

PROBLEMS IN MODERN EDUCATION

Edited by

E. D. LABORDE, Ph.D.

Assistant Master at Harrow School

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FOREWORD

THIS volume contains most of the addresses given at the Conference of Young Public School Masters held at Harrow in January, 1938. As on previous occasions, the Committee had arranged a series of lectures on a chosen theme. These have been placed together in Part I and are preceded by a short explanatory address by the Secretary of the Conference, Mr T. F. Coade. They may be said to contain the schoolmaster's 'recall to religion', and the names of the lecturers is a sufficient guarantee of their authority. The unanimity of feeling among men of such different character and experience is impressive and convincing. After the political crisis through which we have just passed, the words of Sir Cyril Norwood sound like those of a prophet of old. Part II contains lectures on different aspects of education, the very variety of which makes any kind of sequence such as will be noticed in Part I impossible. Their character will certainly refute the charges of those persons who sometimes assert that the public schools are unreceptive of new ideas and out of date. It has been found possible to include in an Appendix the main portions of Mr A. C. Cameron's interesting and informative address which opened to many of his hearers a new field of education.

It will be noticed that the book contains none of the authoritative technical lectures included in former collections of addresses delivered at previous Conferences. This is because the purely technical work of the Conference this year was carried out in small sectional gatherings presided over by certain of H.M. Inspectors of Schools who were good enough to consent to guide these discussions. This new arrangement was rendered necessary by the demands of the specialists to whom reference is made by Mr Duckworth in his summary of the progress of secondary education since 1910.

Professor Clarke's address was first delivered at the Conference of the New Ideals in Education at Oxford in 1937.

The lecturer had intended to speak to the Harrow Conference on a different subject, but, owing to a serious illness was unable to complete his intended address. He therefore consented to allow the address included here to be printed instead. The Editor is indebted to the Committee of the New Ideals Conference for permission to reproduce what has already been printed in the report of their Oxford Conference.

The thanks of the Conference are due to the Head Master of Harrow, who once again placed the School buildings at the disposal of the Committee, and to those housemasters who kindly housed the members.

E. D. L.

Harrow-on-the-Hill, 1938

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PART I
CHRISTIANITY IN EDUCATION

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

T. F. Coade

THE main theme for the Fourth Conference for Young Public School Masters was 'The Educational, Social, and International Relevance of Christianity in the Modern World'. This was intended not so much to attract a large attendance as to challenge as many serious-minded young schoolmasters as possible to face a problem that is becoming increasingly difficult for the public schools. We schoolmasters, like other men, once we have secured comfortable jobs, are sometimes reluctant to face uncomfortable challenges. And the problem presented at this Conference was one which most Englishmen (including schoolmasters) are tempted either to shelve or to regard through spectacles coloured by some prejudice or other.

The issue is plain. Public schools profess and call themselves Christian institutions and claim to be training Christians. At the same time it is becoming more and more difficult in the modern world to know how a Christian should behave or think, notably, for example, in such major contingencies as war, or in the problems of economic equity. How are schoolmasters to guide youth unless they face these problems squarely and courageously themselves? We cannot in this matter fall back on the Englishman's habitual refuge, compromise. In certain contexts compromise is not only permissible but essential. In problems, however, which bring us up against eternal values, in problems which concern religion, a tendency to compromise is not a source of strength but of weakness. And though the present foreign policy of this country seems calculated to postpone war, no one can help feeling that it is based on expediency rather than on any positive constructive faith or theory of life. Is there anything but religion that can introduce this positive constructive spirit into our public or private life?

We shall not awaken a new spirit in the youth of this country by merely decrying the attitude and behaviour of the great totalitarian states. Youth in these states has reached a far more splendid and dynamic consciousness of what life might be than we have. They are inspired by a far greater enthusiasm, devotion, and readiness for service than most young people in this country. The tragedy of their idealisms is that they contain the seeds of their own inevitable failure, just because their leaders have misunderstood the real nature of man: they are in too great a hurry to achieve the millennium. In order to hasten things on, they over-stimulate those human qualities which will further the immediate ends of nationalism; but in order to do this certain fundamental and often more important human qualities are suppressed. While it lasts, this way of life raises them to a degree of heroism and self-devotion which we might well envy. But how long will it last? It is precisely here that Christianity provides a solution, if we could only see it. For Christ demanded the devotion of the whole man—all his faculties, human and divine, in the service of God and of the whole of humanity. It is only the sense that he has devoted himself to that service that can bring to man freedom and peace. Any ideal that is less than that, e.g. where dictators have to whip up antagonism against other groups in order to keep alive the enthusiasm of their followers, is bound sooner or later to fail and leave men in a worse state than that from which they started. At any time in history, and especially at the present time, no conception of human relationships that does not aim at universal co-operation and brotherhood can settle anything on a permanent basis. What we need in this country is to awaken in youth the same enthusiasm and readiness for service as we find in totalitarian states, but enable them to relate it to the Christian ideal and the Christian way of life. That we cannot do until we have begun to find that way and live that life ourselves.

