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the concession that there were different strata in Hellenistic Christianity of which one was Jewish-Hellenistic—a quantity still dimly recognized, as he admits.

A review of such facts, as we have sought to bring forward, must lead to the conclusion that the progressive changes within the Early Christian Church which the *Formgeschichtlicher* stress must have taken place within an Aramaic-speaking and writing community. In whatever part of Syria or Palestine we place it, the evidences show that it was Palestinian in background.¹ Theories

¹ Kundsins, *op. cit.* 37; see also C. H. Dodd, *The Gospel Parables*, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, xvi. No. 2 (1932).

which do not take account of Aramaic Gospels, it would seem, must be readapted to the evidences or abandoned. If it be held by some that the Gospels reflect a situation that is foreign to a Palestinian environment since they are influenced by the doctrine of a miraculously born *savior-lord* who imported to his followers a secret *gnosis* and instituted a sacramental meal therewith, and if it be deduced that, since such things are inconsistent with Aramaic documents,² there could have been no such documents, then it must be answered that whether such premisses be right or wrong, the conclusion is invalidated by the strength of the philological arguments against it.

² Riddle, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, liv. 135.

Christianity in Action.

The Christian Faith and Freedom.

BY THE REVEREND DAVID CAIRNS, B.A., BRIDGE OF ALLAN.

A FEW years ago men would have laughed at the suggestion that in the near future Christians would have again to undergo such persecutions as their spiritual ancestors suffered because they refused to put a pinch of incense on the Roman imperial altars. But to-day events in various totalitarian countries have reminded us sharply that the day of idolatry is not yet over—a fact which we should never have forgotten. In Japan, in some places, school-pupils are compelled to be present at rites in Shinto shrines where prayers are made to the divine ancestors of the nation; and the policy of Soviet Russia in dealing with Christian institutions is not more significant than the hostility of the German Government to the Confessional Church, the reconciliation of Hitler with Ludendorff, and the State encouragement given to the mystical ideas of Rosenberg. The problem 'Christ or Cæsar' has once more become a vital issue.

The aim of this article is to maintain that idolatry always results in the destruction of freedom, and that only where there is a background of Christian ideas in a community can there be full security of freedom for its members, irrespective of their religious beliefs. The cynic will point out that often the Christian Church has itself led the way in persecution. This must be conceded, for the Church has often too little understood the implications of its own faith. That faith, rightly understood, is nevertheless the only true buttress of

social and political freedom. If this assertion be true, the wide importance of the Conference of the Churches held at Oxford in July will be seen. Here the Life and Work Œcumenical Movement was dealing not merely with private concerns which are of interest only to the minority who are actively concerned with the work of the Christian Church. The truth is that here rather the human rights of every man and the rights of the different forms of voluntary association were being buttressed against the spring-tides of State absolutism, State idolatry. Karl Barth is right when he says, 'Theology and the Church are the natural frontiers of everything, even of the totalitarian State.' Who would have thought, a few years ago, that the imposing structure of Trade Unionism and Socialism in Germany would have collapsed so quickly before the onslaught of Nazism, while the numerically insignificant and divided Protestant Church would weather the storm?

How is it that the Christian conception of freedom is the only foundation on which political and social freedom can be securely built up? To understand this we must consider shortly the Christian doctrine of man. According to Christian belief two main things can be said about man. Firstly, God created man for communion with Himself. Therefore in each person there is a centre of infinite value. Secondly, All men are sinful. Something has gone wrong. Whatever our ideas about the

Fall, all Christians are agreed on this fact, that man is prone to use his freedom in a wrong way. He seeks self-expression at the expense of others. He does not respect their freedom, their Godward relation, as he ought to.

Now from this first principle of the Christian Doctrine of man we can deduce the moral obligation to give men external freedom. Without a certain freedom from external hindrance—freedom to do right or wrong—no man can attain to that higher freedom, which Luther has called the Freedom of a Christian Man—the freedom to love and obey God with all one's will. To will the good is the chief end of man, but before he can do this, he must be free simply to will effectively.

But since men are sinful, there is a constant temptation to misuse this freedom and to injure the freedom of others. Hence Christian doctrine holds that there must be restrictions on freedom. There must be things that no man is allowed to do. And to keep men from abusing freedom, there must be sanctions of force—such as the State possesses. Here is the Christian justification of the force of the State with reference to its citizens. Behind the law there stands the police force, behind the police are the troops. It is true that often we obey the law because we feel that we ought to, but no one with a sense for political realities would remove all the sanctions of the law, or maintain that those who break it do so out of ignorance and in innocence. The sanction of force behind the law is necessary, and is due to the fact of sin.

