

ARE YOU A CHRISTIAN?

SOME three years ago, in articles and editorial obiter dicta BLACKFRIARS commented upon the menace of Anti-Communism. It was something of a dissentient note; to Catholics who read, as well as buy, our Catholic weeklies, at least a little unfamiliar. To some indeed the slogan "Anti-Communism is not enough" was positively scandalous. Was there ever a surer title to Election than to be the first to detect heresy in the Left, or the loudest to clamour about the latest iniquity at Moscow?

There was applause, too, from enlightened quarters where it was not believed that to be a Communist you must first be a monster, where people were awake enough to realize that the U.S.S.R. (terrorist bureaucracy that it may be) is not exclusively representative of every evil under the sun. Since then, we have heard at least three Catholics (who go to Mass every Sunday) laugh about the portentous assurance of a tract-writer that the Sinister Thing *modern art* is, even too, a manifestation of the Bolshevik Leviathan.

Inevitably, however, the Anti's continue to talk most and be the most heard: Anti-Communist, Anti-Anglican, anti-what not. Theirs is a simple school: negative polemic, the disgruntled gibe, the well-worn cliché, the worn-out reference, the same inescapable, infallible authorities, the *stock specialists* (of whom the most eminent are rarely acquainted with their specialities, first-hand. How many, for instance, of our critics of Russia have been to Russia?). Whence we may be excused for registering relief that Professor Macmurray (the distinguished author of *Interpreting the Universe, Freedom in the Modern World*, etc.) is one of those who see in Communism by no means unmixed evil—since evil of itself cannot stand—still less, inspire.

In his latest book¹ Professor John Macmurray is truly philosophical in that, in tackling his problem, he aims at a

¹ *Creative Society, a study of the Relation of Christianity to Communism.* (Student Christian Movement Press; 5s. net.)

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cognitio per causas, an analysis of the essential meanings of Communism and Christianity. He believes that Communism may not only be corrected by, but may actually be fulfilled in Christianity. But it must be a genuine Christianity which has resolutely dissociated itself from the counterfeit so frequently confused with it. How often have we ourselves been forced to admit that it is the very spirit of Communism that is Catholic and Christian, annexed by Satan because we seem to have no use for it; good, if you will, harnessed to evil. How often have we declared from experience that the anti-God of Lenin was a reaction not against Christianity but pseudo-Christianity.

Of Communism, Professor Macmurray holds that it is only its negations and limitations which are anti-Christian. He insists that we have but to look to the teaching of Jesus Christ Himself for a recognition of Dialectical Process in human society and history, for recognition, that is to say, of the invariable importance of the economic factor in human contingency, or of the essential relevance of the tension between classes. Here we cannot help noting our disappointment that Professor Macmurray did not go deeper in developing his point in relation to the thesis that it is the negation alone that is evil. Class-tension is not class-war; and class-war is not class-hatred.

The following instances are quoted in proof of the dialectical mind of Jesus: the choice of disciples: his self-announcement in the words of Isaiah, "He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor," etc., and subsequently: "I came not to call the righteous." "The first shall be last and the last first" (elaborated dialectically by St. Paul in the first epistle to the Corinthians). "Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled . . . but woe unto you that are rich for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger"; and the parable of Dives and Lazarus (and was there anything so near to contempt?) as examples of the revolution-nexus in the thought of Christ between the time-factor and the dialectical reversal it brings about. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it

