

The Morning Star

Friday, July 20, 1945

SHOULD CHRISTIANS SUPPORT SOCIALISM?

(Mr. C. S. Paul's address at the Bangalore Conference Continuation.)

The question presupposes knowledge of certain facts. What are the facts concerning capitalism, socialism and Christianity? Capitalism, based on the freedom, initiative and enterprise of the individual, served a useful purpose in the past, but seems to be outliving its days of usefulness. Today its evils are more apparent than its merits. The evils are unplanned production, maldistribution and the profit motive in production and distribution, with the attendant evils of unemployment, scramble for raw materials, markets, colonies, disparity in wealth, tension between the classes, wars, and, in short, the exploitation of the poor and the use of man as a mere means instead of as an end in himself.

What is the socialist challenge? Socialism is a system of life based on the freedom of the individual within the collective whole. It substitutes the service motive for the profit motive in production and distribution. Private ownership is abolished and all the means of production is state owned, for the state is representative of all the people in the classes society. This results in planned economy with a plan and a programme. It offers a refreshing contrast to the chaos under the capitalistic order. In a socialistic society the tension between the classes is removed, for all become workers for the common good. The age long ideal of the Kingdom and God ends where every man is at once an end and a means realised. The value of human personality is fully realised and provided for in childhood, youth, manhood, womanhood, motherhood, old age etc. In the matter of method for implementing the ideals, it retains the experimental attitude of mind. In such a society science enters on its own and becomes a faithful ally of human progress; the machine a faithful servant. Socialism is not only eminently moral but provides conditions for the development of the virtues.

Jesus emphasised in his life, teaching and death the infinite worth and value of the individual. Jesus also gave the central place to the idea of the Kingdom of God. Socialism seeks to realise these on the earthly plane. In this connection it might be asked, why be fair and just to man? The answer is because man is a centre of Eternity and not merely of time. Thus Christianity provides the adequate reason for the things attempted by socialism. This eternal destiny of man provides not only the justification for but also the supplementation of the materialistic basis of socialism. Further, however ideal the external conditions may be, the inner problems of man and society need the redeeming grace of God. Hence Christianity should support and supplement socialism on the spiritual side.

Mr. M. Sunder Rao's address, (summary)

The previous speaker has delineated the play and interplay of economic forces making for free enterprise and collectivism in the history of mankind. This question concerns not only Christians, but followers of other faiths and no faiths. But when a question is asked—Should Christians support Socialism? one means thereby—Has a Christian as a result and implication of his faith, anything significant to contribute to this great human problem.

The previous speaker has given us a programme of action whereby we may realise the socialistic economic order. My interest in this question is not from the legislative, organisational point of view. It has been said that God made man out of clay and then breathed the spirit into him. We are not disputing the contour and substance of the world, but with the nature of manifestation of the spirits.

The ultimate problem of our present society is the problem of inequality and injustice. The prime need is for harmony and community. Looking at the subject from within outside, how can we get the solution? I have a great fascination for Adwaitin's outlook on life. He is faced with the fact of truth and falsehood, good and evil, beauty and ugliness, permanence and transience—in a word he is facing disharmony and chaos in life. What is the Adwaitin's remedy? He says—through discipline, devotion and discrimination acquire *smayakharshana*—the profound vision of the unity of all reality and existence. This, he says, enables one to transcend the difference and with the rest of the universe, give up all personal legislation and organisation become possible and workable.

Have we such a vision and a spirit?—that is the question. I believe we have such—I dare call it the *Ecumenical Vision*. This is both a vision and an experience of the fact that in Christ, God has, as it were, worn mankind—uniting it with himself and binding it in one bundle of life with himself. Here is the source of our individual and collective sense of unity, fellowship and harmony. Once such a spirit and vision is won, practical working out programmes of action becomes possible and effective. Some people believe that all that is needed is a cut and dried programme of action, point by point. Others hold what is needed is an individual spiritual vision. But as Christians we assert that only in the measure that both these are gained and worked side by side that any social order can gain direction, content and solidity. The Christian's peculiar responsibility and privilege is to remind the practical man of the need for "ecumenical vision and experience."