THE EDUCATIONAL, SOCIAL, AND INTERNATIONAL RELEVANCE OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE MODERN WORLD

Cyril Norwood

THOUGH in the course of this book others will discuss, more fully than I can, the question 'What is Christianity?' I feel that for the sake of clearness I must try and give a provisional answer myself. I hold the essence of Christianity to be this, that God is real, that the spiritual values are real, and that a future existence is real, even though none of these propositions is capable of what we call exact scientific proof. Further, that at a definite period of historic time God became man, manifested Himself in the life of the human Jesus, to show to mankind the Way of Life. There are many forms and varieties of opinion under which we can hold fast to these essential truths, but I do not regard any particular form or variety of dogma as essential, so long as these central propositions are accepted. It is the relevance of this faith to the modern world in its educational, social, and international aspects with which I propose to deal in broad outline.

It is to be observed first of all that its truth and validity are openly challenged and denied at the present time with a frankness such as has not been known for centuries. The existence of the many who profess the faith with their lips, though their hearts are far from it, has long been known and felt. These we have with us to-day in numbers certainly not less than in former times. But we are also in the presence of an open and avowed Anti-Christ. It is based on the proposition which, though it was not originated by Karl Marx it is convenient to associate with him, that the economic

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values are alone real, and that on this basis alone can human history be explained and guided with wisdom. The traditions and the mythology of the Christian religion are, it is alleged, in reality a form of dope administered by the possessing classes to the have-nots, to the workers of the world, the rotten and decaying prop of a moribund and decaying system. This is not a theory of the study, but has been translated into action: it has swept away a Church, and destroyed a priesthood and a social order. It has kindled, in the hearts of a considerable number, a fervour comparable to the glowing enthusiasm of a religious faith, and has sent forth thousands of young Russians ardently upon the path of building a social order which shall be free from superstition, and give to all men a sense of freedom and a chance of happiness. It may seem to us an odd delusion. The freedom and the happiness seem to the eyes of most of us not to be there. But to them they are real; for them the dethronement of God and the enthronement in its place of the Soviet Republic represent a happy exchange. We must not under-estimate the reality of it all because we dislike it.

This is, as I see it, only one of the manifestations of the theory of materialism, the belief that the only things that are real are the things which you can see and touch and handle, and take away and make your own. In Germany, in Italy, and in other countries as well, Caesar sits enthroned in the place of God, and the state is offered to the eyes of the nations as the exclusive object of worship. Hitler and Mussolini, in a sense more universal than ever Louis XIV could aspire to, say to their nationals, "The State, it is I". Hitler for reasons of policy may attack the Roman and the Protestant communions; Mussolini for reasons of policy may keep in with the Roman Church. But there is no difference between the two theories. Again the only real values are economic, and the world presents itself as a storehouse of economic wealth, God and a moral order are a delusion, an outworn tradition: there is no such thing as eternal life. Therefore we must

concentrate on the things which really matter, and, since the world's wealth is limited, it is obvious that the wise will make themselves strong enough to get the lion's portion in the share-out. God and the moral order being ruled out, all must depend upon power: 'for why? the good old rule sufficeth them, the simple plan, that they should take who have the power, and they should keep who can.' Hence the state in the pursuit of its destiny may lie, rob, steal, murder, so long as it is justified by success, and there is only too much in history which gives warrant to this theory of politics.