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bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." In His most profound doctrine Christ asserts the dialectical principle as axiomatic in his thesis, a fundamental law of life. Again, for the very reason of his aptness and because he has given us an argument that is as valuable as it is penetrating and exhilarating, and, above all, because we cannot overestimate the worth of any thesis that conduces to the removal of the misunderstanding between Communists and Christians, we regret that Professor Macmurray has not gone a little deeper. To others must be left (in recognizing Marx's debt to the teaching of Jesus, and the Communist reinterpretation, however unconscious, however incomplete, of the Gospel) the task of giving an absolute to a relative value. Indeed, Professor Macmurray is himself the first to recognize that the dialectical evolution of humanity (which is all that Communism sees) is purely temporal, and that in consequence the meaning of life is manifest only in terms of social development—and then only in view of the possible end of the process. He accepts, too, presumably, the fact that to the historical materialist we are as yet animal units, that "all history until the establishment of Communism is pre-human," that it is only "with the achievement of Communism that human society can, in the true sense, exist." With refreshing clearness of vision, too, he perceives that it is the "communist" thought in the life and teaching of Christ from which the Bolshevik rationale is derived; and with a profound sense of reality he adds that without the fulness of Christianity the structure of modern Communist thought is meaningless because incomplete. And yet, when by a miracle there is accomplished in the rich man the possibility of his election unto the Kingdom of Heaven, upon what other eligibility does Professor Macmurray insist than that which is necessary for membership in the community of Mankind? In vain we seek for emphasis upon the absolute value on which alone can rest a permanent appreciation of Mankind. The Communist has his mock eschatology, the original Sin of Exploitation, the life, death and resurrection of Bakounin's great

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Canaille (Atonement), immortality, the destiny of the proletariat, baptismal regeneration by a baptism of blood, the Last Judgment upon privilege and property. What then?

“What then,” a worker in Kiev asked me, “for me, for you, for the people?” If it is we sycophants of Capital, we pseudo-Christians, that disown our liabilities in respect of Society, then it is the Communist legislators that forget the individual. Truly, my friend, Comrade Commissar X. is less ignoble in his preoccupation for Society than I am, N. or M., in my preoccupation for N. or M. But, for all that, there is the problem, and the crux of the problem; *to suggest to Commissar X. a greater interest in the individual destiny of N. or M., and to me, N. or M., to urge (if such a thing be decent) a greater interest in Society.*

But if we are suggesting to Professor Macmurray, as a stable argument, the rights and the privileges of the individual soul, redeemed by Christ and indwelt by the Holy Ghost, we insist no less upon the challenge to the Christian corporation contained in his book *Creative Society*, nor seek the less to justify it. The first duty he enjoins upon us is the reappropriating to ourselves of the general structure of Communist theory *in so far as it is positive*. The second, I take it, to be aware of the nature and the seductions of pseudo-Christianity. Christianity is realist, pseudo-Christianity almost wholly an idealism consisting not in fictions and false ideas, but in the divorce of sound ideas and an ingenuous creed from “the conditions of their expression in material action.” Not merely is this a pharisaism, a creed that denies its own efficacy; it is the attitude of mind even of the truly spiritual man who apprehends God, and, after the vision, desires to build tabernacles and stay there, far from the madding crowd and the sordidness of human existence. So that there are many of us who in our daily return to action shy at (and contemn) the universal struggle for bread, and finding the gaudy world all but bereft of wonder, bury ourselves in insecure catacombs, or in despair abandon ourselves to competition for power, and satisfaction in material terms. Many, again, shuddering (over their newspaper) at the dictatorship of the proletariat

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(or rule by Society) have little suspicion of the comparative rigour of self-rule, that is to say, the unprejudiced rule of N. or M. by N. or M.

Professor Macmurray's book is one which cannot be neglected by those anxious to enlist revolution in the cause of Christ. Its author, as opposed to the many, is a true economist. For it must not be supposed that the economist (I do not refer to the product of the Engels-Marx School on the one hand nor to the Victorian political economists on the other) regards our social conditions purely as the result of commerce and politics. He penetrates these causes and attempts to discover moral motives, and the individual impulse which accounts for so much of the sum total of the misery (and prosperity) of life.

Professor John Macmurray has insight. He asks Christians if they know what Christianity means; in other words, if they are Christ's. He heads Chapter viii with the words, "The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." From some of us it has already been taken.

J. F. T. PRINCE.