

By any reckoning Lord Beveridge's Report *Voluntary Action* is one of the more important social documents of our time. Its interpretation of the changing social scene is as fascinating as it is illuminating. Its analysis of the limitations of the State and its critical appraisal of the function of voluntary organizations is of quite first-rate importance for every alert citizen. For the Church it is a most solemn and searching warning against the prevailing tendency towards ecclesiastical bureaucracy, the while it is a notable stimulant and encouragement to ordinary Christian men who believe they have a part to play in the Conversion of England.

Contemporary Commentary

A Quarterly Review of Church Affairs and Theological Trends

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THE NEW ISLAM

POLITICIANS upon whose shoulders rest heavy burdens of responsibility and students of international affairs are alike preoccupied with the insistent challenge of communism to the ideals and practice of western civilisation. The Christian Church, because of its historic connection with that civilisation and its commitments in every part of the world, is confronted with the same grave issues. Probably the most formidable challenge for a thousand years to the world mission of Christianity is to be found in the communist expansion into all parts of the world. The strength and appeal of communism are derived from its passionate exposure of the cruelties and injustice inflicted upon the ordinary man in the industrial disorder of the modern age. It is presented to men in the guise of a substitute religion with an orthodox theology, an integrated world outlook, a sacred literature and a company of the 'saved' governed by a rigid discipline. As a substitute religion, despite its exclusive concern with the economic and social conditions of human life and its repudiation of a spiritual world, it is able to evoke a measure of devotion and self-sacrifice which can only be compared with the most heroic moments in the history of the Christian Church.

In the last few decades Roman Catholic Christians following the lead of the Vatican have identified communism as the chief enemy of the gospel and have declared unrelenting war upon it. Christians of other allegiances, believing that something more is required of the Church than an aggressive counter-attack on communism as an utterly unchristian philosophy, have sought to meet the challenge in a spirit of penitence for Christian social shortcomings, acknowledging in the words of the Archbishop of York that communism is "a judgment on the social and economic sins of western civilization." It seemed reasonable to conclude that the persecution of Christians in Russia in the early years of the Bolshevik regime was no more than a very

necessary, if unduly violent, purging of a corrupt church. But few of those who formed this judgment had actually lived under a communist-dominated government, and more recent experience of the fearful consequences which follow upon the ruthless totalitarian control of such governments suggests the need of a better informed and more balanced judgment on the Russian church. Nor can the struggle in Europe be regarded merely as a conflict between the ecclesiastical totalitarianism of Rome and the secular totalitarianism of Moscow. The arrest of the Cardinal Primate of Hungary cannot be understood apart from the treatment of the Lutheran Bishop of Budapest, the virtual destruction of Lutheran churches in the former Baltic States and the threat to missionary activity, Protestant as well as Roman, in China. It is apparent that the destruction of personal, political and social freedom which inevitably follows communist success gravely imperils the existence of the Christian Church and at the best severely restricts its mission.

It seems possible to detect in the declarations of Lambeth, Amsterdam and Oegstgeest (International Missionary Council), as well as in the pronouncements of Christian leaders such as the Archbishop of York in his sermon before the Industrial Christian Fellowship and Pastor Marc Boegner in his Burge lecture on "Christianity and European Civilization," three elements in the contemporary Christian response to the communist challenge. First, there is an emphatic assertion that "there can be no common ground between Marxian and Christian doctrine and ethics; they are fundamentally opposed," and that "the police state is the denial of all that Christianity holds most sacred, the value of the individual, personal freedom, mercy and justice." Secondly, there is the recognition of the genuine social passion of the communist and of the extent to which the failure of the Church to fulfil its prophetic calling in the earlier phases of the industrial revolution is responsible for the rise of communism. Recognition that God is at work in the rising of the masses means also acknowledgement of the guilt of the Church. Thirdly, there is the attempt to find and to witness to a third way, neither capitalist nor communist, which shall combine personal freedom with economic justice and inaugurate "a responsible society" in which man may have the opportunity to become truly man and not a mere number or slave. The Christian answer to the communist menace is not to be found in an entangling alliance with Western Union or with Rome but in a searching re-examination of the meaning of the world mission of the Church and a more resolute obedience to the Head of the Church. The immediate question is whether it is not already too late for this answer to be given.