Let us examine certain political movements, with a view to showing how they ignore these two principles. The laissez-faire school of liberalism never suggested that the sanctions of the law should be altogether abrogated, but it did allow far too much liberty in economic affairs to the exploiter. Thus doing, it forgot the second principle of the Christian doctrine of man. The result was that the economically powerful class so misused its liberty as to destroy the liberty of the employed. The laissez-faire school believed that by some preconcerted harmony in the universe unlicensed greed and self-seeking would turn out to the universal advantage. The Bible, however, teaches that the wages of sin is death. By its neglect of the limitations of freedom the laissez-faire school showed itself unrealistic also in its conception of the positive principle of liberty. This was an ideal that had come to laissez-faire liberalism by devious ways from the first tenet of the Christian doctrine of man—the faith that man was created in God's image. In giving a few men unbridled liberty

this type of liberalism made liberty itself something like a mockery, thus giving some justification to the Socialist taunt, 'What use is the vote to a wage-slave?'

We have just been passing through a time when liberalism was in the dock, and it was fashionable to rail at it as an effete faith. It has been too easy to revile it, and to forget that there is a true Christian liberalism which is very different from the laissez-faire type. In this second sense of the word liberalism is not so much the expression of a political faith as the belief that every man must have a certain and limited freedom granted to him. This liberalism it is which says to the State and the other organizations which are potential tyrants over the individual—'Thus far and no farther.' This liberalism is an essential expression of Christianity, whether it happen to be the conviction of a professing Christian, agnostic, or atheist. This liberalism we must never let go, it is one of our most treasured possessions. With it goes that freedom which is the right of humanity as such, and this liberalism is itself really based on the two tenets of the Christian doctrine of man, however confusedly these may be understood.

Like laissez-faire liberalism, Fascism and Communism, however different in many aspects, neglect both these two tenets of the Christian doctrine of man. Communism is the clearest offender in this, but only because its political philosophy is more clearly thought out than are the philosophical systems of the Fascists and Nazis. Communism holds that all the actions which appear to be the result of sin are really the result of the class-system, and that when this is destroyed there will be no more sin. A millennium is coming, in which no sanction of force will be necessary, because the Communist lambs will lie down together, there being Capitalist lions left. Every one will willingly obey Communist doctrine down to the smallest detail. Similarly, though less clearly, there is an unjustified optimism about human nature in Fascism and Nazism. How else could they repose all their confidence in any human principle, such as race, or nation, or State? For these are their Messiahs and Redeemers. For, after all, whatever be the governing principle in a totalitarian State, it is merely human nature in one of its traits, or constituent principles, in which all confidence is placed.

The Communist and Fascist neglect of the first principle of the Christian doctrine of man is too obvious to need more than mention. The philosophies which glory in the suppression of freedom have forgotten that man was created free by God

for communion with Himself. Thus we come to the conclusion that only if we hold fast to the two Christian beliefs about man, can we find a true solid basis for freedom. The failure of the totalitarian States to take account of sin is natural, for without freedom there cannot be sin. Neglect both, and you have not persons, but things. Only a person can sin, a thing is determined by its environment.

Here it is necessary to enter a caveat. Christians do not all live in agreement with Christian belief. Unfortunately many of them have been persecutors, or have failed to see their duty to secure for their employees that freedom which all men should have. And in many respects the Communists have acted in a more Christ-like way than the Christians. Christians have spoken love, but their actions have sometimes spelt hate, while in some cases Communist actions have spelt love, while their theory was one of hate. But that does not alter the fact that they have no philosophical justification for these actions, and a man's actions tend to sink to the level that is justified by his theory.

If we have demonstrated in the preceding part of this article that the Christian faith gives a secure basis for freedom, let us in the latter part examine the nature of idolatry, and see how it necessarily results in the destruction of freedom. Those who believe in God will perhaps be agreed in maintaining that all life has, as it were, a triangular structure. I have a relation to God, and also a relation to my neighbour, while my neighbour has not only a relation to me but also an independent relation to God. In nothing that I do or am, can I be regarded as isolated from the other two corners of the triangle—God, and my neighbour. Out of these relations I cannot escape without ceasing altogether to be human. Every man, even the atheist, has this connexion with God; he can no more escape it by ignoring it than we can escape an obligation by ignoring it. His atheism may be in part the fault of others—a false idea of God may have been given to him, so that he fails to recognize as divine the origin of the communications which God sends to him, and the relations into which God seeks to enter with him.

If a man's relation to God were perfect, his will would accept wholeheartedly God's will for the world—redemption for himself and for his neighbour. Therefore his relationship to his neighbour would be one of complete redemptive love and respect for personality. In so far as a man does not love his neighbour and love and obey God, his relationship does not return along the line to God,

but along another line to a false apex. This apex represents the man's idol for the time being, an idol which he creates. Every false relationship to my neighbour implies an idol, and every idol implies a false relationship to my neighbour.

