

## EUROPEANISM

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**N**OT long ago General Smuts made a very significant statement about U.N.O. He pointed out that the 'world vote' instituted by the United Nations may come to be a coloured majority vote. Already the Nations which administer coloured dependencies are beginning to feel the draught. Britain and Belgium and France are indignant about the 'back-seat drivers' of colonial administration. South Africa has felt half a gale already. It is only a matter of time until someone notices, and makes a case of, the treatment of American Negroes, which is legally so sound, but actually leaves so much to be desired. If U.N.O. is going to turn on those that founded it, it is principally in matters of colour. If Western Liberalism as a whole is to lose the confidence of its multi-coloured following, it will be on this question. Nor would a triumph over Russia in war leave things any better—possibly rather worse. For each time the coloured peoples are asked to co-operate in a war they expect additional recognition after it, and anxious war-time promises are then evaded until the coloured peoples lose patience.

This is a very serious matter for Christianity, since the West claims, in a general manner, to represent Christianity. Unless there is a very marked change in the colour situation of the whole world the same process as that which has discredited Christianity with the working class of Western nations will take place in connection with colour bars. Just as the 'workers' were taught to identify the Church with capitalism, the enemy; so the coloured peoples will be urged to identify it with colour superiority prejudice. And both have just sufficient grounds in facts of the conduct of Christians, Catholics included, to make the accusation really dangerous. Therefore those (and there are plenty of them) who think that the triumph of American arms over Communism in war would make a sort of clear field for Christianity, with none of these social problems to confuse the issue, should remember: finish communism and you have the growing, colour-conscious nationalisms of coloured peoples throughout the world to deal with. And their syllogism will only be slightly different. European

religion was identified with colour superiority and exploitation. We do not want anything that was connected with such things. Therefore. . . .

There are two ways of looking at the future and attempting to assess what will be the set-up of the world after another war, with that ground of probability which, short of the gift of prophecy, must be the guide of preparing for the future. The new atomic weapons may be so destructive that very little will be left of the human race if, one almost can say when, the war with communism is over. But also the relatively small losses of some nations engaged in the 1939 war make one wonder if it is not equally likely to prove the case that the more efficient the weapon the less the destruction, at least in man-power. Possibly a few blows will be so terrific that all will be over in a matter of days. And what then? No real period of mental change will have accompanied war. The world will be where it was, a bit dizzy but soon back to its existing frame of mind. If, as some people think, communism as an idea would die without its military power and international funds, still social prejudice against Christianity might grow, rather than diminish, in a majority of the human race, on grounds of the colour question. Westerners who will not sit at a table with a Negro now will not begin to do so merely because they have beaten Russia in war.

It is useful to think along these lines because it is a fact that a very large part of the missionary work of the Church has become mixed up with Europeanism; and still more because the average European Christian has not at all analysed the real value of his effective cultural leadership in terms of his faith. Continually we find 'Western civilisation' and 'Christian civilisation' used almost interchangeably by European Christians, and what is more serious often used interchangeably with 'Christianity'. And, in practice, colour bars are justified on grounds of not letting oneself be led to associate with an inferior culture. This is in its turn based on grounds of Christianity, danger to self-respect, and so morality. It is one of those insidious half-truths that should be most remorselessly analysed. It is a fact that few people can keep their souls without the protecting influence of their home culture. But when this is associated with a sense of essential moral superiority it becomes Phariseeism and really dangerous. One could draw up a good application of the words: 'the harlots and publicans shall

go into the kingdom of heaven before the Pharisees' in this wise. If the coloured peoples of the world to date find sex morality and honesty more difficult (harlotry and 'publicanism'), the whites find it harder to avoid the greatest of all sins, pride (Phariseism), and its accompanying lesser sin of injustice, 'grinding the faces of the poor', exploiting each other and the coloured world. If we could see the human race and true values in terms of St Augustine's two cities, the Angels and the Elect not being only superior, but the only good part of the human race; if we could really act as if the poorest primitive man of virtue were of incomparably more worth than the unjust master of industry or the untruthful professor; if we could see the two cities shaping from God's point of view, then we would indeed begin to see. Now we are always before a mirage. The mirage is increased by that which I have called the effectiveness of western cultural superiority. It has the right of might. The coloured peoples of the world want it and bow to it to get it. It gives its possessors a perilous sense of power. It gives a justification for the superiority attitude—as if, almost, we are bound, we Europeans, to keep our distance from coloured folk for the latter's sake, that we may not fall to them, but they be raised to us. So we hold off, and the gap widens.

