Church as a witness to social righteousness was, it is hardly an exaggeration to say, almost negligible." This is sad reading, but in face of the evidence it cannot be denied.

Now, however, if it cannot be said that the Christian conscience is awake to social duty, there is nevertheless hope for better things. At least there is a movement away from selfish individualism, a consciousness that a religion which is "drenched with self-regard" cannot be a genuine Christianity, a growing conviction that the one purpose worth striving after is the Kingdom of God, and that no religion of life, least of all the sphere of human industry, can be excluded from His sovereignty.

Lord Shaftesbury has been dead more than thirty years, and we must beware of taking to ourselves credit for his good deeds. Nevertheless we may remember them as a contribution of a Churchman towards the solution of the problem. Frederick Denison Maurice and Charles Kingsley, Westcott and Scott Holland are well-known names chronicled in the Report. The Christian Social Union and the Church Socialist League are not forgotten, and resolutions of the Pan-Anglican Synod in 1888 and the attention given to social subjects at the Pan-Anglican Conference in 1908 is also noted, and it is declared that, at least in recent years, the Bishops who are members of the House of Lords have no need to be ashamed of their notes.

As to this present time, the stern teaching of the War has undoubtedly had a tremendous effect in awakening the Social Conscience. We know our past failure in witness and in service : even now it is too much to say that English Christendom as a whole is prepared to work Christ's principles out to their full conclusion or to make the sacrifices which they require. But there is a dawn of hope, and the next generation may see a better day.

II.

In an article like this it is impossible to deal in detail with the chapter on "Urban Life and Industry," or even to quote from what it has to say upon the evil of insecurity and unemployment ; the antagonism between employer and employed ; co-operation for public service ; the establishment of a living wage ; adequate leisure ; the protection of children and young people ; association of workers and employers ; the industrial employment of women ; the need of a new attitude towards profits ; the development of Local Government ; housing ; and the Parish Priest. All these are dealt with in a masterly way, nor is the chapter on Education less important. Would that the Report could be circulated by the thousand after it had first been (dare we say the word ?) popularized ! We can think of nothing more calculated both to effect the object for which the Report was written and also to draw the hearts of the people towards the Church under the auspices of which such a book has been issued, than that it should be re-written in a style calculated to cause it to be read not only by students and those interested either in social reform or the attitude of the

Church towards it, but also by the "man in the street." This is not to be taken as an adverse criticism of it as it stands. For the purpose for which it was published it is admirable in every way.

It will be gathered that the Report confesses the failure of the Church in the past to preserve the principles of Christianity in the social and economic world. What can we do now to remedy the past and to prove the reality of our repentance?

A New Ideal. When the War first broke out there were thousands of our finest young men who at once volunteered for service. They knew their response would mean hardship, suffering, and probably death. They had little to gain for themselves and much to lose by joining the Army. Yet, moved by a great passion, they gave themselves. This is evidence of what man can and will do when moved by a great purpose. We must call them again to an adventure far greater than the War. Ours is to be a great campaign against dirt and squalor, poverty, crime, disease, death and injustice. If the position is clearly explained and if there be no uncertain sound about the call, there is every reason to believe that the manhood of the nation will respond. It will only do so, however, in proportion as we are successful in casting down the money god. Parents and friends are apt to advise children to choose their vocation with regard to the amount of money which it is likely to bring to them. "There is no money in that" is the discouraging remark frequently made to the young when they discuss plans for their future. For Heaven's sake let us root out teaching of that sort and show that there is something higher in life than the acquisition of wealth. There are thousands of avenues for social service along which our lads and girls may go to build a better England. But let us be insistent in placing before them the need and the opportunity. Let us see that they are inspired not to amass fortunes but to improve the world, even if it means much self-sacrifice to do so. They must be prepared for suffering and self-denial in this the great adventure. Children are never too young for this idea to be implanted in them. And so, when in their childhood's days they come and ask us what they shall be, let us reply to the effect that whatever vocation they may eventually choose they must do so with a view to the service of the community. They must follow in the steps of the Son of Man Who

came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many.

The Gospel of Giving. An ideal like this cannot be realized without a proper recognition of the responsibility of each individual towards the State. Truly the Christian is a citizen of the world, and his idea of brotherhood is not confined to his own nation; but nevertheless, just as the homes of the people are the stones of which the foundation of the State is built, so the State is the foundation on which the edifice of world unity is built, and we must do all we can to bring about a sense of duty towards the State. The sacrifice of the individual may not effect the greatest good unless it is made with a view to what is best for the community, and no proper expenditure of strength, time or money must be thought too great for the attainment of our ideal.

It is to be feared that many of the War bonuses were paid to employees because in some cases employers who would only too gladly have appropriated extra profits, finding this to be to some extent impossible, gave sometimes large sums to those who worked for them because alternatively the money would have come into the possession of the State, and it almost seemed as if they would rather anything than that. We need not envy anybody who received a larger share than usual of the profits of the businesses they helped to carry on, but we may well say that when the State was needing and asking for every penny, much was being diverted into wrong channels by those who considered that they were securing their own interests best by putting it in the pockets of those associated with them rather than parting with it for the general interests of the community. Unless we teach the coming generation better things something similar may continue, and money needed for social reconstruction come into possession of individuals which ought in all fairness to go to the State for the good of all.

