

## ANTI-CHRIST AND THE ANTIDOTE

WHEN the old pagan civilization in the West went down with Imperial Rome there was one institution which, surviving the general decline, gathered together the fragments from the wreckage and incorporating the new elements rebuilt again more solidly, more splendidly than before the edifice of Western civilisation. So intimate was the union between that institution and the new civilization in the West that we may call Christianity the soul of Christendom, for Europe is the Faith and the Faith is Europe.<sup>1</sup>

Till about the beginning of the 16th century the Christian revelation and ideology were accepted universally even when their precepts were not always adhered to. Though disagreement and conflict might arise between Prince and Pope, the basic principles on which society reposed remained unchallenged. But after the decline of the later Middle Ages revolution came, a reaction set in.

Once contracted the fever spread like a contagion in every possible direction. From the three reformers<sup>2</sup> as from a three-headed fountain the stream has continued to flow for some 300 years increasing in depth and volume so that to-day in many cases the rock from which it first flowed has become quite obscured. The revolt began by undermining the Christian edifice, but in time the breach became so considerable that the existence of the edifice became, in many instances, quite forgotten.<sup>3</sup> But men cannot live on a negation. When they have done away with the old order they must replace it by another. This new order cannot, in

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<sup>1</sup> That does not mean, as Mr. Belloc himself has explained, that the Faith is not for all men. It is simply a statement of fact not of doctrine. The Faith grew up in Europe forming Christendom. What has been can never have not been. A Europe whose soul was not Christianity would not be the Europe we know.

<sup>2</sup> Luther, Descartes, Rousseau, vide Maritain's *Three Reformers*.

<sup>3</sup> That is why in many milieux to-day it has become an altruism that the world is faced with only two alternatives, Communism or Fascism.

its constitution, be wholly arbitrary. It must model itself to a certain extent in accordance with the exigencies of the nature of things. This is exactly what happened in the present case.

Long before the middle of last century the cancer germ of secularism had more than amply filled its destructive rôle, for Christianity had become less than an empty name when "Christ meant cotton." The aphelion had been reached; the stage was set for the reaction. For man is a spiritual animal, a religious animal. He knows he is born for higher things. He had drifted far from the old conception of the primacy of the spiritual when the new prophets came, so he did not notice the radical defect in the new revelations they proclaimed. Thus it came to pass that the new revelations, the chink in their armour thus protected, captivated the multitudes, for they are simply the age-old Revelation, the Christian ideology, in material terms. Their strength is also their weakness. They owe their strength, their coherency, their plausibility and veri-similitude to their copying of the old, but their weakness lies in the fact that they are but travesties of it.

These new ideologies, though violently opposed to one another, differ really only in modalities. While Communism seeks the predominance of one class by the liquidation of all others, racism aims at the predominance of a nation, of a race. But their general purpose is similar: they tend to extend their action far beyond the narrow confines of one state, to engulf the world in one universal hegemony.<sup>4</sup> These new systems, we have said, are modelled on the divine plan and on the aspirations of human nature. They are religions: they have a god, the proletariat, the race to whom they offer human sacrifice, whose commands they obey, whose slightest wish (as translated by the high-priests) they fulfil with unquestioning obedience. They too have a redeemer

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<sup>4</sup> "*The Myth of the 20th Century* (A. Rosenberg) is a myth of blood which unchains under the sign of the swastika the racist world revolution."

outside of whom there is no salvation.<sup>5</sup> Nor do these 'religions' lack the distinctive mark of a real religion, the missionary spirit.<sup>6</sup> On the contrary their revelations are essentially commodity for exportation, for the field of action they wish eventually to evangelise is the world. When nourished on the principles of the new gospels of *Mein Kampf* or *Das Kapital*, the precepts of the new Sermon on the Mount ever urging them on, Youth shall have blasted its way to the new Utopia, the warriors shall receive the reward of all their striving—the earthly paradise, the millenium.