Certainly society cannot be based on a hierarchy of moral value, chiefly because one cannot know moral value, which is only known to God, and also because society under sin would not respond. We must leave the dead to bury their dead, men of the world to rule the world, except in those rare circumstances where a full Christian, full gospel spirit, can achieve social leadership without causing riot or losing its purity. And in accordance with this the Church accepts, as a necessary limitation, class-bars and colour-bars, and does not cry out against them as such. We accept ordinary social categories for purposes of daily social life. We demand the recognition of the true moral values in certain essential matters, of freedom of faith, before the altar, in essential social conditions necessary to moral freedom and a good moral life. We attempt beyond that to influence social institutions to a truer mould, but more often have to leave the rest to the compensations of a race under a curse and destined to find its peace by mutual concession rather than by mutual love. At present we have to use the general world-wide effectiveness of white social superiority. There is no alternative in action. But it is also necessary

to ensure that this does not corrupt the mind, or become an acceptance of real social injustice, or blind us to changing social forces for which we should allow. To a certain extent it has done all this, and it is this that the coloured peoples note in the white Christian, and that makes the danger for the future.

Apart from the plain moral fact noted above, that higher culture does not necessarily mean better morals, it may be a temptation to worse morals, there is something to be said about concepts of 'higher' and 'lower' in culture. There is a school of anthropologists, the Functionalists, who will not use these terms at all in connection with culture. It seems that they have been led to this largely by reaction against the smug evolutionary attitude of nineteenth-century anthropologists, who saw themselves at the highest points of evolution, and things high or low as they approximated to them. Unfortunately the revolting school is as wrong in another way, and tends to see each human culture as an adjustment to environment not comparable to adjustments to any other environment, a series of disintegrated reactions to an incomprehensible universe. But while we cannot follow their refusal to accept any standard of judgment of higher or lower, better or worse, we can actually learn from their approach to appreciate much in primitive culture and give it a truer value. It is useful to steady our European superiority complex in this way also, by recognising that if we have a lead in rational processes and technology, we lack much that many primitive cultures have of mutuality and justice in economic relationships, of personal and family loyalty and many other natural virtues, even of imagination and artistry, and of general consistency of all conduct with their governing spiritual ideas. Our technology appeals to the ambitions of men, and so they accept our leadership—and often lose much in doing so. It would be an interesting experiment if some mission of the faith could be carried out to a primitive people without any apparatus of Europeanism. It would help to bring out the clear distinction of the Gospel from the European culture in which it has so far been framed, which is 'higher' in some ways than more primitive cultures, but in others is one of the greatest cultural confusions and disintegrations of which history, or pre-history, gives us any glimpse.

The coloured peoples of the earth are coming. They are obtaining a world majority vote that we may veto for the

moment, but not for long. They are obtaining our knowledge, and there is no reason provided by science to question the assumption of the faith which is that they will equal us. India has shaken off the yoke and is being followed by the whole of S. Eastern Asia and the Pacific. China is in the throes of a revolution which will be either to independence of any influence or to dependence on the Asiatic influence of Russia. African nationalism—not only isolated but Pan-African conventions and organisations—is growing apace. It is only a matter of time before Africa has its Gandhis or its equivalent of the new Chinese revolution. The Mahommedan belt round Southern Asia has already shown contempt for Europeanism. If the 'effectiveness' of Western superiority in technology forces it into line in matters of industry and transport, it will not be forced by that into any greater love. What is the situation going to be when these are all equal and look back? They will see that the West helped them. But they will also see that it bewildered them into giving up many customs that were better than Western customs, that it used them for gain and power, that it hoodwinked them into an inferiority complex, made them feel its gifts of culture were great gifts and served too many years for them. They are going to see that during all this its citizens, in their personal life, drew away their coats from the coloured of the earth as from something unclean.