CATHOLICITY IN SOUTH INDIA

THE newly united Church of South India marked the coming together of hitherto separated members of the Body of Christ by a solemn service of inauguration in September, 1947. It would have been natural if this inauguration had been widely regarded as bringing to a conclusion the quest for unity in South India after a generation of

hard and patient endeavour, instead of being regarded, as it was in truth, but the end of the beginning. But to judge from the evidence of the *South India Churchman* (the journal of the United Church, obtainable in England) considerable energy is being expended in the effort to discover in daily life what living together in one Christian household should mean in the twentieth century. Letters and articles have promoted vigorous discussion of the problems involved in church building, worship and evangelism, and there is evidence of a resolute attempt to share to the full the riches of each tradition which has participated in the union. It is not easy to ascertain how far the ordinary church member is influenced by this resolve, but all those Anglicans who have felt some hesitation about endorsing the union should take courage, now that it is already an event of history, from the fact that the leaders of the United Church are setting themselves to use every means at hand to gain a fuller understanding of the catholicity of the Church. The Anglican understanding of catholicity, far from being restricted in its influence, is welcomed as an invaluable contribution to the upbuilding of the life of the United Church.

Christian reunion, when it advances beyond the limits of theological debate to the stage of concrete action, will almost certainly appear to create fresh divisions. The newly United Church may not enjoy that fullness of communion with other Christian Churches which its constituent members previously possessed, and there will always be some dissentient voices from the uniting church on the part of those who, for reasons which seem adequate to themselves, prefer the continuance of a separated life. It is against this background that the problem of the Nandyal community must be examined. In the Nandyal Archdeaconry of the former diocese of Dornakal in the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon some 20,000 Anglicans have refused to join the Church of South India and have appealed for help to the Metropolitan of Calcutta. Critics in England of the South India Church have seized avidly upon this deplorable incident, representing these dissentients as in danger of being robbed of the Catholic Faith and—contrary to an earlier agreement—urging their need of a bishop. This “deep and painful division among the Christians of the area” led to the appointment of a joint commission representative of the Church of South India and the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon to examine the situation. The report, a brief but illuminating document, is now available in England and should be widely studied.

Several aspects of this unhappy incident ought to be more clearly understood. Apparently the number of clergy and laity who have declined to enter the union does not amount to much more than fifty per cent of the total number of former Anglicans in the area. Efforts were made before 1947 to ensure as complete a knowledge of the proposed union in Nandyal as in any other district involved in the discussions, though since it is a backward area (both economically and educationally) many simple Christians probably did not grasp the implications. The average church member in India is no more ready to concern himself with the details of ecclesiastical arrangements than is his opposite number in England. The real cause for this last minute abstention seems to have been the realisation that union in South

India would involve being cut off from the S.P.G. (emphasised by the discontinuance of grants) and at least temporary loss of full communion with the Church of England. The quarrelsomeness of leading families, personal strife, even the shutting of a church during Lent, Holy Week and Easter (at the cost of depriving the dissentients of their own ministrations) to prevent its 'pollution' by worshippers of the United Church, have made it very much more difficult to restore peace to Nandyal. It was only after the prospect of a break with S.P.G. had caused second thoughts that a statement of doctrinal objections (with many misstatements and misunderstandings of the union) reached the neighbourhood and was used as the basis of an intense propaganda for abstention. As so often happens, theological considerations were little more than the rationalisation of a decision already taken on other grounds. This is not to assert that these other grounds are unworthy of consideration or of little importance but to point out that defence of the Catholic faith can be a misleading slogan. The joint commission in recommending the appointment by the Metropolitan of a commissary to deal with pastoral and administrative affairs in the area for all who remain within the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon, insisted that he should act in consultation with the two bishops of the Church of South India in the area and that "all propaganda which has as its aim the alienation of the loyalty of the members of the two groups" should be discouraged. The test of the claims of the Nandyal group to be the true Catholic Christians of the district will be found in the way in which they loyally implement these recommendations and refrain from any suggestion of interference with the ministration of ex-Anglican clergy in the United Church.

FREEDOM IN THE MODERN WORLD

DURING the closing weeks of last year a remarkable series of articles appeared in *The Times Educational Supplement* under the title "An Argument that Man is Free." The publication of these articles is a significant portent, for it serves to remind the reader how far the average western European man has travelled in the last two generations. Liberty was one of the creative words of the liberal era of history inaugurated by the French Revolution of 1789 and the magic of its appeal affected profoundly the course of nineteenth century history. It was held to be the most valuable quality of a civilization worthy of the name and its maintenance regarded as a legitimate object of political aspiration. Many a community was sustained through long and arduous struggles against tyranny and oppression by the hope of securing liberty. To-day freedom is often despised as an idle bourgeois dream (bourgeois in this as in so many other contexts being used as a modern swear word to save the speaker the trouble of making careful definition of his terms) which can only divert attention from true social objectives. That communism attracts even in the west is sufficient proof that faith in freedom is a good deal less strong than it has been within living memory.

