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THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH TO THE WORLD : ANTI-CHRISTIAN.

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Mr. Chairman and gentlemen : The only thing that I must contradict in the Chairman's opening remarks, is that he seemed to imply that I was particularly fitted to deal with this particular subject, and I made it clear when I was asked to come here and speak, and I want to be quite clear now, that that, from any point of view of special knowledge, is untrue. I have no more claim than any of you to speak with knowledge of the anti-Christian world—I hope that none of us have too intimate a knowledge of it—but at the same time, it does seem to me that there is some justification for, I hope, an intelligent layman talking on this subject, because it is one that everybody does have some opinion about—if not consciously, they have it unconsciously—and for the purpose of discussion and findings here, it may be just as useful to have our thoughts arranged by an amateur as by a professional in the matter of the anti-Christian forces of our time.

For a long while, and recently too, to most people the arch-enemy was Communism. We had our blood turned cold for us with descriptions of the horrors of Communism in Russia, and if that were not enough, we had reports from missionaries and visitors to the East of the advance of Communist thought in China and in India ; and I suppose the wisest and best people are right when they tell us that the choice for a young person in the East, particularly, I suppose, in China and increasingly in India, does really lie between Marx and the Lord Jesus Christ, that the old religions are effectively undermined by modern science, and that the choice in a modern society does fall between these two views of life, and these two only.

Now, of course, in its origins in Russia, Communism is not merely anti-Christian, it is anti-God. Religion of any kind was looked upon as an enemy, and the Church in Russia was identified by the Communist with Conservatism, Capitalism, with the existing order of things, with every vested interest he knew. And more than that, as we see to-day in Spain, the supporter of the Government, the young and enthusiastic supporter, the young Socialist, feels that the organized Church is identified with all the things he feels oppose his advance, and what he cares for, and that some of them feel that the Church is even a kind of secret police for the opposition.

Now, it is not my business, and I am not very good at it, to analyse or defend the position of the Church in Russia before the Revolution,

or of the Church in Spain. All I would note for our purpose is that it should be a very solemn warning to us to avoid any possibility of the Church of England being identified with any particular political or social system. When an attempt was made to turn our Lord's own trial into a political one, to identify Him with a political programme, he made it clear that His Kingdom was not of this world. The temptation for the organized Church on earth, as an organization, to identify itself, without really realizing it, with some particular view of State or Society or Government, is a very strong one, and the difficulty of avoiding it very great. It is not a question to my mind of not bringing politics into the pulpit, though they are usually brought in in the least satisfactory form, but that the Church as an organization should never allow itself by accident or by intention to be identified with a particular theory or particular practice of any political or social order. It has allowed itself in the past to be identified with theories of monarchy, property, and for all these identifications, it has paid a great price, and a price which need never have been paid.

The second thing I want to say about Communism is that it is very important for us to realize that there are elements in Communism which are highly respectable; in fact, some elements which we might almost say are Christian—I don't want to suggest that all the forces in a revolutionary movement are good; they are obviously not, but it is highly improbable that in any Society you will get a revolutionary movement which is wholly bad or wholly unjustified. We must realize that the Communist does show an effective concern for the unfortunate. The driving force behind a great deal of his enthusiasm and actual operations is his concern for the oppressed, for the weak and for the poor. He shows himself as the opponent of privilege, of oppression, of unfairness of one kind or another, mainly economic. You may say that the Communist has a faith which is service to his fellow-men. It may show itself in ways at any particular moment which may seem very odd, or worse than that. But it is essential to recognize the light of joy and battle in the eye of the Communist, the sense that he is on a mission which will bring in the millennium, and a millennium not for himself primarily, but for others. I learned that from the only Communist I spent a whole afternoon with, the only active working Communist I had ever known, one whom I had known previously through the newspapers. I had expected to find a disgruntled fanatic, with strange ideas. Actually, I met a man absolutely on fire with a passion for justice, a man whose whole life had been changed when he discovered he could give himself, and fight to the death for justice for his unfortunate fellows. I am not saying he was right, but I do think it is very important that the Church should recognize that element both in Communist theory, and in the strength of the individual Communist.

There is a great deal of the New Testament, a great deal of the Saints in Communism, but at the same time, whatever allowance we make for the faults of the Church, whatever allowance we make for the virtues of Communism, the Communist is right when he feels and says that there is an essential opposition, a fundamental opposition

between his view of life and the Christian view. I think it is unanswerable that the Communist view of life is, in essence, materialistic. It is concerned with this world only, and its standard of measurement is material, measured in money and goods, that in the pursuit of economic justice it is prepared to sacrifice all the immeasurable and intangible values of life for the individual as such, as of little account as compared with the community, that conscience or faith in another world, immortality, these things not only does he deny, but he recognizes in them the most potent enemy of his own view. It seems to me that the Communist asks us whether we are as good as he is in turning stones into bread, and our answer might be that we are not as good as we ought to be or as he is, but we go on to reply that man shall not live by bread alone.

That, of course, is far too brief to be fair. Communism is modifying under our very eyes, the practical deductions they make from their theory change with every few years, and it looks to me as if our civilization is being inoculated with Communism much in the same way that it was inoculated with Liberalism in the last century, that there will be a period in which we shall all become Communists to some degree, whether we admit it or not, and then we shall pass to the next stage, I hope with a less bloody revolution to usher it in.

The Communist's emphasis on economic justice, on economic planning, that part of his teaching, is being accepted by all western states, whether they know it or not, but there is one part of his view which has taken another anti-Christian form, his view of the supreme authority of the community and the state, that the way of salvation is not through the individual but through the body.