But to me the important aspect of the whole case is that it presents itself to the young German, to the young Italian, as a release, honour from disgrace, light from darkness, power from weakness; it captures his imagination, it enlists all the ardours of youth, it offers him the chance of a glorious self-sacrifice, escape from the sordid and the commonplace, the sublimation of self. We cannot understand their frame of mind; we too suffered in the war, and learned the horrors that result from militant and competitive materialism. But we won the war; we did not go through the valley of conscious weakness, suffering, and dishonour, when those nations felt that there could be no God. There is no God, they said, but Germany shall be great, Italy shall be great. The individual matters not at all, only the greatness, the grandeur, the glory, the power, the might that the state will achieve. The true liberty is to combine, to build up the force that shall prove itself irresistible, when the earth shall be ours and the fulness thereof. Again in this Nazism, this Fascism, we catch the religious note, the fervour that can make men greater than themselves. Nothing great is done without enthusiasm, and the enthusiasm is undoubtedly there.

Granted the premises, it all seems to me to be perfectly logical. Cancel out God, dismiss Christ as a myth, His teaching as a delusion, and the rest seems to follow. Make yourselves strong, sharpen your swords, and take what you want. Granted the premises, it deserves its title of 'Real

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Politics'. We can approach its believers and say, I think with truth: 'This sounds all very well, but it leads Europe over the precipice.' We have fought one world-war for power, wealth, and influence, and it left us bled white and deadly weak, miserably poor, and without a shred of influence. These material values are not real: they perish under our hands while we fight for them. This policy can only lead to the decadence of the nations, the twilight of Europe, possibly a new dark age. But they turn deaf ears to us. It will not be so bad as we pretend, because of our weakness, that it is going to be. We, the western democracies, are fat degenerates, sagging with our ill-gotten wealth: we profess a hypocritical religion, we maintain a hypocritical social and political system. We are pacifists, because we are afraid. Britain, for instance, as the lecturers at times say in their discourses on the colonies to Germans, is a country where the grandfathers knew how to create an empire, and the fathers knew how to hold it, but the sons will lose it, because they dare not and will not fight for it. It is fruit hanging on the trees, to be had for the picking.

The simplest way to argue with a man who has reached this state of mind is to hit him on the nose, because this is the only argument which he will understand. But that way madness lies. That in a nutshell is the difficulty of the present international situation.

There is another attack on Christianity and its values which comes from the side of what is popularly known as modern psychology. Modern psychology speaks with many voices and is trying out a number of inconsistent theories. But it is popularly supposed, in some self-styled intellectual circles, that God has been explained away as a wish-phantasy, or, alternatively, as a Father-complex, or, alternatively, as a projection of the personality: in any case He is not real. Of necessity therefore there can be no reality in prayer, and so there must be a totally different valuation of morality. Conscience disappears, sin cannot exist in any real sense.

A man may hold these views in Britain, France, or America, and act as a solvent of the structure of society: he will follow his self-interest, enlightened or unenlightened, and will not fulfil his social obligations unless it clearly pays him so to do. If he holds these views in Germany or Italy or Russia, and goes so far as to act up to them, he will find himself either segregated or liquidated. He can of course call God what he likes: but if he calls the state a wish-phantasy, in spite of the much more genuine grounds that he has for doing so than in the case of God, he would soon be in a concentration camp, or cutting logs in Siberia. I do not wish to elaborate this side of our subject, but only to illustrate what is a very relevant fact, that the democracies are open to every kind of disintegrating influence and factious self-interest, all making for obvious weakness, and the totalitarian states have crushed all this sort of thing out of existence, or driven it underground, so making for apparent strength.

Here then is Anti-Christ, no vague theoretic danger, but present and capable of destroying or darkening the life of everybody in this country. What weapon have we for meeting this peril? first and strongest of all, I think, education. The strength and temper of this weapon are well understood in the totalitarian states, for it is directed firmly to its purpose, the turning out of good Communists, Fascists, or Nazis. It is not enough to call this an education in blinkers, and to be content with an education of our own, which is not directed to any particular end, and leaves all the important issues that condition our lives as so many open questions. If they can produce young men and women who are, within their limits, genuine idealists, then must we produce men and women more enlightened, but not less devoted. It is in connection with this issue that the educational relevance of Christianity in the modern world most justly engages our attention.

