

LAMBETH PAMPHLETS

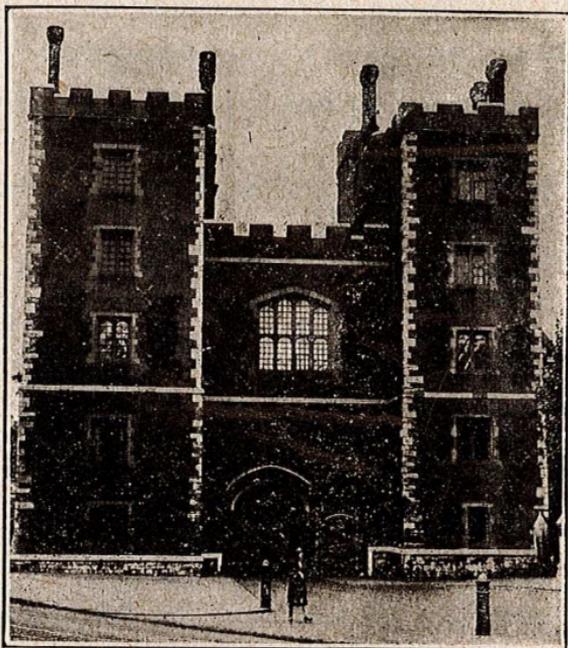
No. 2

LAMBETH ON

“The Church and The Modern World”

THE MODERN STATE COMMUNISM

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Introductory Note

At the Annual Meeting of the General Board of Religious Education, in joint session with the Executive Council of the General Synod, the following resolution was passed:

"That the G.B.R.E. be requested to consider (in collaboration with the C.S.S.) the publication, in attractive form, of a series of 'Lambeth Pamphlets', as part of a wide educational programme."

In harmony with this resolution, the G.B.R.E. has produced a series of five pamphlets as follows:

1. Lambeth on "The Church and the Modern World"—Human Rights—War, by Rev. Canon W. W. Judd, M.A., D.D., D.C.L.
2. Lambeth on "The Church and the Modern World"—the Modern State—Communism, by Rev. Canon W. W. Judd, M.A., D.D., D.C.L.
3. Lambeth and "The Unity of the Church", by Rev. F. H. Cosgrave, M.A., D.D., LL.D.
4. Lambeth and "Education", by Rev. Canon R. A. Hiltz, M.A., D.D., D.C.L.
5. Lambeth and "The Church's Discipline in Marriage", by Rev. Canon W. H. Davison, M.A.

The purpose of these pamphlets is to set forth in brief form the main points of view contained in the various reports presented to Lambeth, as well as the resolutions passed by Lambeth.

It should be kept in mind that the statements taken from the reports carry with them only the authority of the committees concerned. The resolutions, however, carry the full weight of the conference itself.

It is hoped that these pamphlets may be widely circulated throughout the Church of England in Canada.



THE CHURCH AND THE MODERN WORLD

The Modern State Communism

Under this general heading, "The Church and the Modern World", the Lambeth Conference dealt with the Church's relation to human rights, war, the modern state and Communism. In a former pamphlet we discussed the bishops' treatment of the subject of Human Rights and the idea of war in the modern world.

Any discussion of the Church in the modern world must, of necessity, direct public attention to the modern state and the ideologies of the day. Hence Lambeth has given us a very searching analysis of these two subjects. Their treatment flows naturally from their statement of the Christian doctrine of man. Man as the child of God is the criterion for our judgment upon the modern state and all that it entails, whether in the democratic countries of the "west" or in its totalitarian form as seen in some other parts of the world.

As was pointed out in our other pamphlet—on Human Rights and on War—the Lambeth Report reveals at many points a prophetic criticism of the conditions from which these totalitarian doctrines and their embodiment in modern states have sprung. The bishops sound the prophetic note of the Christian Gospel, challenging the faithful to realize injustices in their society and pointing the way to righteousness and brotherhood.

THE CHURCH AND THE MODERN STATE

One might imagine that the whole of Lambeth's statement on this subject could be summed up in a condemnation of the omniscient state of today and of the exercise of unbridled power. As a matter of fact every paragraph of the committee report and every resolution is full of definite and differing suggestions, some of them with words of praise for the modern "welfare" state.

The Church and Christians, according to Lambeth, have a very

great responsibility in the state today. This is set forth in eight propositions. We summarize them briefly:

1. While welcoming the concern of the modern state for the welfare of its citizens, the Christian community must exercise a continuous check upon any development towards totalitarianism.