This brings us to the other totalitarian states, whether Italy or Germany or the copies of them all over the place. I must be briefer still with them, but you will notice that they, like Communism, had much of good in their origin, that the young Nazi, for instance, is delivered by membership of his party from the feeling of helplessness in the face of disunion, graft, poverty, unemployment, and is given a sense of order, of community service, of efficiency, and feels that for himself and the State, there is purpose where before there was none, whereas before the energy of his society was wasted in internal strife and struggle. Whether he is right or wrong is inessential. A large part of the strength of this totalitarian movement lies in the deliverance it brings to young people from a sense of futility.

But we must notice that just as all is not good in Communism, so unfortunately, in the totalitarian state, it appears to us as onlookers that it exaggerates the greed of the crowd, that it plays upon their ignorance and fear, that it promotes what it is hardly unfair to call a gangster morality. They are not at first sight so anti-Christian. Mussolini has his concordat with the Church in Italy, Hitler has his in Germany, and in Japan they have a similar theory which is closely linked with State religion.

I take it there will be very little disagreement amongst us here that we should be very wary of such a system. My own view is that of the two, the totalitarian state as seen in the German and Italian

dictatorships, or in the Japanese, is really more dangerous to the Church than Communism, because it is more subtle. It offers such prizes if we will ally ourselves with it, it offers such power, it appeals to our patriotism. Thank God there is not very much sign in this country yet of any strong totalitarian group. But if one arose, I imagine the temptation to a great many Christian people to join up with, to throw themselves into it, to strike a bargain if possible, between it and the Church would be very strong, and I am reminded of the second temptation of our Lord, when the Devil showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and He replied : "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

I want to finish by suggesting that these obvious anti-Christian forces on a big scale in the modern world, these views of the State and of Life which oppose the Christian view, are only made possible by a theory which is also represented amongst us, and is represented very widely. This anti-Christian organization of the State is based on an anti-Christian faith, an attitude which lies behind Marxism and Hitlerism alike. I don't know that I can give a name to it. The nearest perhaps would be scientific humanism. That view of the world is held probably, by as many people in England as in Germany though it has not led as yet to the same result. In England we see its results mainly in religious indifference, but it is anti-Christian, and it is violently anti-Christian. It takes many forms, but I think we should probably agree that all its forms share the following anti-Christian features. In this view of life, there is no effective belief in immortality ; this world is all. Secondly, that not only is this world all, but there is no interference in it by any outside or supernatural power. There is no miracle, and not merely no miracle in a theological sense, but no power from outside operating in any form. Thirdly, that there is in this world and in man, no moral imperative. There is no such thing as "Thou shalt not," there is only "This would probably be unwise in normal circumstances." I believe myself, of course, that without a belief in immortality, there is no ultimate basis for morals at all, but we need not argue about that because if we admit that there is no basis for conscience then the convenience of the community remains as the only ground of morality and that is no certain ground at all.

But more serious than these three differences is the fact that for the scientific humanist there is and cannot be any redemption. For him life is essentially fatalistic, what you have done you have done, and nothing can alter it. When you believe that about yourself, most unfortunately you then believe it about other people, and that, of course, leads to the concentration camp. Last of all, in that view of life, obviously, from what I have said, lies no possibility of a belief in the Holy Spirit.

To these people, wherever they are, whether they put it into words or not, Christianity, and therefore the Church as they conceive it, is a collection of superstitions which only survives because of the weakness and fears of men, and more particularly of women. Christianity is something that no longer matters. All these people have a pleasant

conviction that it is already finished. It represents to them the forces of darkness, and is only a survival from an unattractive and unsuccessful past. To them, the hope of the future lies in science. They say that science has already delivered us from a great many of the errors of religion, and if we follow science it will deliver us from the rest.

Again, let me emphasize that these people do not adopt this point of view simply from original sin. They do not adopt it simply because they are too lazy to come to Church, or because they have committed some moral offence which is burdening their conscience. That may be true of many, but it remains that for a number of them, there is a deliverance in the faith, however misplaced, they put in science, and we may say, in all humility, that their existence is in part, due to the failure of the Church to believe in truth, to believe that its own Founder is the Truth, and that you can trust the truth, and in part also to our own inefficient materialism.

The failure of this world view is already becoming obvious. It has no basis in reality, no room for art, still less for love, for morality. What are we to do about it? Well, it is not very difficult to say, is it? The Church must live better than the Communist. It is no good arguing with him. We have to demonstrate a fuller, more dedicated and enthusiastic life, more given to our fellows than he can achieve. We have to out-worship the Nazi, we have to have a greater concern for a more efficient order, for that joy in community service, for that giving of oneself to the witness of God, to one's country, for that sense of the glory and freedom that comes from abandoning your own motives, purposes and objects. And we have to out-think the scientific humanist. We have to advance without any fear at all to tackle any problem he produces in the certainty that the guidance of the Holy Spirit is worth all the Universities, all the degrees and all the dialectic for the purposes of daily life. We must outlove them all. That, the most important point of all, the most obvious duty of a Christian, is probably where we have failed most notably in the past; and yet we start with such an enormous advantage, that if we only believe it, we can drive them out of the field at any time, because there is no large group that even in theory, believes in the supremacy of the love of God for man, and the response of man to the love of God except the Christian Church, and I hope that nothing will ever divert the Church from its primary responsibility of demonstrating the working of the love of God.