

SIR JOSIAH STAMP ON CHRISTIAN ECONOMICS

the quest is over. His two themes are complementary, as Dr. Richey points out. "While the end of *Parzival* brings out the idea of chivalry as a unison mating this world with the world to come, the introduction shows it as a unison of the lives of men and the lives of women . . ."

Wolfram is the equivalent to Langton among the laity. He gives us the "literal" counterpart to Langton's allegorical interpretation of the creation of Eve.

The Middle Ages often strike us as a series of romantic contrasts. We think of St. Bernard and the Arch-poet, of the hymns and the drinking songs. But recent work on the generation that preceded St. Thomas⁶ is showing that the Thomist synthesis had its roots in experience. "Christian humanism" had been taught by Langton in the schools of Paris and sung by Wolfram in the German courts.

BERYL SMALLEY.

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CATCHING sight of my own name by chance in a periodical several weeks old, I discovered to my astonishment that I had apparently been mentioned in a book by Sir Josiah Stamp which was published this year. Sir Josiah Stamp, needless to say, is not only a director of the Bank of England and a railway magnate, but also an "eminent economist" and indeed the chosen publicity-man who is ever ready to defend the existing financial system with voice and pen and a limitless supply of tact and urbanity.

Curiosity had to be satisfied, and at the first opportunity I looked up his book, which is called *Motive and Method in a Christian Order* (Epworth Press). As regards myself, the results of the search were very disappointing. The distinguished author had indeed mentioned me (amongst others) and even quoted extensively from a little book of mine, but only by way of illustrating how unwise some of the clergy are in committing themselves to the "Douglas Credit Sys-

⁶ Stephen Langton died in 1228, Robert de Courson in 1219, Wolfram von Eschenbach in about 1220.

tem." I call this disappointing, because I have never at any time been a follower of Major Douglas or an adherent of his scheme, and indeed was at considerable pains to distinguish myself from the Douglasites in that same little book from which Sir Josiah Stamp took his quotations. I have even criticized the Douglasites quite a lot in their own periodicals; though not in articles addressed to the general public, because it seems a pity to give the impression that money-reformers are at loggerheads, when they are *all* united in their exposure of the private Money-Power. Also it is true I have often used the terms "social credit" and "national dividend," but Sir Josiah Stamp can hardly be unaware that these ideas are common amongst others than Douglasites and by no means involve acceptance of such junk as the A + B theorem, etc., which the Douglasites are now finding it so difficult to throw overboard quietly.

For the rest, Sir Josiah's complaints about me are that I "restate the Catholic position on usury over the centuries with a curious hankering after the current validity of mediæval ideas"; and that in discussing the existing financial system I insist on bringing in the question of morals. To these accusations I do not mind pleading guilty. What I do object to is being counted as a Douglasite; and I think Sir Josiah Stamp could easily have known better, but it agrees only too well with his purpose to identify Monetary Reform with the solemn unrealities of the Douglas proposals.

And that is enough, and more than enough, about myself; but it seems a pity to leave Sir Josiah Stamp's book without a fuller description of its contents. It is addressed explicitly to "the younger generation of preachers," and offers them advice as to their attitude towards social and economic ideas. We will let the author speak for himself; all we need do is to contribute some italics and capital letters to bring out the full significance of his words.

First of all, he is insistent that economic arrangements are just a mechanism, to be improved perhaps by the engineers and the economists, but not a matter for the moralist to meddle with. "Have we any *right* to claim that religion, and especially Christianity, shall provide not only for communion with God, but also a clear answer to the problem of the best MACHINERY to adopt in all circumstances for men's relationships with each other?" And again: "I submit that

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Christian enthusiasm for a better order may give an impetus to study these problems, but no guidance whatever in their solution. . . . The pulpit should have no lot or part in it [he is talking about the Douglas Scheme, but he means any change whatever] UNTIL THE MAIN BODY OF REPUTABLE ECONOMIC THINKERS [surely a delightful phrase!] have declared it to be feasible."

Morality indeed, in Sir Josiah Stamp's mind, seems to be rather restricted to personal relationships, and the same can be said of Christianity. "We understand that A can love his neighbour B as himself, but in what precise sense can Birmingham love Croydon as itself, or the National Union of Railwaymen love the Railway Shareholders' Union? . . . *A company, through its board of directors, may do things 'in the interests of its shareholders' (for it has power to select only particular interests, i.e. their financial interests) which the individuals or many of them would not do individually. THEY MAY BE THINGS WHICH DO NOT SQUARE WITH THE INTERESTS OF THE COMMUNITY TAKEN AS A WHOLE—SUCH LARGE GENERALIZATIONS ARE NOT ITS BUSINESS*" (p. 40).

It is uncomfortable to reflect that the writer of these words is one of the directors of the Bank of England.

No wonder Sir Josiah Stamp remarks that group-relations of this kind (limited liability companies for instance) introduce a complication that was "insignificant in the time of Christ. . . . *The whole body of ethics needs to be recast in the mould of modern corporate relations.*"

But can we trust Sir Josiah Stamp to do the recasting? He thinks that the word "right" *may have a different meaning when transferred from individuals to societies*. He asks: "MAY NOT CHRISTIAN TRUTH BE PRAGMATIC RATHER THAN ABSOLUTE?" And he objects to "the combination in one logical whole of utterances of Our Lord which stand *sub specie aeternitatis* and those which had apocalyptic limitations, or those we now see to be clearly conditioned by kenosis, or by Christ's humanity" (p. 32).

Having thus warned "the younger generation of preachers" against undue reliance on Christian morality, the author finds it easy to say what part religion can rightly aspire to play in social and economic affairs. The main business of religion, he says, is to concern itself with the uplifting of personal motive and personal character. Beyond that, it

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may also seek to create a sort of atmosphere or set of conventions favourable to progress. But as regards social betterment, religion must take care *not to advocate changes for which men are not ready*, but rather "TO SUPPORT HEARTILY ALL MODIFICATIONS OF SOCIAL COMPULSION WHICH ARE WELL-SPONSORED IN A TECHNICAL SENSE," and so consolidate the ground for the next advance.

In other and cruder words, the younger generation of preachers are invited to place themselves at the service of the policy of the Bank of England.

Never for a moment does it seem to enter Sir Josiah Stamp's head that there is such a thing as Justice to be considered in economic arrangements; that right or wrong are as much involved in collective affairs as in individual: and that the laws of a country may be good or bad, just or unjust, and that bad laws ought to be changed into good ones.

Two definite conclusions can fairly be drawn from this book. First, that the Money-lords are becoming a little apprehensive lest the facts about Finance should be realized by organized religion; they have made sure of the Press, the Radio, and the Cinema, but the pulpit disconcertingly reveals itself as a possible source of leakage. Secondly, that the tactical scheme of the Money-Power is going to use the Douglas proposals as a red-herring; it will try to make the public mind identify the cause of Monetary Reform with the eccentric knots into which the Douglas die-hards have been tying themselves ever since the death of Alfred Orage, who, with his dynamic inspiration and his not-too-critical judgment, was of course the real source of their movement.

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EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

CATHOLICISM AND PEACE. Possible misgivings as to whether the attitude to Peace and War adopted by contributors to the last number of BLACKFRIARS represents authentic Catholicism may be allayed by some remarks of Emmanuel Mounier in LA VIE INTELLECTUELLE (November 25) which we may paraphrase: