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WHITE SETTLEMENT IN THE TROPICS

IT is now more than a century since Sir Samuel Baker recorded his lamentable failure to establish an English country gentleman's estate on the grassy plains of the heart of Ceylon. His pedigree cattle and sheep soon succumbed and his carefully selected wheat and oats showed early promise, but failed to come to harvest. No less concerned was his coachman at the death of his carriage horses; with characteristic though misplaced resource, he sought to uphold his master's dignity by teaching an elephant to trot gracefully and so to replace the missing horses. He succeeded only in driving a fine elephant to death. Since then, many advances have been made in the knowledge of tropical agriculture, yet many of the major problems of white settlement in the tropics and acclimatization to tropical environments remain unsolved.

The problem of finding areas for large-scale settlement of mid-European refugees has thrown into prominence the need for more accurate knowledge of many of the more sparsely peopled areas of the earth's surface. Those that remain little known are mainly in the tropics. In particular, attention has been focused on British Guiana—in latitude but a few degrees from the equator and thus not very different from the scene of Baker's experiments in Ceylon, and at comparable elevations. In the latter part of 1938, the British Government made a tentative offer of lands in British Guiana as a possible site for the settlement of involuntary refugees created by recent events in Europe. An impartial international commission to investigate these areas was appointed by the President of the United States through the Advisory Committee on Political Refugees. The Commission was a strong one, including members

with expert knowledge of health, engineering, colonization, tropical agriculture, soils and malarial control and, with the aid of air reconnaissance, it carried out in the short period February 14 to the early part of April 1939 a remarkable series of journeys, and has presented, with commendable speed, a general report*. A number of appendixes have been grouped together and published† separately, including an important note on the "Possibilities of Agricultural Settlement" by Sir Geoffrey Evans, formerly principal of the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture at Trinidad.

British Guiana has an area of 89,480 square miles and a population of about 325,000, but the people are concentrated on the sugar and rice lands of the coastal lowlands. The vast interior is virtually uninhabited, save for scattered Indian settlements, mainly in reservations, and occasional mining camps or cattle ranches. The two main areas examined were both south of lat. 5° N.—that is, less than five degrees from the equator—and covered about 30,000 square miles on either side of the Essequibo River. The bulk is covered with dense forest; about one eighth is grassland.

The Commission summarizes its findings by expressing the "opinion that, while the territory is not an ideal place for refugees from Middle European countries, and, while the territory could not be considered suitable for *immediate* large scale settlement, it undoubtedly possesses potential possibilities that would fully justify the carrying out of a trial settlement project on a substantial enough scale that would make it possible to determine whether and how these potential possibilities could be realized".

* Cmd. 6014. (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1939.) 4d. net.
† Cmd. 6029. (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1939.) 2s. net.

This is a very guarded statement, and the plan recommended is for receiving camps and trial settlements, directed by properly equipped technical organizations, to be set up at properly chosen locations for some 3,000-5,000 carefully selected young men and women at a cost of about 3,000,000 dollars. The cost is given as a rough figure to be accepted with caution.

It is from Sir Geoffrey Evans's appendix that some clear indications of the possibilities are to be obtained. He emphasizes that the utilization of the open savannah country is essentially a pastoral problem, and that much of the forest country has the light, sandy, easily eroded and easily leached soils common to many of the hot, wet-forest regions of the world. The only areas capable of supporting a permanent agriculture are valley lands of unknown extent in the Kanuku mountains. A difficulty exists that large sections of the savannah country are flooded in the wet season, and drainage might be needed for health reasons; on the other hand, the areas liable to flood seem to support the best pasture. What is envisaged is a compact village community, raising by its own labour subsistence crops on the valley lands, managing cattle on neighbouring savannahs, and thus having not only an assured meat supply but also being able to sell to timber-working communities to be set up in the forest areas, and perhaps to feed a meat packing plant. The scheme incidentally involves the utilization by Europeans of unaccustomed tropical plants as the basis of diet.

It is interesting to note the insistence on the inherent poverty of many, perhaps most, tropical soils; an insistence emphasized by recent work in tropical Australia. There, in complete contrast to the patriotic optimism of only a decade ago, agriculturally utilizable soils have been stated recently to occupy not more than 5,000 acres in the 335,116,800 acres of the Northern Territory. Since the financing of private enterprise in this territory is obviously a concern of the great banks, the Bank of New South Wales recently commissioned Mr. A. G. Lowndes to make detailed investigations on the spot, and then to compare conditions in North Africa, Brazil and other comparable areas. His findings are pessimistic in the extreme: "Beyond the present limits of agricultural settlement, Australia has practically no areas which are definitely known to be suitable for close settlement".

The appearance of the Commission's report post-dates by a few weeks the publication as a special

monograph of the American Geographical Society of what is really the first comprehensive scientific study of white settlement in the tropics*. The author, Dr. Price, is an Australian with a very wide experience of tropical Australia, who has made detailed studies in many parts of the world but notably in the West Indies. He emphasizes the contradictory views which are held by leading authorities even at the present time. Andrew Balfour summarized the conclusions reached after a lifetime's work on tropical diseases thus: "so far as the race is concerned, I am persuaded that the hot and humid tropics are not suited to white colonization and never will be with our present knowledge, even if they are rendered as free from disease as England". At the other extreme are those whose views are coloured by the amazing success of General Gorgas in Panama and epitomized by Guiteras in his study of Cuba: "the tropical climate is compatible with the most elevated manifestations of human activity, and the acclimatization of the white race to the tropics has been effected with complete success".