Though in these new revelations we see revived the Christian ideas of the common destiny of all men; the universal nature of the new gospel; mysticism, idealism; their truth and beauty has become terribly attenuated through the shallowness of the source on which they depend. Their catholicity is merely relative; they preach only for the elect. Their mysticism too is a frustrated aspiration, an arrested development, for "it is the fundamental contradiction of materialism that it exalts the results of human achievement and at the same time denies the reality of the spiritual forces that have made this achievement possible." Their exterior resemblance to the older faith serves to accentuate their fundamental dissimilarity. For Christianity is based on the supernatural while the new gospels are essentially materialistic. Therein lies the root of their difference. Unlike Christ the new prophets speak as all men speak, in terms of land, and cotton and oil, of prestige and honour and strength. Their kingdom is quite definitely of this world.

This primary postulate that man is a mere animal whose destiny is to be entirely accomplished on this earth, is the initial error which running through these modern ideologies vitiates the whole system. "You can give men food and leisure and amusements and good conditions of work, and still they will remain unsatisfied. You can deny them all these things, and they will not complain so long as they

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<sup>5</sup> "In Hitler alone is our salvation" (Nazi banner in Vienna).

<sup>6</sup> cf. *The Modern Dilemma*, by C. Dawson, p. 95.

feel that they have something to die for . . . But when the soldier comes back from the war, and the Communist has realised his Utopia, they are apt to feel a certain disproportion between their sacrifices and the fruits of their achievements.

“Now it is the fundamental contradiction of materialism that it exalts the results of human achievement and at the same time denies the reality of the spiritual forces that have made this achievement possible. All the highest achievements of the human spirit, whether in the order of thought or action or moral being, rest on a spiritual absolute and become impossible in a world of purely economic or even purely human values. It is only in the light of religious experience and of absolute spiritual principles that human nature can recognise its own greatness and realise its higher potentialities.”<sup>7</sup>

Though to-day, for many, the existence of “a world of eternal spiritual realities in which and for which the world of man exists,” is a “truth that is no longer obvious, nevertheless it cannot be disregarded with impunity. The civilization that denies God denies its own foundation. For the glory of man is a dim reflexion of the glory of God, and when the latter is denied the former fades.”<sup>8</sup>

It is not surprising therefore to find the materialist virus permeating these idealisms vitiating the whole. Their materialism which binds their souls to earth, reduces their angle of vision; man is the highest creature in this perspective. In such a philosophy the individual is soon subordinated to the mass, the brotherhood of all men to that of a class or caste. He becomes a unit in the thundering herd; a mechanical wheel in the giant machine. But the herd is thundering towards the precipice; the machine has got out of control. These new-fangled gods have turned out to be juggernauts. Frankenstein is devouring his creator.

These systems have one defect, they lack one part. But

<sup>7</sup> *The Modern Dilemma*, pp. 97-98.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 98-99.

this part is so important, that its absence destroys and renders useless, even noxiously seductive (noxious because seductive), the truth and harmony of the other parts. Like Frankenstein they lack a soul.

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The importance of these new revelations arises from the two distinctive features which distinguish them from previous false philosophies. Instead of being content with attacking the old order, they are attempting to replace it with a new—with a new which resembles the old and like it fulfils (albeit in a restricted fashion) the needs and aspirations of man.

Too often in the past we have been content to oppose them with reasoning and argument alone. These are certainly very necessary and useful instruments but do they suffice? Are they adequate? Are they fully adapted to the task? We must remember that “the Communist who matters is a man who has seen a vision. We may meet the Communist with solemn arguments showing this fact by statistics and that fact by psychology, confronting this statement of Marx with that statement of Stalin and both with some rigmarole from the local Communist Party’s platform, destroying all his foundations with the ruthlessness of our common sense and leaving him as firmly grounded as before, but angry with us and more passionately than ever in love with his vision.