2. Since the state in its care for human welfare must use many more servants, it is a duty of the Church to see that such persons are the product of Christian teaching and training.

3. There must be a true and insistent "gospel of work" today and the Church must forever emphasize this. There must be found a cure for monotony of mechanical tasks, provision for recreation and the disciplined use of leisure, and workers on all levels must be made to feel the urge of the service motive as against the "profit motive"—a phrase which has often been wrongly used in recent years.

4. While there must be an army of government employees, even for educational and social administration, the Church must emphasize the continued necessity for voluntary agencies and workers, for "social work today demands more than good will". It requires training but also the sympathy and grace supplied by Christ.

5. It follows, naturally, that both clergy and laity should take part in the communal life of the neighbourhood, this in order to prevent the state from disregarding Christian values. The Church will save its life—"will preserve its integrity" . . . "by penetrating at every possible point the secular community".

6. The delicate question of the rights of minority and of majority groups must be recognized by the state, and the Church is called to quicken the conscience of government in this direction.

7. This concern for people within one's own country must be extended to all under-privileged and subject peoples. The Church must support all enlightened policy looking towards the rights of such peoples, to the stability of their family and tribal life. "Production and distribution should be governed by the needs of the producing peoples . . . and not just to the profit of the few." Added to this the Church must insist that the spiritual and cultural heritage of Christian nations should be given without stint to these various peoples.

8. In order to bear their weight in all these directions, the various Churches should seek the widest understanding and co-operation so that the state may be duly apprized of Christian desires and ideals.

Lambeth recognizes the difficulty of defining totalitarianism, democracy, or any other form of government. Nevertheless, it says:

"Such, however, is the evil in human nature, and the corrupt-influence of power, that the dictators and their subordinates fall in love with power, and the exercise of coercion over others. No agreement is possible between the dictatorships of the police states and the Christian way of life. The conflict of values is absolute whether the basis of the dictatorship is a secular or a religious view of life."

While making that assertion, Lambeth also notes the "paternal" nature of the modern state—its desire to meet the material welfare needs of its people—and while recognizing the need for that in this day of high organization, sounds this word of warning, ". . . but paternalism must be truly fatherly and not a cloak to cover exploitation nor be allowed to delay full and responsible freedom of indigenous people."

It is impossible within the compass of this article to discuss fully the application of these various principles in our own country or abroad. Suffice it to say that every principle enunciated is of the very warp and woof of our daily living. The "paternal" state is with us—apparently to stay. To prevent it becoming the omniscient state, to forbend against that total corruption of power, totalitarianism, should be a vital concern of the Church both as an institution in society and as the Body of Christ. It should also be the concern of Christians, as individual members of the state, who are the inheritors of the "liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free". The late Archbishop Temple used to say that the working out of freedom and of fellowship in a controlled society is not impossible, and that it should be a major concern of the Christian community.

There are those among us today who believe that the development of programs of security for all citizens and the control of the public utilities and major natural resources will of necessity lead to totalitarianism. On the other hand, there are those who want more state planning, more control, more public ownership. To each group, the present writer believes, Lambeth says in effect that both personal freedom (consistent with the freedom of others) and the good of the community as a whole, that is, fellowship, can be won, but only by the constant reference of all social and economic reforms to the Christian standard of "man as the child of God". To insist upon this the Church must ever be alert, and in our "democratic" society must work with all secular groups who

with goodwill seek to direct governments along similar, if not identical, lines. Lambeth has placed a warning signpost against totalitarianism, but has also pointed society to these eight avenues which should lead us around that dread danger zone. Will Christians and the Church follow them?

THE CHURCH AND COMMUNISM

Communism, to Lambeth, is the most challenging manifestation in the world today of the corruption of unbridled power and of the evil result of materialism and secularism.

The genius of the resolutions and of the committee's report might best be indicated in these four propositions:

1. Marxian Communism is an altogether evil thing and must be countered by Christianity and Christians.
2. A clear understanding of the word "Communism" is necessary since there are some manifestations of Communism not wholly at variance with Christian teaching.
3. Communism cannot be overcome by force of arms, nor by argument alone. "It has to be outlived, not merely out-fought."
4. It must be met by sound Christian teaching and by the fearless witness of the Church against political, social and economic injustice.

We shall deal with the report under those four headings.

1. Marxianism

Let Resolution No. 25 speak for itself. It brings into clear light the essential differences, both philosophic and practical, between atheistic communism and Christian faith and practice.

