

BLACKFRIARS

A MONTHLY REVIEW

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POINTERS FROM PAMPHLETS

The War has encouraged the pamphlet. The restriction of time and paper have made book production more difficult. The pamphlet does not demand large stocks of paper and the time it takes to write or to read is negligible. Often its few pages provide an occasion for inserting an unwelcome truth in the machinery of the world at war, where a volume would never be opened or a column in a newspaper thrown aside forgotten. Taking occasion of the spring-cleaning of the Editorial desk we may here pass under review some of the latest of these sallies.

Mr. Stephen Hobhouse in an *Open Letter to Peace-planners* (Peace Pledge Union, 3d.) puts forward the view that the only hope in this present gruesome scene lies in a spiritual revival or revolution 'from below,' a peaceful uprising of no less magnitude than that of the beginning of the Christian religion, before the compromise (not peace) of Constantine. It demands a conversion from mechanism and materialism on the part of a minority sufficiently vital to be able to sway the secular governments which will certainly continue after the war in the same spirit of destruction.

The author has reason indeed for this gloomy picture. The reasoning of the slowest must recognise that the unleashing of enormous powers will tend to an ever increasing volume of blind destruction unless a still greater power can direct their course with intelligence. The sudden emptying of a lock will bring floods unless the walls of the canal below have been built high and strong. The hate and passion of war could lead to good only if the war were governed and directed by superior power, concentrating not merely on the destruction of the enemy which any big flood can do but on a positive and constructive aim. So far as the layman can judge there has been no higher and intellectual power controlling the inevitable passions of this war. Any positive aim with which it may have begun has become dimmer and dimmer as passion rises. The bombing of the German dams which has left such a throbbing wound in Mr. Hobhouse's experience stands as a monument of what has seemed to become the only purpose—a devastating flood of destruction.

The war began with our word to Poland and our assertion that we were fighting for the freedom of minorities. We slanged Russia not only for deliberately giving Germany the chance to fight, but for her attack on Finland and her occupation of half Poland. In those days an individual soldier could view his horizons with the eyes of a crusader. The primary motives that started the bitter slaughter and destruction may not have been beyond suspicion—that could not be ascertained by the individual—but the aggressor was definitely anti-Christian, attacking not only the heritage of hundreds of years of Christendom but the religion of Christ himself. Atheistic materialism in its several forms was ranged against the Allies, so that the private soldier was justified in waging his private crusade. Hitler was the figurehead, but he stood for Russian aggression as well. The brown shirt, German Catholics used to say, was only thinly covering the red.

The position seems now to have changed, and many are realising the change. It is not simply a question of the dams. Mr. Hobhouse uses them as a type. The German cities have been systematically bombed section by section with the apparent intention of treating them more thoroughly than the Germans treated Rotterdam or Coventry. At the beginning of the war bombers brought back their load when their target was obstructed; was that only because bombs were scarce at the beginning, or has a change taken place now that no excuse is made for bombing a target that cannot be seen? Then Monte Cassino has brought this negative destructive spirit out into the open and called forth an implied condemnation from His Holiness the Pope himself. The Prime Minister's apparent acceptance of the

Curzon line has brought to the open another concealed disease, the opportunism than can sling overboard the Atlantic Charter as out of date.¹ Where is now the private soldier's crusade? A damping sponge has wiped off the cross from his shield. Mr. Hobhouse has reason to pray for a spiritual upheaval, but why not from above as well as from below? For he ascends who has descended.

The question is pertinent, for the trouble has become so ingrained in the common man that his spiritual uprising will inevitably be coloured by the state from which he rises. He needs inspiration and direction also from above. To-day we have fallen into a machine because we had come to regard God as the first mechanic, whereas we needed God the True, the Good and the Beautiful. This is the main point of Mr. Wilfred Wellock's pamphlet, *A Mechanistic or a Human Society?* (1s. from the author, 12 Victoria Ave., Quinton, Birmingham, 32). This massed bombing of civilians, this domination of blood red passion, this butchery of the weak—all so imaginatively horrible—derives in truth from the respectable and complacent evils that we have learned to consider as goods. 'To-day we are witnessing the collapse of civilisation. Its cause is the pursuit of what the nineteenth century called "progress." By progress was meant the multiplication by mass production of material things and the amassing of private fortunes, called "national" wealth, from their sale.' Mr. Wellock traces the process of decay from the change-over from agriculture to industry, the replacement of Christian and spiritual values by money value, down to the totalitarianism that tumbles us into total war. Once we have abused the idea of man, however politely wrapped up in references to dividends, poor relief and leisure, we are only a few paces from abusing the life of man with shrapnel and poison gas.