Discussion

In the discussion it was pointed by some speakers that while the Russian experiment commended itself by its great achievements, the use of force as the means, is not Christian. The reply to this charge was given by others who pointed out that the Russian situation did not permit any other alternative, and Christ's methods were not followed by any of the so-called Christian Powers, whereas Russia made no pretence of any profession of Christianity. Another question that was raised was why communism took the kernel of Christianity, while the church was satisfied with the shell. To this in reply it was pointed out that the Church concentrated on the spiritual as the line of least resistance, while the communists dealt with the material life of man. The philosophical foundations of communism, economic determinism and the materialism of the 19th century are untenable and contrary to Christian principles. Separation of Russian economic planning and State control and ownership and management from its anti-spiritual basis, is rendered necessary if Christians are to adopt communism. It is becoming clear that in modern times, both the body and the spirit have to be met squarely and their demands satisfied. Religion in general, and Christianity would have a much greater future and fulfil their functions of generating the higher life. If the hungry stomach and the other needs of our material existence were provided for without the insecurity and anxieties now attending on our present capitalist system. It was further pointed out that, apart from state action, groups should try to live on the principles of common sharing on the basis of equality, and an appeal will have to be made to such as are prepared to experiment on such lines.

Findings

1. This Conference feels that there is much in socialism that should be welcomed by Christians as being in conformity with the mind and teachings of Jesus.
2. It also feels that man's injustice to man, the tension and disharmonies among peoples are inherent in the capitalistic system as such and that the future peace, happiness and progress of mankind can be secured only through a radical change in the present order, which will be socialistic in its principles, plan and programme.
3. This Conference, therefore, commends the careful and sympathetic study of the experiment as worked out in Russia.
4. The Christian cannot accept the materialistic dialectics or the anti-God campaign of the communists. The Christian should insist on taking the first commandment along with the second, for they are inseparable and the one without the other is meaningless.

An Appeal

The Bangalore Conference Continuation at its twenty-eight sessions,

having considered that it is of supreme importance to our national existence that the struggle for independence should be carried to a victorious end at an early date, and that this struggle for freedom can never end in victory until we liberate the power that comes from unity alone—which unity cannot be achieved without overcoming the obstacles created by communal prejudices, and that communal claims for justice and fair play cannot be met in a society structured on caste and class basis, impresses on the nation the need for a social revolution, based on the principle that every man should give according to his capacity and receive according to his need, and calls on Christian, Hindu and Muslim youth to start the revolution without delay and in order to attain the purpose in view adopt and put into operation the following seven-pointed programme:—

1. *No Caste*. The members of the cell, described below, should express their renunciation of caste by eating together openly.
 2. *No Class*. The members of each cell, especially those who are in a position to do so, should set aside a little of their net incomes towards a fund to be owned by members in common and used for meeting unemployment and ill health among members.
 3. *Productive Work*. Every member of the cell should set apart a portion of his time daily for the production of food by gardening, or the production of clothes by spinning.
 4. *Common Ownership*. The essentials like food and clothes should be lifted from the category of private ownership, and experiments should be made for the enjoyment of these as the common property of the group. Equal distribution should be effected by rationing according to the need of the members.
 5. *Co-operation*. The members should extend the principle of co-operation to every field of economic activity. A start may be made with common kitchens or movable canteens.
 6. *Replacement of Money*. Money should be replaced wherever possible by social and moral effort of which it is a token.
 7. *Religious Unity*. The members should endeavour to secure harmony among followers of different religions in the group, by translating their ideals into action and by bringing to bear religious inspiration and zeal on furthering the social revolution. Thus religious discussions, disputations, comparisons, attempts at conversion, should be avoided and religion should manifest itself in loving service and contribution to cell welfare.
- The Conference recommends (1) that the technique of "cells" be adopted for implementing the programme, (2) that the cells maintain the revolutionary spirit, (3) that cells be multiplied and extended as rapidly as possible, (4) and that Christian young men and women should throw themselves into the social revolution along with their Muslim and Hindu comrades.

Cell Structure

1. Every cell should be composed of 5 or 7 members but not more.
 2. Every cell should consist as far as possible of (a) members of different castes—one Brahmin, one non-Brahmin, one Muslim, one Harijan, one Christian at least and (b) of members from different economic levels—rich, middle class and poor.
- From "The Guardian."

Notice

The Annual Meeting of the Women's Missionary Society, will be held at Udulvi Church, on Saturday the 4th of August, at 4 p. m. All the ladies of the S. I. U. C. are kindly requested to be present. Please keep this date free.

K. Saravanamuthu,
Secy. W. M. S.

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