

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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No. 55/27 THE CHALLENGE OF INTER-DEPENDENCE

An address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L. B. Pearson, to the World Convention of Churches of Christ, Toronto, August 18, 1955.

The study of man's history, and of the slow development of civilization, may be approached in a great and indeed almost perplexing variety of ways. History, perhaps unfortunately, has become increasingly a wide domain where specialists often pursue their separate objectives often quite independently of one another. The few who have attempted to present a composite picture of man's story, such as H.G. Wells or Arnold Toynbee, have suffered considerably at the hands of specialists, and there remain not many now who would venture to undertake so vast a task.

There is, however, one aspect of man's history on which, it seems to me, it is reasonably safe to generalize. It can, I think, be contended that an important part of the growth of civilization has consisted in the slow, and often interrupted, but steady broadening of man's political and social horizons. Primitive man was undoubtedly exclusively concerned with his immediate family, warring upon his neighbours and being subject to their violence. It is possible to trace his growth from the family to clans, tribes and, later, though certainly not last, to nations. Within these larger groupings - and this, no doubt, was the chief impulse behind them - there was a certain measure of order, security and justice.

In the development of these earliest communities, a common ancestry or a sense of common ancestry was a strong, though not the only uniting force. But gradually over the centuries man's horizons extended so that he began to accept responsibilities for the welfare of a community in which he was a citizen rather than a kinsman. A sense of partnership in an ever-widening group slowly developed and became accepted. Man came to realize that a larger community, although he must in large measure lose his sense of kinship in it, could provide for him a safer and richer and a more varied life. As Aristotle put it, "the state came into being so that man could live; it was developed so that man could live well" - not material sense - this is how civilizations grew.

This process of growth was not always voluntary or peaceful. Force played an important part in the extension of family, clan or community power. The great empires of the ancient world were, as we know, acquired by violence and maintained by its use or its threat. However peaceful, for instance, the first two centuries of the Roman Empire were, that Empire was acquired by overwhelming force and was maintained by the power which constantly underlay the civilizing process of Roman law and of Roman institutions. There was a great degree of liberty in the Roman world, but it was not liberty to rebel or to secede. It is quite true

that when the Roman Empire was at its height a man could go, in the quaint words of the ancient commentator, "from the Thames to the Euphrates with his bosom full of gold, with no man to lift a hand against him". But it is equally true that the Peace of Rome was established by conquest and maintained by thinly veiled tyranny.

This model of empire, designed in the Western world by Alexander the Great and continued by Julius Caesar and the Roman emperors, has been pretty much the model, with, of course, many variations, which has been followed ever since, whether by Charlemagne, Napoleon, Hitler or Stalin.

It would, in short be difficult to recall, until our own times, an example of the voluntary union of large states for anything except a war-like purpose, or for the maintenance of that which each state had acquired. Now, however, we are right up against the next great step, and the next great problem; the recognition of the inescapable inter-dependence of all free and sovereign states, and the adoption of the necessary national policies that flow from that recognition, and which may ultimately lead to some form of coming together among such states.

On occasion we may become somewhat impatient with the slow course of history and with the human tendency to perpetuate its own mistakes and its own prejudices; with history repeating itself but in the wrong way. It may restore our time perspective, if we remember that York and Lancaster, although they now contend only on the cricket ground or the football field, were at each other's throats on much bloodier sod only 400 years ago. Not so long ago also, the Dukes of Burgundy and Normandy could lead out against each other their competing private armies. More recently, the bloodiest civil war of history was fought on this continent over the issue of the obligation of union or the right of secession.

It was only after long years of violence and tumult that the domestic peace and unity of the great national societies as we now know them, societies forged out of competing and often hostile lesser units, came into being.

We are now, however, faced with a further and more important step, the extension of our horizons and of our accompanying responsibilities until they embrace mankind as a whole.

Notwithstanding my own plea for patience and maintaining a sense of perspective, it is impossible not to feel that the slower moving processes of the past will not be sufficient for the problems of the future; that we may not have as much time now to reach our essential social and political objectives as our forefathers had. Man's conquests in the natural sciences, indeed, have made greater speed imperative in the development of the social sciences if we are to keep pace with the amazing, yes the frightening, consequence of those conquests.

So it is hard not to be impatient as we watch man's relatively slow progress towards reason and morality in the political, social and economic relations between peoples and states. We must somehow - and soon - eliminate or bridge

the chasm between our moral, social and political development, on the one hand, and our scientific advance on the other, or we will perish in that chasm!

In this great convention of churchmen, it is appropriate to ask ourselves, what is the Christian religion doing to bridge this chasm; to what extent is it a unifying factor in the international confusions of the present age?

There are certain stern facts we must face. One is that after nearly 2000 years, Christianity still remains the religion of a relatively small minority of the world's peoples. Within Christianity itself there are three great divisions, the Roman Catholic, the Greek Orthodox and the Protestant. Again, Protestantism has become so finely sub-divided that, if I am accurately informed, within the United States alone there are more than 70 Protestant faiths. Other and more populous religions, such as the Moslem and the Buddhist, are not split to the same extent that we are.

