



## Religion—a Changing Force ?

IT will always be a paradox that the gentlest and most lovable character in the whole of the recorded history of mankind should not only be the source of such bitterness and hatred as mark the story of Christianity, but also that He Himself should have been fully aware that the consequences of His teaching would constantly be averse from the spirit of His doctrine. Of all the utterances of Our Lord, that which displays most clearly His insight into the heart of man, and has been most completely fulfilled, is the declaration that he brought into the world not peace, but a sword. Not only did He knowingly set up insurmountable barriers between those who followed Him and their families, friends and fellows in the community, but also when He turned from the Jews to send the seventy disciples on their mission to the world, He informed His religion with an inflexible will to the conversion of the heathen—in other words, of those not of like belief—which in its methods and its results has belied the promise to mankind of peace and goodwill.

Too often in its history, the missionary of Christianity has been of the type of the inquisitor and the conquistador ; the fate of its converts a degradation and an extinction no less complete in its results, if less drastic in its methods, than the fate which overtook so many of the Indians of Mexico and Peru. Not indeed that Christianity

here stands alone. The first great tragedy of Calvary was a prelude to the beasts of Ephesus, the spectacular slaughters, the crucifixions and the pyres of Rome. If that tragedy was re-enacted time and again in the sectarian quarrels of European civilization through the ages, elsewhere, to name one instance only, the Moslem world enlarged the circle of the Faithful by the persuasion of fire and sword.

A post-War generation, weary of strife, in its desire to build "a brave new world", would have consigned all such antagonisms to the limbo of errors and absurdities of an outworn dispensation. Frank and open discussion of differences, and co-operation, despite these differences, of all of good-will in the promotion of common aims, were to take the place of sectional rivalries and obstructions. Leagues of intellectual co-operation, and international conferences and congresses sprang up on all sides to discuss and deal with every kind of problem which stood in the way of the advancement of mankind—moral, intellectual and social. The events of more recent years have brought a bitter disillusionment to those who thought that Armageddon had passed and the millennium was due to arrive.

The present, however, is no time for pessimism ; and least of all does it befit science either to belittle what has been effected by co-operative effort since the War—and the sum total is by no means

negligible as the record of the non-political activities of the League of Nations can show—or to despair of the endeavour which is being made to keep open some of the ways to interchange of thought and mutual assistance, at a time when differences of outlook and tradition are being emphasized and barriers of mistrust are being re-erected. There are still matters of universal significance for mankind in which the co-operation of all may be invited, if indeed it be not essential.

Yet, however strong the conviction that a sturdy, and at times dogged, optimism is the only creed for the man of science, as well as a necessary condition of constant progress in the understanding of Nature and the universe, there are whole departments of thought, with their corollaries in human conduct and affairs, from which the principle of universality, which is a condition of world-wide co-operation, seems to be excluded. Co-operation rests, ultimately, on a truth which, in a scientific sense, is universal—in fact, a 'law'. This is the ultimate principle, whether in dealing with the suppression of the drug traffic or with 'sanctions'. But in the field of religious beliefs, on a detached view, truth is relative to the object of belief, and departmental. The code of thought, and its materialization in action, which befits the Buddhist, cannot be reconciled with that of the Christian, however near their approach.

More than passing interest, therefore, will be aroused in many not directly concerned, and irrespective of religious belief, by the announcement that during the early half of the month of July representatives of the more important religions of the world are gathering in London at a World Congress of Faiths for the discussion of "World Fellowship" as a way to the solution of world problems—the problems of war and of social and economic difficulties, which seem inevitably to lead to disaster. Neither the validity nor the possibility of fusion of the religions represented will be under consideration; but each religion is invited to consider how, maintaining its individuality, it can best contribute to the common end.

The organization of the Congress, which opened on July 3, fully maintains the claim that it is both international and inter-religious. The international president is H.H. the Maharaja Gaekwar of Baroda, and the chairman of the British National Council is Sir Francis Younghusband. The chairmen, speakers and openers of debate at sessional meetings have been selected with strict impartiality for their ability to further discussion,

without preference of creed. For the attainment of what may be taken to be the more general purpose of the Congress, the dissemination over the widest possible field of a knowledge of the varied lines of approach to the major problems of existence among different peoples and creeds, the greatest importance must be attached to the series of public meetings at which distinguished members of the Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu and Moslem religions, as well as of independent thought, will expound their respective conceptions of "The Supreme Spiritual Ideal".