It is said that Empires are greatest in their decay. And it is true that after the new peoples had swamped Rome they respected her more than when she controlled them by her power. And the main reason for this stands as a hope for Westernism, that Rome was the centre of the faith the new peoples adopted, and will be. But the secondary reason, that there was nothing comparable to Rome's philosophy and technology in the culture of the new peoples, will not be found now in the same degree. It is not uprooted travelling clans, with no time for thought, that are now shaking off the old order, but many of them peoples with their own settled culture centres, their ancient books and towns and monuments and tradition intact, their philosophies, from a different angle, as developed as the Greek tradition, their technical achievements already almost equal. And in any case, the process by which the despoilers of Rome came to be so respectful took hundreds of years. We must turn this around, examine it, grasp it. Europeanism is going, and going even if Russia does not find

herself powerful enough to force the pace.

The moral for the Catholic is of the utmost importance. Almost everywhere the Church has come alongside the Western invasion, protected by the awe inspired by the European colonising power, or even less nobly, the trading company with its quasi-administrative authority and its mercenary soldiers. St. Francis Xavier's gloomy remark that the principal obstacle to the conversion of the Asiatic was the conduct of the European Christian colonist covers the whole history of the mission field. It is going to cover the history of missions and origins of modern life as these will be written by the scholars of the newly developing world. And quite apart from the reaction to be expected from this accompanying of Christianity by social injustice, there is the question of the whole European tone of the missions. Even if it was inevitable to give such local pattern stuff as *Tom Brown's School Days* or Dickens to children in the African bush as exercises in English, still there is more, there is that whole assumption in the European literature of the faith, apart from the most philosophical or spiritual, that European institutions are the Christian institutions. For example the concepts of ownership, or of marriage, or of success in life, in all the European literature which surrounds Christianity and uses the name of God and Christ, have all their respective accretions from Roman Law, Renaissance Romanticism, and Commercialism. Even the concepts of holiness in relation to action or contemplation, activism or peculiar European forms of introspection, need clarifying.

The Holy See has visualised all this in its mission policy, just as in its policy towards Greek Christianity. And while the missionaries continue to use the 'old order', the subsidised school system of the colonial power, the land grant of the mining company, the contact created by European diplomacy or commerce, the whole emphasis of the mission endeavour of the Church now is to develop indigenous institutions, and most particularly to create an indigenous clergy, and to create it in a manner best fitted to the local customs and psychology. This will disengage the Church from 'Europeanism' so that, as in India and China now, when only indigenous clergy are even partly safe of tenure, and the national self-consciousness has come, the Church may not be identified with the vanishing colonial influence. Moreover there is insistence in this policy on the recognition of the equality of the native

clergy and religious, a point that the Holy See has been continually called upon to stress when missionaries have been affected by the mentality and colour-bars of their European colonist associates, or by experience of throw-back to paganism, or of irresponsibility, in indigenous clergy and religious. It has been for Rome to re-establish the principle that the new peoples must have the right to learn by their own mistakes, and to show the confidence that created the early European clergy in the similar circumstances of the first few centuries after Christ. With African and Indian Bishops and Religious Superiors, and a Chinese Cardinal, this principle is established.

There is an immense field for the application of the same principle in colour questions as a whole. White Catholics, migrating to or growing up in coloured regions, even missionaries, can learn from it to shake off the insidious prejudice of their birth that white men are the best kind of men. There is a scope for wider sympathy in all Catholic thought and activity towards the real values in non-European culture. There is evidence to be collected of that universal human application of the Natural Law which the Mediaevals called the *Jus Gentium*, most especially in the burning question of the distribution of human wealth, but also in many other matters affecting natural Ethics. The study of prayer and contemplation could learn from Eastern and African forms of asceticism and meditation, just as it gathered much of use from Plato. It is urgent that Catholicism should not be transliterated only but fully translated into the non-European cultures, that it should be less and less markedly connected with European forms—just as its Founder was not a European but an inhabitant of that corner of the Mediterranean where European, Asiatic and African meet. Thought for the position of the Church when the Asiatic and the African, like the Russian, has reached a stage when he no longer desires anything European merely because it is European, can assist our charity in seeing the importance of this full interpretation of *Catholicism*.