Moreover, throughout the long history of the Christian faith it is unfortunately true that Christians have often contended against each other, not only in theological discussions, but on some of the most terrible battlefields of all time.

The record of the past - or some aspects of it - gives us cause to doubt whether the organized Christian religion, as such, is likely to play an important and constructive part in driving home the recognition of that inter-dependence of peoples, which will lead to greater unification than has been achieved before, and which is now indispensable for man's future.

Nevertheless, in spite of obvious failures and shortcomings, the religion of Christ has served an essential purpose in the evolution which is taking place of an inter-dependent world community. Throughout the long and turbulent history of Western Europe and of this continent, in spite of the imperfections of man's actions, there has remained shining in the darkness, occasionally almost obscured but never quite extinguished by it, the guiding light of Christian faith. The essential principles of Christ's life and teaching - as contrasted with some of the ecclesiastical manifestations of that teaching - has always had a healing and beneficent effect on the relation of man to man and of nation to nation. And now the application - to personal, national and international life - of Christian charity and tolerance; of the belief in the worth and in the immortal soul of every individual, of grace and mercy and the forgiveness of sins, is needed more than ever before. Surely it is the first duty of the Churches of Christ, and all other Christian churches to teach and preach these principles and deepen the awareness of their necessity. Without their acceptance as the basis of policy and conduct, we will never secure real peace on earth.

The challenge of inter-dependence, then, is to our tolerance; to our sense of brotherhood for mankind as a whole. As such it is first of all a challenge to us as individuals. In free societies, we must take it that the collective action of governments is bound to reflect the individual attitudes of their citizens. If the citizens

are arrogant, contemptuous and greedy, it may be expected that these attitudes will express themselves in the political and even in the military conduct of their governments.

There is much to be said for the ancient view that charity begins at home, and that, in the words of Plato, if a man expects to live in a well-ordered state he must first of all put his own household in order. Unless a man love his neighbour, he is unlikely to love or care about a man on the other side of the world. It is therefore the mission of Christianity to bring men to tolerance and charity in their closest relationships and fill them with a passionate desire to extend these principles between peoples and so bring peace on earth to all men. Essentially it is on the rock of personal belief, on individual conduct and action and on this alone, that a sense of world community and co-operation can be achieved.

Charity and tolerance of this kind has not always been a characteristic of Christianity. Though Christians have spread the good tidings far and wide, Christianity has on its conscience sins of both omission and commission and has on occasions caused strife and shown intolerance. In the mistaken, if often sincere belief that God's will was thereby being done, Protestant has been set against Catholic, Christian against Moslem, and the Jew and the unbeliever have been persecuted. Missionary zeal, so laudable in itself, has too often led not merely to the spreading of Christian doctrine, but to contempt for the beliefs of others. There is no room for a narrow exclusive zeal of this kind in the inter-dependent world of today. Unless Christians can spread among the citizens of non-Christian as well as Christian countries, charity, tolerance, and understanding, Christianity will certainly not be adequate to face the challenge of the shrinking little atomic world on which we are today huddled together for better or for worse; in which we do indeed co-exist. It is not enough for a Presbyterian or a Copt to love his Presbyterian or his Coptic brother. He must love those of all beliefs and races. He is not required, of course, to abandon his belief or faith in the teaching of Christ as he understands it, but surely he must recognize and respect the finer aspects of Islam and Buddhism, Judaism, and the other religions which have helped to turn men away from sin and savagery.

This is no plea for the abandonment of doctrine or the conversion of Christianity, in the name of universality, into a flabby mishmash of indiscriminate brotherly love. It is a time for the Christian churches to strengthen, not to weaken, their convictions. Christian tolerance and charity should therefore not lead us to conclude that there is neither good nor evil, neither right nor wrong, neither truth nor error. But they should lead us away from arrogance, from the assumption that we alone possess all truth and virtue. This kind of arrogance, and this assumption of superior virtue are not only offensive and wrong in themselves; they are today among the main obstacles to friendship between peoples. It is these un-Christian attitudes on the part of the individual, reflected in national policies, that so often stand in the way of world co-operation. And until they are rooted out there can be no assurance of that healthy, friendly co-operation between nations which is the only guarantee of lasting peace. That is why the basis of such peace is not to be found in

conferences between leaders at or below the "summit" - important though they are - so much as it is in the hearts and souls of men.