"25. The Conference, while recognizing that in many lands there are Communists who are practising Christians, nevertheless declares that Marxian Communism is contrary to Christian faith and practice, for it denies the existence of God, revelation and a future life; it treats the individual man as a means and not an end; it encourages class warfare; it regards the moral law not as absolute but as relative to the needs of the state. The Conference holds that while a state must take the precaution it regards as necessary to protect good order and peace from all subversive movements, it is the special duty of the Church to oppose the challenge of the Marxian theory of Communism by sound teaching and the example of a better way, and that the Church, at all times and in all places, should be a fearless witness against political, social, and economic injustice."

Communism, in this meaning of the term, must be met by war to the death. The term "war" is not happy, but it is expressive. This must

be carried on by the dissemination of Christian ideas and ideals, and given effect by Christian living. The atheistic elements of Communism, its denial of the imperative nature of the moral law, its oft-times ruthless social action can be clearly distinguished. These are black over against the white light of Christian thought and action. Being recognized, they can be repudiated and can be answered. There is no difficulty in recognizing this type of "system" and of its inherent evils.

2. Other Manifestations

The difficulty presented to Christians in the world today, in almost every country, becomes apparent when the picture is neither all black nor all white. There are many phases or "degrees" in Communism. The report of the committee says:

"It is important that Christians should make sure that they understand the nature of Communism and the different senses in which the word is used. There is the Communism which means simply a communal ownership and stewardship of possessions. This finds a place in the New Testament and has often found a place in the life of the Church. There are many today who call themselves Christian Communists and believe in the removal of class distinctions through communal ownership, but who combine such views with belief in God and His self-revelation in Christ. There is the Communism of Karl Marx, which combines an economic system of communism with an atheistic interpretation of history. There is the Communism at present being worked out in modern economic practice. This is largely influenced by Karl Marx, and it has often shown a cruelty to individuals resulting from his rejection of any transcendent moral law. There are, however, many who hold the economic theories of Karl Marx but reject his atheistic philosophy. It is most important to see clearly these different meanings in the word Communism, and so to avoid applying to one meaning emotional reactions which may only be relevant to another."

Lambeth says very little (purposely, we believe), of the political systems in some countries today where Marxian Communism dominates. It does not discuss the difficulties and the menace of linking up a whole political philosophy and governmental set-up with the Communist theory of economics. It tries, however, to give us some lead in recognizing people or groups who follow the Marxian lead and who look forward to the redemption of society by such a politico-economic process. Insidious efforts to secure power by the influencing of minorities,

ruthless action where such power is secured, the preaching of class hatred and the acceptance of force as the way to social reform are hall-marks of those who hold this view. They are also, as will be readily recognized, denials of Christian teaching. As such, we believe, they exhibit the whole theory and system for what it really is, a prelude to totalitarianism.

3. "Outliving" It

While all that has been said, Lambeth, on the other hand, challenges us to learn from Communism.

"The Conference believes that Communism is presenting a challenge to Christian people to study and understand its theory and practice,"—this in order that we may recognize the elements in it which are in conflict with the Christian view of man and so be able to resist it. But Lambeth also says, "they (i.e. Churchmen) must do full justice to the truth in Communism, both its critical insights into history and its desire to help the oppressed. The Church ought not to be identified with social reaction. Its members should be ready for social and economic change and quick to welcome into the councils of the Church men and women with the workers' experience of living conditions." "Churchmen must begin by entering into the despair as well as the hope which has inspired modern Communism."

Such an attitude on the part of all Christians and of all people in our Western Democracies is necessary if we would recognize and appreciate the conditions out of which Communism has sprung. It is only as we do this that we shall know how, in Lambeth's words, to "outlive" it, how to master it. Evil ideas can be overcome only by better ideas, evil actions by better actions.

4. Fearless Witness

While such knowledge of the enemy is necessary, action by Christians is even more necessary. Here Lambeth is again prophetic. It acknowledges the lack of social insight and concern of the Christian Church, including the Church of England, "throughout the formative decades of the industrial era" and says, "It was slow to take the initiative in the desperate fight for social justice."

But, positively, it says that the Church should continue "to make a radical critique of western society". We must, in other words, study the fundamentals of our politico-economic situation and find a way to avoid the weaknesses in it; if they are inherent to change the system, if they are incidental to reform it. Churchmen must also recognize "the communal strain in Christianity itself" which has been there since apostolic times. "They must proclaim human rights without equivocation."