At the present time, as we work through the fifth year of the war we continue to 'plan' our way out of it for the future. This may be called making good resolutions. Yet there is little trace of a firm purpose of amendment and the main feature of these resolutions is the outcome of subordinating man to the machine. An extreme case is seen in 'family planning'; and the Family Life Bureau of the American National Catholic Welfare Conference has found it necessary to issue a pamphlet to expose the campaign for birth prevention

¹ The Pope in his Christmas Allocution said: 'Do not ask from any member of the family of peoples for that renunciation of substantial rights or vital necessities which you yourselves, if it were demanded from your people, would deem impracticable.' Would that the many utterances of His Holiness were in pamphlet form, easy of access to the bewildered now looking for some purpose and aim in this struggle.

which is boosted in America under that title ('*The Case Worker and Family Planning*'—*An Answer*). There is in fact a 'Planned Parenthood Federation of America' which urges social workers to propagate the birth control clinic movement. The same movement is of course to be found in England, only that it does not seem necessary to organise it. That is only one of the immense immoralities that may result from this sub-human planning. Professor Laski, who arraigns the Right Wing in England for having before the war smiled on Hitler and Mussolini and frowned on the Soviet Union, fears 'that we are missing a great opportunity by our failure to utilise the revolutionary impetus of this war' (*London, Washington, Moscow Partners in Peace? Peace Aims Pamphlet No. 22; 6d.*). He fears in consequence that we shall fail to pull our weight in the Soviet peace barge. He does not of course make the point that the major part of the present planning is *à la Russe* and has therefore an anti-religious and materialistic taste. The great plans for abolishing unnecessary poverty and unemployment and for establishing social security, discussed by various authors in another Peace Aims Pamphlet (No. 21, *Planning for Abundance, 1s.*) are measured consciously or unconsciously by Moscow rulers. They wish to see an ever-increasing control by the Government, and then inconsequentially hold up Fascism as a bogey to frighten us into compliance with their totalitarian plans.

Happily those plans depend on so many intangibles that we may reasonably hope that our liberty will linger for a few more years. But when to the planning of family and finance is added that of education we have grave reason for concern, for that indeed brings us within the immediate influence of totalitarian ideas. The Government control of schools is being tightened by the new Bill, which by implication would remove numbers of schools from the control of religion. To help us along this path the Rationalist Press busies itself to show that the Christian religion has always been anti-cultural, antagonistic to true, disinterested education. When the authors of *The Church and Education* (Thinkers' Forum, No. 27; 6d.) begin their attack by pointing out that every history is a personal interpretation as well as a record, one wonders why we should bother with the rationalist interpretation rather than the Christian. But they draw attention at least to a comparison of value between the present trouble and the education struggle between pagan and Christian after Constantine. For the rest the Church is attacked for wishing to use education for its own ends, and we are left wondering for what ends the Government will use it. Mussolini, Hitler and Lenin have given us concrete answers.