The articles were devoted to an exposition of the thesis that "the

preservation of social freedoms depends upon the general and profound conviction that personal free will is a reality." If education "must fortify freedom," then it must be based upon positive convictions about the fact and the value of personal freedom. The Christian with his concern for the integrity of human personality and his belief that human society can only continue in any tolerable form on the basis of widespread agreement on the significance of life itself, will be ready to participate in any debate on the meaning and limits of freedom in relation to the purpose of education.

The argument of these articles seeks to demonstrate that intellectual responsibility "as a quality of will" is of the very stuff of genuine education: that the notion of human behaviour as wholly explicable in terms of physical laws is based on a false analogy with nature: that it is the business of the historian to show that freedom only has meaning within a frame work of necessity: that psychology and its allied sciences merely describe phenomena and not the reality behind them: and that the highly organized society of our time with its exaggerated emphasis on technical education is losing interest in the pursuit of truth and "the things of the mind." The argument is concluded with the assertion that the real problem of education is in persuading "the rising generation that things are worth doing," followed by the suggestion that the teacher should solve the problem by setting before his pupils, as examples worthy of emulation, outstanding men and women of history who have embodied in their careers the ideals of western civilization. This seems to be another way of reiterating the thesis of Sir Richard Livingstone that education should lead people to admire what is good and great by "the study of greatness." The Christian educator, even if he had no church schools or colleges left to him, need not complain of any lack of freedom to fulfil his distinctive vocation in England if these articles represent the direction in which the best contemporary educational thought is moving.

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE JEW

DESPITE the persuasive advocacy of Dr. James Parkes, who would have us regard Judaism and Christianity as two religions with independent rights of existence, the majority of Christians still acknowledge some obligation to offer the gospel to the Jew and believe in the need for Jews like all other people to be integrated into the Body of Christ. Since the elimination of the Nazis there has been a revival on the continent of Europe of Jewish missionary concern, and a special sub-committee dealt with the problem at Amsterdam, urging the churches to recover the universality of our Lord's commission and to provide relief both for Jews and Arabs. Important conferences on Church and Israel were held during 1948 at Boldern in Switzerland, Stockholm, Fribourg (the International Council of Christians and Jews) and at High Leigh. A famous institute of Jewish studies closed by the Nazis has been re-opened in Germany, and in April the Fraternal Council of the Evangelical Churches in Germany issued a statement on Jewish-Christian relations which included a confession of repentance for the anti-semitism and Jewish

persecution in Germany and a message to congregations on the meaning of fellowship between Jews and Gentiles within the Church. These activities are to be welcomed as evidence of a renewed determination on the part of the Church to preach the gospel to every creature ; but it must be admitted that the Jewish mission is one of the most difficult parts of the whole Christian enterprise, while in Anglo-Saxon countries (hitherto the areas least troubled by anti-semitism) the whole subject is frequently obscured by misplaced biblical speculation.

The need for a revision of the entire strategy and theology of Jewish evangelism has been underlined by recent developments. The emergence of the new State of Israel on the basis of religious nationalism has altered the whole situation for missionary work in Palestine, adding, as Amsterdam observed, " a political dimension to the Christian approach to the Jews." The missionary there has now lost his privileged position under a mandatory power and is a foreigner urging the acceptance of a creed which may well appear to the leaders of the newly founded State to contain the seeds of national divisions and weakness. It is by no means certain that religious toleration such as the Christian Church needs will be granted by Israel. It is doubtful whether Christian schools and hospitals will be allowed to continue in a system of Jewish nationalized education and health services. The position of Hebrew Christians in the new State is not at all enviable, yet the future of the Christian mission in that land probably depends upon their witness as foreign missions are liquidated.

In eastern Europe, where are still large Jewish populations (Hungary, Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Russia itself), Christian missionary activity, after more than a century of work, has received a severe check through the impact of Communism. Behind the iron curtain foreign workers, especially from Anglo-Saxon countries, are regarded with disfavour as agents of western capitalism. The famous school for girls maintained in Budapest by the Church of Scotland has lost its position through the nationalization of schools in Hungary, and a distinguished pastor of the Norwegian Mission has been arrested in Rumania. Moreover, the communist emphasis on racial equality has, not unnaturally, made a profound appeal to the unhappy survivors of the Nazi policy of annihilation. "In all countries of eastern Europe," says one report, " the synagogue is dominated by communist groups." World Jewry has not yet been converted to communism, but if the exigencies of politics made Israel dependent upon Russia for support, communist influence amongst Jews in many parts of the world would be paramount. It is plain that careful and prolonged consideration of the basis and methods of Jewish evangelism is an urgent call at this moment.