

BIG FAMILIES A common form of selfishness - from which Church dignitaries seem to be exempt - is indulgence in large families. Dr. Barnes, Bishop of Birmingham, has drawn attention to the position in the Rede Lecture before the University of Cambridge. This lecture reveals Dr. Barnes as a disciple of the famous Rev. Mr. Malthus who argued that the plan of creation was a failure because God had sent more people into the world than the world can feed. Whether Malthus was right or wrong is still debated, but death by starvation is still avoidable, and the size of populations has little to do with it. The alternative to the "selfishness" complained of would seem to be the practice of extreme unselfishness: all people refraining from rearing families (which would include food-producers) in order to save the human race from extinction through starvation. Be that as it may, we can in the meantime continue to produce children and crops in the sure and certain hope that such problems will cease to trouble economists and puzzle preachers when obvious facts are recognised and "common-sense" becomes common.

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THE ONLY QUESTION: There is only one question now; there has never been but one question; there will never be but one question: how to prevent the few from saying to the many: 'You will work and earn bread, and we will eat it.' (Lincoln)

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DUMPED FOOD "Britain says 'Thank you' to the Dominions and the United States for having "dumped" food in this country at 100 per cent below cost price. Why do not our Protectionists protest that all the British people who might have produced this food have been robbed of their employment? Why do they not raise a hand about the amount of revenue lost by letting all this stuff come in duty-free? Why do we have an exhibition to celebrate the generosity of our friends overseas? BECAUSE when we are faced by the hard facts of shortage, we forget Protectionist nonsense and are only too glad to say "Thank you" for all good things that come into this country." (Enid Lakeman)

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MEANING OF FREE TRADE "Free Trade means more than lower tariff barriers of reciprocated trade treaties. It means that men are free to trade with anyone they choose, without let or hindrance on the part of other men, and without tax or toll or treaties or agreements on the part of their own government. Free to take goods out or bring goods in when and where they will without the concern of anyone except themselves." (H. W. Noren)

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(WITH SOME TELLING POINTS)

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MR. ATTLEE ON FREEDOM

One of the signs of the present time is a universal desire for freedom.

Politicians of all shades of thought unite in praise of this fundamental human right - in spite of the policies and programmes they have adopted, many of which, in recent years, have been carefully designed to curtail freedom. And the continued clash of conflicting ideals does not inspire hope for the future.

It is said that hell is paved with good intentions, but it would be foolish to condemn resolutions to be and to do good. Mr. Attlee, for example, has expressed his determination to keep the freedoms already won, but this cannot be done by means of restrictive measures which only leave people "free" to obey instructions and regulations. In a reference to Mr. Churchill, Mr. Attlee said he had not grasped the truth that one man's freedom is another man's slavery. Perhaps Mr. Churchill would agree with him, but if it is true, then it is also true that one man's slavery is another man's freedom. Mr. Attlee's philosophy of freedom leads to the conclusion that the largest measure of freedom attainable for humanity can be won by making half the population slaves.

What's in a name?

Men working for antagonistic ideals sometimes call them by one common name - usually being equally zealous and equally ignorant. One might as well argue that it would be impossible to use the brain without paralysing the legs, as to assert that free people cannot live and work in complete harmony and to their mutual advantage. So-called freedom which cannot be shared equally by all is as unreal as air which only some men could breathe. Failure to recognise this truth led to the downfall of Spain, at one time the most powerful country in Europe. Freedom is not a gift which governments can bestow; they can only erect or remove the barriers which deprive men of freedom. Unless all

men are free to share the opportunities for production and enjoyment provided by Nature, real freedom does not exist - and no-one would assert that such conditions are to be found in the civilised world of to-day.

Brotherhood

Unhappily, when men most loudly proclaim their love of freedom they usually forget the other fellow. There is one limitation, and only one, to any man's freedom, and that is the equal freedom of other men. Until this vital truth is recognised and steps are taken to break down the existing barriers, there can be no general prosperity or lasting peace because there is no real brotherhood. Only ignorance and the selfish interests of short-sighted individuals and classes stand in the way. But men who talk as though they did not understand the meaning of the words they use are unlikely to be helpful.

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BUREAUCRATIC IMBECILITIES

"Some years ago an extract from

"The Bankers' Magazine" was published about a man with a windmill-lighting plant being forbidden to use it by Government instructions. I have recently heard also of a lady in England with a cow who, on her children's return to boarding school and having a surplus of milk, was going it to the villagers. She found herself in a fearful tangle of red-tape spun by various boards and authorities. Being a misfit and quite un-planned, she must neither give, sell, nor pour the milk down the drain, but was advised by the very final Top-Joss to draw off only sufficient milk for her daily needs."

Here is an example of bureaucratic imbecility from Australia: "A grazier had arranged with man-power for help with his lambing. At the appointed time, the promised help not having arrived, he wired to the Department to jog their memories. He was officially advised to postpone the lambing." (The Standard, Sydney, Aus.)

In Britain:

"Government methods of dealing with local authorities' schemes were criticised at the annual conference of the Institution of Municipal Engineers. Mr. P. W. Ladmore of Torquay said man-power was being wasted by the checking of schemes which had already been checked by technical experts. In his own district, he said, "we have a housing scheme and so far have built 500 houses. But before we did that, we had to consult 57 Government Departments, and 34 officials visited the town." In the opinion of Birmingham's City Engineer the system was a tremendous waste of man-power on the altar of the fetish of standardisation. ("Manchester Guardian," 2/6/49)

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THE CHURCHES' DILEMMA

It is reported that there is much uneasiness in the churches about the Christian attitude towards the use of atom bombs in future wars. It is not a clear choice between good and evil, declared the General Assembly of Presbyterian Churches. Outlawing the bomb would open the way for ruthless men to dominate the world, and the church wished to avoid an untenable position.

Safety first

It is a difficult position for people who are not prepared to put into practice what they preach. But the churches have been through similar difficulties without appearing to have lost position or influence, and they will no doubt survive to meet others. The dilemma in this case is that Christians are forbidden by the founder of Christianity to do violence to their enemies, regardless of the consequences, and in their belief that the practical application of what is called Christianity would convert enemies into friends.

Thou shalt not steal

There has been no recent report of the existence of uneasiness in Christian circles about the churches' attitude towards the use of legal instruments to commit robbery. The ancient command "Thou shalt not steal" is no less binding on living Christians than that forbidding murder, but the churches have for generations approved, tacitly, of a social system which reverses the natural order by enabling some men to eat bread that others have earned. This is done quite simply - by treating the Creator's bounty to humanity (land) as the private property of a few privileged people. No organised effort to change the iniquitous system has been made by the churches, and those who have worked to that end have been frowned on. If there is no clear choice between good and evil, as stated by the Assembly, and if there is no choice which might not involve other people in appalling suffering, then there can be no escape from the dilemma. To set people free from one set of tyrants or robbers, and allow them to be robbed by others, would be as cruel as it would be useless.

Perhaps the conclusion is that there is no dilemma; that Christianity is impracticable; that the world is going fast and inevitably to the devil; that the churches can only choose between evils and are powerless to practice the ideals of truth, brotherhood, goodness and peace. If so, they should tell us, and let others try.

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"THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS WISDOM is a realisation of the extent of our ignorance." (Chas Low in "Great Asiatic Mysteries.")

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