Elsewhere we are offered a solution to this puzzle (*The Riddle of Religious Education and a New Solution*, by A. G. Whyte. Thinkers' Forum, No. 22; 6d.): a broader religious instruction should be given, embracing Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, etc., together with Christianity. Comparative religion should make religious teaching alive, for the child has thus the supreme advantage of choosing one, all or none of these conflicting religions. Attempts have in fact been made to introduce a naturalistic materialism, owing much to Confucius, into the schools in California. H. R. McKinnon, member of the committee that put a stop to it by evicting the text books of Professor Rugg from the schools, has published an exposé of the Professor's errors. (*Changing our Children: Harold Rugg's Crusade to remodel America, A Critical Analysis*. The Gillick Press, California). The two objects of wonder here are (a) that such social science text books should have found their way into the junior high schools of California, and (b) that they should need thus to be exposed. But though Professor Rugg's materialism and his interpretation of history are crudely this-worldly, we cannot hope for anything better for our children in England under the new Bill. And all our Professor Ruggs, like the original, are educating with an eye to reconstruction under the all-inclusive word 'democracy.' The Saltire Society opened its series of pamphlets, which were intended to stimulate interest in the future of Scotland, with some pages on *The Basis of Reconstruction* by J. A. Bowie (Saltire Pamphlets, No. 1; 1s.), wherein the author shows how, like a demigod, he would 'improve the quality of the people by better breeding, better education and better environment.' He would find a congenial companion across the Atlantic in Professor Rugg, for they both wish, through education, to enable this grovelling 'people' to 'reap the benefits of the age of plenty.' Stanley Cursiter, in another Saltire Pamphlet, shows how art must be dragged into education in order to coat the pill of industrialism, and no wonder since on his principles 'art has to do with qualities which add to our satisfaction, while industry . . . will cover all these aspects of man's activities by which he produces what he needs or wants' (*Art in Industry*, Saltire Pamphlet No. 4; 1s.).

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There are solutions in plenty to this materialistic and mechanistic impasse. The reading public have become acquainted with, if not weary of, the solutions that are concerned with the Natural Law summed up in various Charters of Points. It has been necessary to turn to this L.C.M. of Nature in order to begin somewhere, for

the line of a solution ought to begin at some fixed point. This must be man's nature, both in the individual and in society. Truth about man's nature must be set before our eyes if we are to escape this unnatural mechanism. But it would be a mistake to think that nature alone can snatch us from the cogs of the machine. Particularly have Catholics become complacent about human nature, forgetting that of itself on account of its sin it is powerless to stop the machine set in motion by individual greed. Economic, social, and legal 'points' will not bring us a ha'porth of peace. As Fr. Andrew Beck says, after outlining the international economic relationships and the law that must govern them, the task before us 'means conquering men's greed and overcoming the pride of false and exaggerated nationalism. And here religion has a vitally important part to play' (*Economic Resources, Law and Religion*, Catholic Social Guild; 3d.). Yet religion may be limited in these discussions to the natural plane, and it is dangerous to speak of religion having a 'part to play.' Professor Rugg would agree to that and would produce all sorts of religions out of his hat. If it is a question of playing a part, each continent should be regulated by its own religion insofar as Confucianism, Buddhism, Bolshevism, or Islamism conform to some basic natural standard.

Supernatural religion raises the whole man to another plane; it has not a part to play, but the whole drama to produce. It cannot be degraded into a tool for the worldly prosperity of 'honesty is the best policy.' Total religion is often known as Evangelism because it goes back to the uncompromising views of Christ in the Gospels. If we rid the word of some of its emotional and revivalist associations we could say that the primary need of to-day is a thorough evangelical movement. As we have seen, that is what Mr. Hobhouse, though almost in despair, looks for—a power as new as Christ himself to regenerate the world. The Archbishop of Canterbury in the 1943 Beckley Lecture has spoken of the relevance of Evangelism to social matters (*Social Witness and Evangelism*, Epworth Press; 1/6). He shows in effect that here the question of 'mucking-in' or 'mucking-out' of the modern world, a question which occupied the pages of BLACKFRIARS often in the past, necessarily comes to the fore when the spirit of the Gospels is applied to modern mechanism. The Archbishop rightly reduces the separation between these two approaches to the world. 'We must first find where men are, and then, taking them by the hand, lead them to the true source of power and peace. But we can do little as long as we call to them across an intervening gulf; and we can do nothing if we direct our appeal to some region of interest where they are not to

be found at all.' So that 'social witness' prepares for the full gospel as well as flows from it, and we must turn to the true ideas of community in order to learn how to live as a Christian community. Yet the Archbishop is soon engulfed in housing, nutrition, the school-leaving age, so much that one is tempted to wonder whether the spirit of the Gospel can stand up against this avalanche of natural wisdom.

