

## ANTI-COMMUNISM IS NOT ENOUGH

PERILS from without assail the Catholic Church openly throughout the centuries. Perils from within threaten more insidiously.

At the close of the Middle Ages the invading armies of Islam threatened continually the faith of Christendom, and the good estate of the Holy See; while within the seeds of disaffection, neglected because unseen, ignored so blandly and when visible so virulently denounced, germinated in every land of Europe north of the Alps and Pyrennees. The Mohammedan hosts were driven back. Rome was sacked by the Lutheran troops of the Catholic emperor, the success of Protestantism accomplished the break-up of the Catholic unity of Christendom.

The peril from without, quite a real peril, failed to overthrow Christendom, and in Europe (though hardly in Asia, and certainly not in Africa) the faith of Islam has steadily diminished. But Protestantism, the peril from within (for the men who made the Protestant Reformation were all Catholic priests or Catholic laymen), survives throughout the world, and is for ever threatening the faith and morals of Christian people.

Anti-protestantism was not enough to restrain the revolutionary fervour of the early Protestants, for whom the very existence of the Catholic Church they had left, and the authority they disowned were things to be swept from the face of the earth. The fierce intolerance of the Protestant propaganda—not unlike in many ways the propaganda of Communism in our own time—was not to be extinguished by the utmost penalties of the law. In England burning elderly clergymen—once Catholic priests and now Anglican bishops, leaders in the revolt against the priesthood they renounced, the bitterest enemies of the Mass and the Pope—did not persuade their countrymen of the truths of the Catholic religion any more than burning numbers of unlearned and fanatical Anabaptists did. (Though it seems that ‘at least two-thirds of the

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martyrs who were burnt by Queen Mary would almost undoubtedly, had Edward VI survived, have been burnt in the normal course by the Church of England,<sup>1</sup> as Unitarians were burnt in England under Elizabeth and under James I.)

Sanctity, heroic charity, deathless courage, knowledge of the truth and zeal for souls—these were the qualities that stayed the advance of Protestantism when what we call the counter-Reformation checked the revolutionary propaganda. Not by burning bishops and heretics of lesser importance but by the willingness to die for the faith, by devotion utterly disinterested, and by unquenchable desire to win their neighbours and fellow countrymen to the ‘old religion,’ was the remnant in England saved and the second spring made possible.

Anti-protestantism was not enough in the sixteenth century; it is not enough to-day. Pro-catholicism is the better device for the banners of the King. Enthusiasm against the enemy has the thrill of destroying; but what if we forget *why* we seek to destroy, forget for what we stand?

Anti-communism is not enough. ‘They had the heat of love that kept out the cold of fear.’

Is it anti-communism or is it anti-atheism? Is it the economic theory ascribed to Marx, or is it the denial of all revealed religion appended to that theory that we are against? Because the Communist declares that belief in God, Whom no man hath seen, compels men to the worship of personal property, must we say that Catholics affirm the actual possession of property to be part and parcel of the deposit of faith? The latter cannot be true, for Communism makes its appeal to men and women of good will throughout the ages. To have nothing of one’s own and yet to possess all things, for this have men and women turned from the world and embraced our lady poverty in every century; for this have the thrones of kings and the seats of

<sup>1</sup> *Cranmer and the Reformation under Edward VI.* By C. H. Smyth, 1926.

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the mighty been exchanged for the obscurity of the cloister. To call ourselves anti-communist is to deny the true communism of religion, and also to forget that many tribes of men have preferred this simple communism before initiation into the advantages of commercial civilisation.

It must be against the atheism of the Communist propaganda rather than the economic theory that the call is sounded. And yet the very fact that the Communist Party insists on atheism is both a tribute to the faith and morals of Christianity and a spur to Catholic action. The truths of revealed religion do still persuade the mind and kindle the affections, or the Communists would not be so anxious to get rid of them; and would not so greatly handicap their political chances by making atheism the test of membership in their party. The Communists know, they must know, that in Great Britain to make atheism the badge of a political party is to exclude many sympathisers and to arouse instinctive suspicion and hostile feeling.

Yet the Communists persist in advertising their atheism, even though it means losing votes.

Neither Catholics nor Protestants persist in identifying their politics with their faith as the Communists do with their un-faith. Catholic voters do not require their political candidate to be a Christian, or even to avow any faith. It is sufficient that he is chosen to represent the party. He may be Anglican or Agnostic, Jew or Gentile, Methodist or Modernist: always provided he is the official candidate of their party, Catholics will do their best to get him (or her) elected. We rather pride ourselves on this broad-mindedness; it does not hamper us at elections as the narrow-mindedness of the party of un-faith is hampered. And we are not hampered by the faith in Parliament. Catholic peers in the House of Lords are not conspicuous in the cause of justice when debates on social questions take place—even divorce Bills can hardly bring them to their seats in that assembly. The Anglican bishops in the House of Lords are vocal and articulate on the great issues, while the Catholic peers say nothing, and indeed are probably

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absent; perhaps presiding at anti-communist meetings. *Against* rather than *for*.

Similarly, with the Englishman's natural reserve, our Catholic members in the Commons are careful not to intrude their faith, or to suggest that Catholic ethics or Catholic philosophy have any relation to economics, or can throw any light on what are called the problems of unemployment and housing, and are really but problems of poverty. Perhaps the words were not reported in the daily press, but in the Parliamentary discussions on the Means Test for the relief of the poor did any Catholic M.P. mention Catholic principles of social justice?