We have a theory, inherited from the nineteenth century and bred by the age-long sectarian strife of Christians, that

there is such a thing as secular education, an education which can properly leave out God, and have nothing to say of Time and Eternity. It is vaguely supposed that information on these grave issues will be given at home, or in the churches. However, such teaching has ceased to be given in the homes, and the pupils do not attend the churches: hence we are breeding a population that is predominantly pagan, which believes that education is merely a process which prepares you for an examination, in order that you may get a job. People generally are beginning to be uneasy and even distressed, because there appears to be something lacking in this education. But they have not yet grasped that education is a preparation for life, and the consequences which flow from this truth.

I have not long come home from a journey in which I had occasion to lecture on education in most of the chief cities of New Zealand and Australia. There they have educational systems sharply and clearly defined by law, as free, compulsory, and secular, which means in other and less resounding words that the pupils go to school to cram up the subjects which will enable them to pass an external examination. The teachers are profoundly dissatisfied, but have yet to grasp the fundamental truth that religion and education are so bound together that they are in their development two sides of one process. For an education which is wholly secular is an education which declares in effect that God does not matter, and that the spiritual values are of no importance for life. In this issue there can be no compromise, and he that is not with me is against me. It is a modern delusion to think that you can safely leave this question open, and that it is in the spirit of modern progress to leave the minds of children unbiased so that they can decide for themselves. This is in effect to teach them that those particular considerations do not matter. You do not leave them, or think of leaving them, unbiased as to the laws which govern their bodily health: that is an action which would obviously be

absurd. Why is it not as obviously absurd to let them grow up ignorant of all that concerns their spiritual health? the meaning of this life, their place in the world?

The answer will be, because we have no certainty, and as soon as you try to introduce this sort of teaching, all the schools and churches fly at each others' throats. But is this true? Here are two clear-cut issues about life. Let me recapitulate. On the one hand it is said that God is a delusion, and that prayer is a delusion. You are, here, an animal in a material world, and the only real values are material. You are part of a nation that must make itself strong enough to secure the place in the sun which belongs to it by right, because it is potentially strong enough to take it and to keep it. On the other hand it is said that these values are only apparently real: they are transitory. Reality is spiritual, and each one of us is a spirit. Our values are spiritual: they are truth, beauty, and goodness. It is possible to gain the whole world, and to lose one's own soul; and it is not worth it. Turn away from that region of material values where you can only gain by your neighbour's losses, and where the values themselves perish while you fight for them; and turn rather to that spiritual kingdom where the values increase by being shared, where your own share of truth and goodness and beauty makes that of everyone else so much the greater and the more possible, where the kingdom in which God is revealed is love, and love is made perfect by sacrifice. If this is true, can we reasonably or safely leave it out of education? is it not vital to right living? is it not a far nobler, even if admittedly a more difficult ideal than that other, to which by a merely secular education we by our very silence condemn the generation, whom it is our duty to prepare fully for life? And this, as I see it, is but another way of saying that other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, even Jesus Christ.

The claim that I am making is, therefore, that national education ought to be frankly based on Christianity conceived of in this broad spirit. If it is true, it is the most

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valuable of all the truths which we have to impart to those that come after us. In what way can it be imparted? Christianity, thought of thus, thought of as the first Christians thought of it, is a way of life, and that way of life must be followed in the school, giving light and warmth both to corporate and to individual living. Instruction there must be, and I will say a word on it presently. But far more important than the actual instruction is it that the whole school should feel itself to be a social organism in miniature, made up on the part of masters and boys by individual wills freely co-operating, and feeling their truest freedom, their fullest self-expression, in so doing. It should be felt to be a life lived to a common end, a society formed to bring out the best in each individual, and yet so inspired that the individual seeks to give his best in return to the common life. Just as in the Christian gospel we are expressly bidden to 'render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's', never merging the value of the human soul in the mere service of the state, and yet providing always that each individual human soul shall find its full development through service to others in and through the state, so the school should be equally balanced and equally true in its estimates of comparative values. The Archbishop of York once said that there was no reason why even an elementary school should not constitute itself as a church in miniature: I think that this carries us too far on the road to an artificial self-consciousness, but it has its foundation of truth. There is no reason why every school should not feel itself to be a spiritual adventure taken in common, a life to which each has something individual, something of his own, to contribute, a life quickened by example, whose inspiration passes, like the flame of the torch, from a life to a life.

And the teachers should be more sensible than they are that their calling is a vocation. They will not have done all their task if they have merely been adequate in their teaching