Again, Fr. Duffy, of the 'American Catholic Worker,' has produced a comprehensive pamphlet, *This Way Out* (The Catholic Worker Press; 20c.), in the seventh essay of which he writes: 'The simplicity of the teaching of Christ and of His Apostles must take the place of the complex casuistry of the schools . . . the laboured treatises and intellectual gymnastics of moral contortionists, who seek to reconcile the irreconcilable, must be relegated to the scrap heap and oblivion . . . The attempts (to reconcile God and Mammon) have resulted in all ages in schisms, wars, murders, injustices, oppression, tyrannies, uncharitableness, and strife of all kinds.' And yet the other twenty-seven essays deal mainly with Co-operatives, the Land, Labour Unions, and the like. Does 'sound sense' get us anywhere in these days of cataclysmic nonsense? Mr. Wellock thinks we can *choose* the way out, and that the way out is to choose *creative* labour, and Fr. Duffy is of much the same opinion.

But ought we not to return to a fiery conviction of the primacy of the spiritual and the supernatural? This at any rate seems to be the secret of the growth and development of the Y.C.W., and Fr. Fitzsimons in a pamphlet for the Girls' Y.C.W. *Will Christ Reign?* (6d.), lays the true foundation: 'The first thing a member of the Y.C.W. has to do is to be trained in holiness.' Indeed, what Mr. Hobhouse regards with only a glimmer of hope as the one way out, the Y.C.W. is to attempt as its immediate objective. 'It is a commonplace that if ever you are going to love our Lord properly you have to make your own will subject to His, you have to live in Him and be crucified in Him and with Him. It is necessary for all Christians to do this, but it is, above all, necessary for you who are to labour unselfishly for Him. You have the same force that the early Christians had, the same force that He had, to overcome the world. They conquered—the early Christians—because all they had to do was to confess His name and die: die to-day, die to-morrow, die always.'

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One of the difficulties lies in the fact that a world war necessarily introduces a world view of our desperate situation. As a result, we

come to see the outline of the wood in its gloomy shadow, but fail to detect any single tree. Mr. Christopher Dawson contributes a Peace Aims Pamphlet on *The Renewal of Civilisation* (No. 20; 4d.), in which he shows that modern developments have made a universal economy essential to any peace. Planning at home depends on the success of world-planning in economic and social spheres. We must have social reform at home, but that will never be achieved unless co-ordinated with a social reform of all nations working together. Mr. Dawson shows that in the rejuvenation of civilisation which is the only alternative to its death the social order must be brought into contact with the life of the spirit—and like Mr. Hobhouse he can offer little natural hope for such a marriage to-day. There are other attempts at world settlement which do not begin to consider the spiritual, as in Mr. Lionel Curtis's idea of salvation through the British Commonwealth (*An Open Letter to Lords, Commons, and Press*): 'The safety of the Commonwealth and of the world from war are one and the same thing.'

Fr. Fitzsimons says to the Catholic working girl: 'The world needs conquering for Christ—or reconquering. How ambitious such a project is! But you can't put it at anything less than that.' Our Lord said: 'Have confidence in me. I have overcome the world.' The prospect is grim indeed, the whole world topsy-turvy. To look at it through international eyes always merely appals and saps initiative. The sight of the daily destruction from the air, the knowledge of the unprincipled methods of pagan Germany and pagan Russia, if not of pagan England and America—these sights and sounds make the future appear beyond redemption. And so it is—humanly speaking. There can be only one way out. Not distributism or back to the land, not co-operatives or nationalisation, not creative work or extended education, but a return to sanctification in Christ. Sacrifice and love at home, in each person's immediate surroundings. The only way out is through grace abounding in the followers of Christ.

As Mr. T. S. Eliot has written: 'THERE IS NO RECIPE FOR SOCIAL STABILITY.' (Christian News-Letter, Dec. 1st, 1943.)

THE EDITOR.