Let us trace out more closely the connexion here. If I am in a false relationship to my neighbour, I am not in the relationship to God that God desires for me. I am obeying some other command than God's voice. Some desire or aim chosen by me gives me direction. That is my idol for the time being. And when I create an idol, it is in the image of myself or some aspect of my own nature, or some power in myself. I use this to dominate my neighbour. The will to power over my neighbour by means of such idols is not necessarily conscious. But if I worship an idol, I either do not know the God who created my neighbour, or am ignoring the true God. So I also forget the side of the triangle which connects my neighbour with God, if I may so put it, his private wire to God. And it is this which constitutes his true humanity. He then easily falls a prey to the domination and tyranny which my idol exercises on all that fall within its kingdom.

But this tendency to dominate others is not the final stage of idolatry. For our personality only finds its true expression in obedience to God and love to men. Hence any erection of an idol can only result in the domination of ourselves by that which is the caricature of ourselves, a part of our nature torn from its true context and exalted at the expense of all the rest of our nature, our personality. Such an idol becomes an idol that terrifies us, a cancerous growth drawing its life from our dissolution. A man who has made sensuality his idol has exalted one side of his nature which under God's guidance might have found its true expression. But now he is become himself its slave, and this one side of his nature, projected on the background of infinity, enslaves him and becomes his master, as well as dominating others. The man who seeks autonomy, in the sense of independence from God's rule, becomes in the end a slave himself, the slave of fragments of his own nature, which he has invested with the power of the Absolute. The technician may become, for example, the slave of the machine, a horrible and inhuman slavery, if he regards technical efficiency as an end, and not as a means, and forgets that man has only one true end, to glorify God and enjoy him for ever. Technical efficiency in life may and should be a means to this.

The danger for the State from the Christian point of view is that it may become the victim of

such an idolatrous idea—a kind of demon possession. For example, the idea of the Aryan race and its tradition may so dominate a certain European nation that it becomes in time practically a stud-farm, and its citizens are no longer treated as persons, with rights of their own, but become merely links in a chain of pure-bred Aryans. And of all the groups into which the community is divided, the State is the most dangerous if it once becomes thus idol-possessed, because of the sanctions of force which it rightly holds, and may use to enforce its idolatrous ideas.

Let us now proceed to a short diagnosis of the present situation. There are two characteristics of this situation which call especially for notice. The first is the very great complexity of our civilization which has become like a very finely adjusted machine or sensitive organism, which can be very easily thrown out of gear. The lower animals can survive with a primitive nervous organization, but a surgeon who is to perform a delicate operation must have a nervous system which can help him to work quickly, exactly, and decisively. Our present civilization, if ruin is to be averted, must be much more delicately adjusted than were the civilizations of the past. Lack of organization and the incoherence caused by each individual seeking his own interests, will no longer do in the modern world.

Beside this increase in complexity and sensitiveness we must set the fact that there is no longer in the modern world the psychological unity that there was. Ways of living and thinking are different more and more, and one can no longer count on the existence of one religious background which will influence the thoughts and actions of the great majority of men.

The result is that disorganization is much more of a danger than ever before, and if disorganization comes, then governments are discredited, there is unemployment, starvation, and danger of revolution. The inevitable result of this need for greater efficiency and organization is that more and more functions in the community which were once left to individual enterprise are taken over by the State, and the area in which individual liberty rules becomes ever more and more restricted. This is itself inevitable, and is, from an ethical point of view neither to be praised or blamed. If we are to live at all in the modern world we must be organized.

But the danger lies in this fact, that in order to combat the increasing lack of unity in each people, various governments are now trying to bring their various peoples into line by setting up the tyranny

of a State idol, or religion. Citizens in different nations of the world are being dragooned into support of the State worship with cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer. And, as the idols are rivals, the confusion becomes greater, and the pressure on the individuals for moral conscription becomes greater. Beyond the necessary increase in State control and organization there has entered in a pathological element, an idolatry which dominates and terrorizes.

It is interesting to conjecture in what illegitimate ways the State may attempt to infringe the liberty of the individual even in those countries like our own, where, happily, the totalitarian claim has not yet been made. We can get some inkling of what might happen from looking at the case of other countries. The freedom of the press may be assaulted. Here we must distinguish between a legitimate censorship of the press and an illegitimate one. Where does one draw the line between fair criticism of a leader in a foreign country, and unfair personal attacks on such a person, and insults which the Government ought to punish by fine or imprisonment? Who is to secure the impartiality of the judge, who will watch over the watchman?