“You cannot destroy a vision by nibbling at it or laying violent hands on it or throwing stones at it. You can meet a vision only with a vision.”<sup>9</sup> That is why “to be anti-Communist is not enough. We must have the heat that keeps out the cold. There is only one way to change darkness—by introducing light. If the Communist with a vision is the one that matters, how much more so will it be with the Catholic. The Catholic with a vision will be the one that matters.”<sup>10</sup>

But while the new materialist mysticisms inflame their adherents with an all-conquering zeal to evangelise the

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<sup>9</sup> F. Sheed, in a review of *City of God*.

<sup>10</sup> Captain Robert McGuire at the Birmingham Catholic Reunion.

world; to make their vision a living reality, "we (Christians) have become so used to our (how much grander!) vision that we scarcely have any sense of vision at all. Use and custom have dulled the edge of the wonder of Catholicism."<sup>11</sup>

But "if it be the case that the man who matters is the man who has seen a vision and who holds on to it, then let us leave these men with their vision and retain the true vision of the radiance of Catholicism. Our vision will be like the sun at its height against the light of a match . . ." <sup>12</sup> For our vision is the perfect counterpart of theirs but on a more sublime plane since the new ideologies are but defective imitations of the old. They have a vision, we have a greater; they have a mystical body, so have we; they have a führer, a duce, outside of whom there is no salvation, so have we; they aim at world revolution, so do we.

But once more the children of this world have been wiser in their generation than the children of light. We may learn of them a lesson.

For them their religion is not an adjunct, an appendix or a mere dead-weight to act as a brake but something "essential" which inspires and vitalises, from within, all their activity. That is why, not content with possessing their treasure, they must needs endeavour to share it with all their brothers. They spare no pains to spread their gospel, because they are "possessed" by it. They penetrate every milieu forming nuclei or cells which spread until they have completely transformed the whole. They make use of every means in their power to propagate their ideas. Wireless, the cinema, the theatre, literature, newspapers, reviews, books, and the hundred and one other means of thought dissemination are all pressed into service in the cause. They know the importance of knowledge, for without it action is impossible. *Nihil volitum nisi præcognitum*. That is why the members of the Left Book Club are told to "Learn and Lead." That is why the dictators believe in "catching them young" to indoctrinate them with their own

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<sup>11</sup> *loc. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

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particular ideas, that they too may see the glorious vision. They train them too in bodies that they may support one another in their march towards the ideal; that they may be fully conscious of their unity, indivisibility as one body. In a word, they live for their ideal. No sacrifice is too great; no task too mean, if it brings nearer the advent of the Kingdom of Earth.

Catholic Action is the complete, the perfect answer to this Communist Action. But Catholic Action demands Catholic Actionists, "visionaries," militants. That is what we lack. We know that Christ and His Gospel is the remedy for all maladies for all times.

But though Christ is the remedy he will not save us without our co-operation. We must apply the remedy; we must bring Him back, not simply as a figure-head but as a vivifying reality. Only thus will our reality dispel the new-fangled mirage.

Those who preach His Gospel, who continue his work of redemption, whose goal is the Peace of Christ in the reign of Christ, must remember that the following of Christ necessarily demands sacrifice.

That our vision may become a reality, we must become enamoured of it, "possessed" by it. If we want to bring about a revolution, we must begin by radically changing ourselves; we must also forget ourselves.

That demands self-sacrifice. But it is only at that price that we shall obtain victory. As Peter Maurin has pithily put it:

"The dynamite of Christianity  
Can out-dynamite  
The dynamite of Communism (and every other ism)  
Easily. If only the Christians  
Had the courage  
To light the fuse of  
That dynamite—  
Which is self-sacrifice."

If we continue to be "half-an-hour a week Catholics" we

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can never hope to contend with "seven days-a-week Communists" or any other visionaries. It is only in the measure in which we become conscious of our vision that we shall impart it. To become conscious of it, we must meditate it. It must be a case of "contemplata tradere." We shall propagate it when it has become for us a living reality; when it has so fully taken possession of us that we are willing to make it the lode-star of all our activity and the centre of our firmament; in a word, when we are willing to light that fuse.

E. R. GILCHRIST.