Christian people, too, might set a better example than they do in their attitude towards taxation. We know that public expenditure cannot be too carefully watched. There are some who seem to lose all sense of responsibility when dealing with monies other than their own. Yet it must be clearly understood that if there is to be the establishment of a living wage, the sweeping away of the slums, the proper housing of the people, a higher standard of living and a proper system of education, it can only be at the cost of

immense sums of money which must be provided by the community, and, moreover, since the only wealth we have is the wealth we produce, the wealth must be produced before it can be provided for the objects mentioned. The houses unfit for human habitation to which attention has been drawn by the visit of Her Majesty the Queen to Bethnal Green were condemned more than twelve years ago. But it was said that nothing further could be done because the responsible authority, having spent already a large sum on clearing another area, could not afford to do more for a long period to come. Yet we know now that the money could have been provided over and over again, and nobody would have been the worse but rather all the better for it. It is a shame to us to sit down in comfort while such places remain as a blot upon our civilization. We must teach and preach that sacrifices greater than any we made in war-time must be cheerfully borne till these difficulties are surmounted and these evils done away. The only remedy seems to be in the way of the development of schemes for local government and housing. This is a costly process which must be watched with all care and undertaken with due regard to economy, but without grudging a penny required for any necessary reform. How strange it is that a man who will voluntarily give a cheque for some philanthropic purpose will grudge the addition of a penny rate, though the latter is often more necessary than the former.

Education. The "Fisher Bill" is intended to be regarded only as a stepping-stone to higher things. The Church may do much to secure its smooth working by pointing out the future prospect to those parents who are inclined to grumble at the raising of the school-leaving age, or to those employers who raised their voices against the abolition of cheap child labour—a system more expensive in the long run than any which insists upon a sound education during the years at which boys and girls are most susceptible to it. Parents must be taught—as the Report reminds us—to make sacrifices in order that their children may the longer enjoy the advantages of education, and during the years of transition we must be prepared to support measures by which parents may if necessary be subsidized in order that they may be enabled to properly feed and clothe the children throughout extended years of school life. In the matter of education, at all events, there should be equality of opportunity for all, yet "figures supplied by the

Board of Education to the Royal Commission on the Civil Service show that of the children who every year leave the elementary schools of England less than 5 per cent. enter secondary schools, *and that probably far less than 1 per cent. ultimately pass to the universities.*

The Church, too, can use its influence to stir up local education authorities to take such steps as shall obtain the maximum benefit out of the facilities provided by the Bill.

Many and bitter have been the controversies with respect to religious education. Some extremists have indeed contended for instruction in the narrow tenets of their own particular school of thought ; but most of those who object to " simple Bible teaching " do so, not because they have any doubt as to the sufficiency of Holy Scripture, but because they do not wish the Bible to be taught as if it were merely literature in the same way as instruction is given in the writings of Shakespeare and Milton, without reference to its inherent claim to divine authority. Surely the remedy for this lies with the Church, not only in the provision of training colleges, but also by appealing to the best and most devoted of her sons and daughters to consider teaching as a vocation, and to point out that with the teacher rests the secret, not only of England's greatness and prosperity, but of preparation for the Kingdom of Christ. With the teacher is the responsibility for the training of those who are to be the future leaders of democracy. Could the Church engage in any greater work than the selection and training of those to whom such a responsibility is to be committed ? Proud indeed may be the pastor who, pointing to the list of those he has presented for Confirmation, can number amongst them many who are teachers in schools and colleges, and how wide the sphere of his influence ! Perhaps in view of its great importance this question might be added to the numerous queries already to be found on the official forms issued to the Clergy from time to time. How many of your Confirmation candidates are likely to enter the teaching profession ? One thing is certain—that on the closeness of the union between religion and education depends the solution of the industrial problem. Without the principles of Christianity we may despair of the large spirit of generosity which shall prompt the people hitherto recognized as the governing classes to give up many of their privileges and to recognize the justice of labour's

claim ; and on the other hand we may despair of maintaining the spirit of moderation which shall be prepared to obtain that justice by constitutional means, and in a temper which recognizes that society cannot be revolutionized hurriedly without bringing to birth evils as great as those which we are striving to overcome.

If it is important that the Church should induce the most earnest of her sons and daughters to become teachers, it is even more important that she should secure recruits for the ministry who shall inspire those who thus teach the young. And it is most necessary that the Clergy should be drawn from all classes. Not only that we may be freed from the reproach of having a class ministry, but in order that in the ranks of our pastors may be those who know from experience what the lives and conditions of working people are. Where amongst our Clergy can we find men with the ability of the best of our labour leaders or with the gifts and personality which would make them an effectual counter influence to the wrong sort of agitator ? Where indeed ?

The fate of Germany may well remind us of the futility of education without religion. We have only to look around us to see that divorced from spiritual ideals the worker may use leisure for licentiousness, the most comfortable home may be a chamber of horrors, the highly educated may become a soulless repository of learning, and the "cultured" may become a clever scoundrel. Whilst we agitate for the removal of injustice and demand for every man the right to live, we must not become simply advocates for social revolution. The time is ripe for a great evangelistic campaign, for to secure the establishment of Christ's Kingdom nothing can avail without a spiritual appeal. We should do well to bind the "Christianity and Industrial Problems" tightly to the "Evangelistic Work of the Church."

Meanwhile, too, the everyday work of the Churches may have its influence upon the spirit of the times. Let us at least dispense with snobbery and social distinctions. Among the faithful, whose numbers are all too few, let us be done with pride and prejudice and lay to heart the striking words of the Report, "The Church must not merely talk about brotherhood ; it must be a brotherhood."

E. A. DUNN.