But why do people, including Catholic young men and women, become Communists? Why are people drawn in increasing numbers, and in spite of its atheism, to the Communist standard?

In the pages of a book called *Hungry England*,<sup>2</sup> published in 1932, an answer can be found. The investigations published in *Hungry England* reveal that thousands of hard-working, decent-living, and thoroughly respectable people are now no longer employed and are in want of food and the common necessities of life. And this not in one district of England alone, and leaving out London and its vast encirclement of distressed areas, but in the textile towns of Lancashire, the Black Country and Birmingham, in agricultural East Anglia, on the Tyne and the Tees, and in Glasgow and the Clydeside. There is nothing in *Hungry England* but what every parish priest knows; every parish priest in the districts investigated.

(But how many of us, laymen or clerical, are aware that in 1930 there were twenty-nine suicides of men out of work between November 24th and December 23rd? that 'the official estimate of suicides by unemployed persons is two a day'?)

Hunger, scarcity and the miserable discovery that, having saved and furnished a home, savings and all must go

<sup>2</sup> *Hungry England*. By A. Fenner Brockway. (Gollancz; 2/6 net.)

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before any relief will be granted to unemployed persons, these are the reasons that recruit for Communism. Misery and the hope of better times that Communism offers. For Communism does tell the flattering tale of hope. Of course the investigations in *Hungry England* do not give the whole story; no investigations ever do. For instance, the work being done on allotments at Great Harwood in East Lancashire, work organised by the parish priest and his S.V.P. Council, is not mentioned, though Great Harwood was one of the towns visited. There are agencies that escape all investigators. But the facts are shameful, and the facts have not been disputed. And Communism declares that the conditions are intolerable, and can be changed for the better.

Anti-communism says they cannot be changed or, alternately, if they can, we don't know how to do it; and that anyway to change to Communism would only make matters worse. But the drowning man is immediately concerned with being saved from drowning, and would rather land on a cannibal shore than be left to drown. So when destitution presses and the opportunity to earn a livelihood at the trade we have practised for years is denied, and it is plain that we shall be out of work for the rest of our lives, dependent on the poor law for the pittance that will keep us alive, we turn to the Communist, who promises a better land, and we are not put off by any of the anti-communist arguments. 'Poverty and none other is our captain,' said the leader of the rebellious country men in Norfolk when the Duke of Norfolk wanted to know who had instigated the rising. That was in the reign of Henry VIII, but poverty and none other is still the captain of the unemployed, who are restless and embittered. Would Stalin in Moscow, or any Communist leader in England, have influence if poverty was not hourly at work preaching the need for deliverance?

'Wealth is a present good and has a tendency to fix the mind on the visible and the tangible, to the prejudice of both faith and secular policy.'

The words are Cardinal Newman's, spoken in 1853. Money has even more power now, because there are far more things that money can buy, and the luxuries of yesterday so rapidly become necessities of to-day. The tendency Newman noted may help to account for the prejudice that fastens on the urgency of anti-communism to the neglect of true communism. For the ideals of true communism, of a society based not on competition and a world divided between the haves and the have-nots, but on co-operation and mutual aid, appear as realities to numbers not yet alienated from the Faith.

When it is pointed out that money comes from Moscow for the Communist propaganda, the Communist, not unreasonably, replies, but where does the money of the anti-communist come from? the money that supplies political parties with funds for elections, candidates, and salaries for officers?

The answer is from rent or interest for the most part, from dividends in especial. ('Let us not forget in our commiseration with the lot of the poor the ever-present anxiety of the rich man—how to combine a safe investment with a high rate of interest.')

#### Dividends.

Dividends from money invested in armament firms, in slum property, in South American industries, and South African diamond mines, in Government loans, in cinema theatres, in companies that sell the widely-advertised and generally harmless and innocuous patent medicines.

And if our investments are unprofitable or non-existent, we still hope to get money by winning prizes in newspaper competitions for crossword puzzles, and by drawing a lucky number in a sweepstake. It is, of course, the sixpences and shillings of our neighbours that we hope to win. Newspaper proprietors are not philanthropists, and neither are bookmakers. Winners are only enriched at the expense of their neighbours who lose. A thoroughly anti-communist method of making money.

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Anti-communism is not enough. Unless it can offer something better than the chance of getting money without troubling whence it comes, men and women will continue to turn to Communism with its promise of work for all and a share for all. At the present time to engage in supplying the adornments of life is to be amply and perhaps richly rewarded, while to labour to provide the necessities is frequently to be left destitute. To the Communist this seems all wrong, and to the anti-communist it is not entirely satisfactory. But it is of no use at all for the anti-communist to reiterate that Communism will leave us all worse off.

They will be disillusioned in the end, the Communists, of course; for the City of God will not arise nor the brotherhood of man emerge by changes in systems of government and improved methods of industry. Capitalism did not invent envy, hatred and malice and all uncharitableness, and the passing of Capitalism will still leave us troubled with original sin and the pains of avarice. Nevertheless, the Communist for a while enjoys the hope of comradeship and fraternity in this world—is it only in war and its discipline that comradeship is permitted?—for a brief season he is conscious of fellowship, and believes that ‘fellowship is heaven and the lack of fellowship is hell.’ Disillusionment will come, and in that hour of disillusionment will there be discovery of the comradeship of the Kingdom, of good fellowship in the unity of the Faith?

Anti-communism is certainly not enough. We must have St. Austin’s ‘heat of love to drive out the cold of fear.’

JOSEPH CLAYTON.