Price entitles one of his chapters "British Failures in the West Indies"; but is careful to show that the long and dismal record throws little light on the effect of climate *per se*. The scientific invaders of the tropics still face three great obstacles: disease, which can and has largely been conquered, the coloured races, a condition which can be eliminated, and climate, the unsolved problem. It is rightfully pointed out that the effects of climate can be studied only in part in the laboratory owing to the interaction of sociological, psychological and other factors in real life. Despite the most adverse conditions, small white groups have maintained a remarkable standard, notably on the little island of Saba in the West Indies, and Price agrees with R. R. Platt that failures in Central and South America are due to isolation rather than to climate.

So far there is nothing in the historical record to negative the possibilities of settlement in British Guiana with the safeguards envisaged by the Commission. The admitted dangers of disease, ignorance, isolation and racial conflict are to be removed as largely as possible. Contrary to long-held popular belief, medical opinion agrees that manual labour is not only possible but even essential. Provided the soils prove capable of

* *White Settlers in the Tropics*. By A. Grenfell Price, with additional Notes by Robert G. Stone. (American Geographical Society, Special Publication No. 23.) Pp. xiii+311+20 plates. (New York: American Geographical Society, 1939.) 4 dollars.

supporting an adequate agriculture, the unknown factor is still, in the main, climate. Ellsworth Huntington contends that there are climatic limits and optima for human beings as for all other forms of life, and that the tropics are beyond the climatic optima and near the climatic limits for whites. In a series of long and detailed appendixes to

Price's work, Mr. Robert G. Stone, of Harvard, has summarized the present state of knowledge. There are definite physiological changes of temporary and possibly permanent character produced in white peoples by a tropical environment; the real test must come in the second and third generations.

THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE

Christianity and Morals

By Prof. Edward Westermarck. Pp. xvi + 427. (London: Kegan Paul and Co., Ltd., 1939.) 21s. net.

PROF. E. WESTERMARCK requires no introduction to the reader; his earlier works on ethics and sociology are well known, and anything that he says commands attention and respect. Several of his previous books have an important bearing on the present volume and in two of these, "The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas", and "Ethical Relativity", he states his objections to the view of Rashdall and others on the objective validity of moral judgments. The present reviewer dealt with this subject less than two years ago in "Free Will or Determinism", and though his line of attack was somewhat different from that of Westermarck, his conclusions were the same, that belief in the objectivity of our moral judgments is untenable. In "Ethical Relativity", Westermarck argues that the predicates of all moral judgments, all moral concepts, are ultimately based on emotions. There are two moral emotions—moral approval and moral disapproval; the first of these is a form of retributive kindly emotion, and the second is a form of resentment. They are characterized as *moral* emotions, as distinguished from *non-moral* emotions, by the fact of disinterestedness.

In Chapter iii of the present work Westermarck shows that the ethics of Jesus are of a retributive character. It is difficult to read the synoptic gospels without agreeing with this view (John's gospel is in a different category, as few of the actual sayings of Jesus are recorded there). The moral teaching of Jesus is undoubtedly permeated with the principle of rewards and punishments. Although egoistic hedonism has usually been repulsive to the moral consciousness, yet it can have a plausible appearance, and Sidgwick recognizes it as an inevitable element in a complete system of ethics. He defines egoistic hedonism as "a system which

prescribes actions as means to the end of the individual's happiness or pleasure". This differs considerably from the egoistic hedonism of the Cyrenaics and Epicureans, and there is nothing in the teaching of Jesus which is contradictory to this definition. In Chapters iv and v it is shown that the teaching of Jesus also emphasizes the disinterested and altruistic character of the moral emotions, and here we see the feature that distinguishes them from other, non-moral, retributive emotions. The Golden Rule brings this out very clearly, although it should be pointed out that this Rule is older than Christianity, and in its negative form is widespread.

There is a very marked contrast between the teachings of Jesus and of Paul. According to Paul, salvation is not a reward for righteous conduct, as Jesus taught, but is entirely dependent on divine grace, "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus". His doctrine of justification by faith was accepted by the Church from the days of St. Augustine, though Catholicism has always recognized the meritoriousness of good works. The denial of this and the trust in justification by faith alone had very demoralizing effects amongst various Protestant sects, which even Luther himself was forced to admit and bewail. On p. 117 it is stated that Paul had imbibed from his Jewish upbringing the idea of all mankind doomed to death on account of Adam's sin. But the doctrine of 'evil impulse', not associated with the Adam story, was held in official and cultured scholastic Jewish circles, and there is much to commend the view of Dr. N. P. Williams, that the Adam story, held largely in backward Galilee where Jesus did most of his work, was adopted by Paul. This he did out of deference to those disciples, Peter in particular, who had seen Jesus in the flesh, and while it cannot be proved that Jesus in fact accepted the Adam story, yet in some of his sayings he appears to assume a sinful disposition inherent in man.