To bring together representatives of these different faiths, some of which, it might be thought, would mix as readily as oil and water, for the discussion of such a topic as "world-fellowship" is in itself no mean accomplishment. It does at least lend some colour to the expectation of a not entirely unfavourable answer to the inevitable question, whether any practical outcome is to be anticipated from this attempt to secure co-operation among the more liberal spirits of the various religious beliefs in the solution of world problems.

In view of the past history of religious animosities, the whole project may seem Utopian, the forlorn hope of enthusiasm. Has the time really come when the lion will lie down with the lamb? Have these religious differences been composed, and is the *odium theologicum* a thing of the past? Perhaps we may construe current events as a turn in the tide. In the Education Bill which has now passed through Parliament, for example, we seem to be entering upon the final phase in a settlement of a denominational religious difference which has been an obstacle to progress in popular education for well over a hundred years, and a source of social disintegration for three times that period. The Church of England, it is true, failed to reach a satisfactory conclusion in its overtures to the Orthodox Church; but in other directions, as for example, recently in Finland, it has been more successful. Do these movements and others of a like character point to a weakening of the religious fibre, manifested in a lessening of the spirit of aggression, or do they represent a further stage in progress towards a higher development of religious activity?

To attempt an answer would involve a combination of prophecy and analysis which would be neither profitable nor appropriate here. This much, however, may be said. Religion as a social phenomenon, and not as an individual experience,

as the student of religions well knows, is a sublimation of group solidarity. In a supreme self-protective effort it either proselytizes, expels, or exterminates: hence missionary effort and persecution, on the principle that he who is not for is against. This lies at the root of the quarrel of Nazi nationalism, a quasi-religious emotion, and the Confessionals in Germany, just as it inspires the persecution of the Jews. The Old Testament expresses it repeatedly in the reliance of the Hebrews on Jehovah, the god of battles, as the exclusive protector of the Chosen People.

To some extent at the present time this particularist spirit of self-protection has been diverted into the channel of nationalism. More potent,

however, is the fact that an ever-increasing number, appealing in the conditions of modern civilization to a widening circle, is not content to rest in the particular, but must pass on to the universal. To such, neither restrictions of national distinction nor differences between creeds can weigh in the balance against the ethical principles explicit or implied in all the higher forms of religion. In this composite but practical creed, analogous to the *jus gentium* of the legists, it may be that they are feeling their way towards a further and higher stage in the development of religious belief, in which the theological differences which antagonize will be forgotten in the pursuit of a common and universal ethical purpose.

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## Colonial Policy and Scientific Research

MR. ORMSBY-GORE has lost no time on taking up his duties as Secretary of State for the Colonies, in making clear his personal position in relation to a variety of problems with which he is confronted in colonial administration, and more particularly to the need for the active prosecution of research with a view to future development.

An address which he delivered recently, when presiding at the thirty-fifth annual Colonial Service dinner of the Corona Club, was broadcast, and was no doubt consciously directed to reach a wider public than his immediate audience. It will go far to allay some not unjustifiable feelings of uneasiness as to future developments, which for some time have disturbed informed opinion both at home and in the Dependencies. While Mr. Ormsby-Gore deprecated the discussions, in which the possibility of future sessions of territory had been debated, as likely to do more harm than good, he was emphatic in endorsing "the very clear statements" of the Prime Minister and of his predecessor in office, referring specifically among other dependencies to Tanganyika Territory. "Peace," he went on to say, "continuity of policy, social progress, and economic development are the greatest needs of the Colonial Empire."

With this all will agree, although there may be difference of opinion as to the best means by which they are to be attained. It is significant, however, of the confidence inspired by Mr. Ormsby-Gore's appointment, that it has made optimistic even so

sturdy a champion of the white settlers' claims in Kenya as Lord Frederick Scott, who, as he told the East African group of the Overseas League on June 18, sees hope for the future in the appointment of "a new Secretary of State for the Colonies, who knew East Africa, and had written . . . the best of all reports on East Africa".

While Mr. Ormsby-Gore is fully alive to the part which has been played, and must continue to be played, by the study of native institutions in their bearing on the further development of the native, there are two matters to which he directed attention as problems of public health confronting the Colonial Governments. Of these the first is the application of the newer scientific knowledge of nutrition. Mental and physical efficiency, as well as resistance to disease, he pointed out, are tremendously affected by nutrition; and he is not satisfied that the problems of nutrition have been adequately studied and the results applied in our tropical dependencies. After a reference to the generous offer of the Rockefeller Foundation to establish a special organisation in Uganda for the study of yellow fever, he spoke of the benefactions received by many Colonies from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, particularly in connexion with education, social services and libraries.

It is especially satisfactory to hear that Mr. Ormsby-Gore intends to devote his personal attention to the application of science to Colonial problems of agricultural development and public