Then we must also watch vigilantly over the freedom of education. Children in school and students in the universities must never be treated by their teachers as the potter treats the clay. To do this would be more than to usurp God's place, for God never treats man merely as a thing, but always as a reasonable person. There are more kinds of compulsion than the physical, and some of them may be unconsciously exercised by the teacher. Mr. Kurt Hahn, headmaster of the new Public School at Gordonstown, tells a story of the visit of the parents of two pupils to the school. Both expressed their satisfaction with the change that the school was making in their boys, but the first complained to Mr. Hahn that he was making his boy a revolutionary Socialist, while the second asked, 'Why have you made my boy a Fascist?' Mr. Hahn gave them no direct answer, but introduced them to one another, and left them to talk it out. That is liberalism in the finest sense, liberalism which expresses the spirit of Christianity. Such a refusal to mould the character and views of another does not mean that no one has a right to influence another, it merely means that we should take care to use such methods as respect the personality of our neighbour.

Then there is the whole problem of the social activity of the Church. Many functions that once belonged to the Church now belong to the State,

and it is not wrong that this should be so, but we see the danger in secularization of such functions in Russia, where the Church is not allowed to do anything save to hold services of worship. In Germany the same State tyranny is expressed by the fact that all youth organizations save the Hitler Youth Movement have been suppressed. This is fatal, for if Christianity is to be real at all, it must find expression outside the Church doors. It is an essential that the Church should be independent of the State in all matters pertaining to Christ's Kingdom. Luther made the mistake of saying that the Church was independent in spiritual matters, but in material affairs she might receive her stipend and direction from the State. This is an unreal distinction. For if the State has control over the property of the Church, then the State can control the Church's policy by threatening to withhold supplies. If we are in favour of the nationalization of all wealth, we should realize that such control would cut away all liberty, not only from the Church, but also from all other forms of association, which within their own legitimate territories ought to be free from State dictation. The Universities should have a measure of freedom—or else the danger may arise, that when the State becomes totalitarian, the Professors will only be allowed to teach certain doctrines, as in Germany and Russia to-day.

But, it may be objected, are these not all outside questions? Is it likely that this country of freedom would ever be subjected to a tyranny of that kind? The answer to such an objection is not merely that the cause of freedom is an international cause, and that we must not be so insular in our outlook as only to care for liberty within our own shores. We must also realize the uncertainty of political conditions even in our own land. Supposing that unemployment were to continue, or to increase during the next ten years, is there any one who could guarantee that Communism would not become a much more formidable force in Britain than it is to-day? Or if the unstable equilibrium of Europe were to break down, is it not probable that in the ensuing confusion the economic conditions of this country would change very much for the worse? And if that be so, who can guarantee that a great expansion of Communism would not result, for its real roots in the modern world are in the hunger of the people.

But if Communism increases, who can suppose that the propertied classes will go down without a great struggle? And what is more likely than that they will organize themselves in what has shown

itself to be a highly efficient form of organization, under a Fascist dictatorship, probably in forms more congenial to the genius of our people than the German or Italian forms. In either case, if Communism or Fascism were to triumph, the first victim would be the liberty which is the right of every human being. It is therefore high time that we were looking into the very foundations of our freedom, and maintaining a watch lest they be fatally undermined.

It has been the argument of this article that the real foundations of that freedom lie in the Christian gospel, which teaches that man was made by God for communion with Him, and that forgiveness for sin and new life are given through Christ. What are we Christians to do in the face of these threats to freedom? Our first task is the proclamation of the gospel—one might almost say our task is to make the gospel available to the modern world. For there is a temptation to equate the proclamation of the gospel with the preaching of the Word in our half-filled churches. This is necessary, but it does not exhaust our duty. Henry Drummond used to say, 'Either the gospel has lost its power, or it is not being made available. I am convinced that it has not lost its power.' The conclusion that he drew was that the Christian Church, that Christian men and women, were failing in their duty. We of the Church are in danger of failing to recognize the stupendous task that lies before the Church, before us. To-day the message of the gospel is turned aside by millions as a mere irrelevancy. That indifference is in large measure the fault of the Church. The first task is therefore the proclamation of the gospel by means of preaching, personal witness, service, writing. Compared with this other tasks are secondary, other defence of liberty is like playing a hose on a house which is already blazing. For Christianity is the alternative to idolatrous systems which suppress freedom, and we must not only say this but believe it with all the passion of which we are capable, and work for its propagation with a zeal equal to that of the Communist missionaries.

But there is another thing which we must do. There are others who do not profess the Christian Faith, who have yet a conviction of the sanctity of human personality, and with them we must make common cause against the idolaters, even though we may not agree with our allies on every point. And in the last place, the test of persecution may come to us, as it has come in other lands in Europe and Asia. And if it does, we must be willing to suffer for the truth.