Apart from our deficiencies as Christian citizens, as individuals, it can hardly be denied that the lack of unity in Christendom itself stands in the way of a wider international community. It also presents to non-Christians a perplexing contrast between our principles and our performance. I think, however, that it is true to say that Christendom itself is now moving forward toward a greater unity than it has achieved for centuries. Its divisions have passed from violent and bloody discord through a more reasonable but not always very positive stage of co-existence until it is now, I hope, reaching a new era of co-operation and collaboration. No better evidence of this new spirit can be found than in the work which has been done in recent years to bring together representatives of diverse Christian creeds, not for the purpose of compromising our respective beliefs, but of understanding what is good in all beliefs. There have been heartening examples of church unions in recent times and greater contacts between religions which have helped to dissipate old conflicts and prejudices. And there is no doubt that this process of unification and the extension of understanding and tolerance, both as facts and as examples, have promoted international understanding and co-operation in other than church fields.

Unity as an end in itself, however, can be a false god. The pursuit of truth itself is a more sacred obligation even than the laudable desire to reach agreement with everyone. I do not mean to suggest, therefore, that it is essential for all Christian Churches to unite if they are to play their role in an inter-dependent world. Unity is no doubt a good thing, but it is charity and tolerance which are essential.

Although I would not like to suggest that there is anything like a clear parallel between religious faith and political allegiance (indeed efforts to assimilate the two has in the past caused wars and bloodshed) I would like to draw an analogy between them which has at least a partial validity.

The desirability of the greatest unity possible consistent with free choice does not mean that there cannot be many varieties of religious experience and many different ways of approaching religious truth. The world is richer for the efforts of many men to find God in their own ways, nor do these efforts have to be all directed into one narrow channel. The important thing is that they should co-operate with and not conflict with each other - understand, not betray each other.

So too the political world is richer for the infinite variety of peoples and cultures that make it up. We in Canada know from our experience that we are wealthier in our heritage and stronger in our national development for having as the basis of that development two peoples, two languages, two traditions, constantly enriched by the flow of peoples and cultures from many other lands.

Such a situation, of course, gives rise to problems and in the past has caused friction. There have been those in our national story who would have abandoned the building of a Canadian nation, in the face of these problems, and would have accepted a policy of division and drift.

There were others who preached the specious blessings and the political necessity of building on a single race a single culture and a single language.

Both extremes were rejected, and we have the Canadian federation of today strong and united, but with a strength and unity based on the recognition of separate rights.

Similar differences of viewpoint are present in the relations between nations.

There are those who cling to the old and barren doctrine of exclusive and competing national units; with the rights that flow from sovereignty as paramount. In the nuclear age, this concept is as anomalous and unrealistic as trial by ordeal or the divine right of kings.

There are those who go to the other extreme and argue that there is no hope short of world, or at least Atlantic Federation and immediately. In their impatience, these far-sighted idealists, sometimes make the best the enemy of the good as they try to master through a brittle political formula the tenacious problems posed by the relationship of independence and inter-dependence.

Then there are those who would unite the world by forcibly reducing all peoples to the servitude of a master race or a master ideology. The latest and most dangerous of the heresies which have sought to unite the world by forcibly imposing its doctrines on all mankind, is communism. It is devoutly to be hoped that we will not meet the challenge of inter-dependence by accepting this kind of unity, the deadly unity of the lock step and the jack boot, co-existence by compulsion.

If there is today a stronger conviction abroad that this will not happen, if there is today an easing of tension in the world, a lightening of the spirit and a greater hope for a better peace than we have known, it is largely because we who believe in freedom have in recent years shown our determination to defend it, and developed the collective strength and unity to make that determination effective. We must maintain this strength and unity. But even more we must make our own free way of life mean something positive and constructive, so that the challenge will not be to freedom and democracy from communism but to communism from free democracy. But we will never put the forces of communism on the defensive by keeping ideologically on the defensive ourselves. Because of our unity and strength - because also of the recognition on both sides of the Iron Curtain that the alternative to peaceful co-operation in the hydrogen age is common destruction, there have been indications recently that the aggressive forces of international communism backed by the might of Soviet Russia may be revising their ambitions and even recognizing some of their errors.

We can take satisfaction and hope from these developments while we try to broaden and deepen them in the interest of real peace. We should not, however, indulge in any premature rejoicing or loud hosannahs. We must not become unreasonably exultant when things seem to be going well on the international front: or unreasonably discouraged when there are setbacks, as there will certainly be.

It would be dangerous and unrealistic to assume that real peace has been achieved merely because four men have smiled into forty - or four hundred - cameras at Geneva. It is, therefore, no time to relax or to weaken our defences, physical or moral. But it is a time for imagination, as well as caution; for seizing and making the most of every opportunity that may lead to a better state of affairs than this poor world has known since 1914.

Steadiness and balance, the maintenance of a sense of proportion will be essential in the months ahead; months that will be full of movement and manoeuvre and will prove, I believe, the realities and the necessities of inter-dependence between nations. In the long run, however, there is only one answer to the challenge of this inter-dependence in the hydrogen age. It is the response of Christian charity and understanding; in showing by our actions - not merely by our words - that we are in all truth our brother's keepers.

It is because the Churches of Christ are dedicated to this response, and because you have come to Toronto as witnesses to that dedication, that I am proud to have had this opportunity to be with you and speak to you tonight.

S/C