

CHURCH and POLITICS

Two Archbishops Provoke A Lively Controversy

SHOULD the Church concern itself with political and economic questions? The Archbishops of Canterbury and York think that it should, and have said so plainly in recent pronouncements. But their views have aroused widespread and lively argument, and we here present summaries of statements from both sides in the controversy.

ON a recent Saturday, England heard the voice of progressive Christianity from the Albert Hall, says a leading article in the *New Statesman*. Dr. Temple had much to say which, coming from an Archbishop, was remarkable. He spoke of the "broken fellowship of our society—what Disraeli called the two nations." He urged that a society must disintegrate if the profit motive predominate in it, that the community's interests must come first in employing the use of the land and the natural resources of the country. He wanted to control the banks. His speech fell short of Socialism, but like the speech of Sir Stafford Cripps that followed, it was an effort to reinvigorate the Church by providing the social content which it has long lacked. Dr. Garbett, the Archbishop of York, was a little more definite and for that reason a little more effective. . . . How significant is a meeting like this? That the leaders of Christianity have moved so far in their demand for social change is a sign that they are aware of an almost universal popular demand. . . . But, within a nominally Christian country like England, the prestige of the Church as a social force has fallen so low that nothing less than specific deeds will serve to revive the reality of faith. Many times before religious leaders have talked of social change and, when the test came, were found on the side of the *status quo*. To-day, if the speakers at the Albert Hall, who include the two leaders of the English Church and a member of the British War Cabinet, are to have any chance of leadership in the future they must decisively put their weight behind some specific social change during the war, and not be content to talk about what is to happen after it.

"CHRISTIAN DUTY"

Dr. Garbett, Archbishop of York, in justification of the plea that the Church must influence the world of politics, in a recent speech, said:

"THE demand has been made that the Church should concern itself solely with spiritual matters and should stand aside from political, social, and economic questions. I agree with this demand if those who make it intend that the Church shall not commit itself to any one political party or to any specific political programme. . . .

"It is impossible, however, for the Church to stand apart from all politics if it is to perform its mission. Half a century ago the State only touched a very small part of a man's life. Now in different degrees all States are totalitarian, and their influence over the individual is all-pervading from infancy to

old age. If the State is left to itself it may create an environment in which a life in accordance with Christian standards becomes increasingly difficult.

"There are three ways in which the Christian Church must attempt to influence the political society. First, as a corporate society the Church declares the principles which should govern and control the action of the State and the life of the community. . . . Secondly, within the Church there are individuals and groups who must study these problems and advance the remedies which they are convinced are demanded by the Christian conscience. . . . As a Christian citizen I have the right to advocate detailed reforms of which I have special knowledge, and the accident that I am an Archbishop does not deprive me of this right.

"And in another way the Church should make its influences felt in politics. Its members should take their full share in national and local politics. They should attempt to permeate their own political party with Christian principles. . . . Churchmen have not always recognised that it is their duty as Christian citizens to take an active part in local government.

OPPOSING BISHOP

All the bishops do not approve of the campaign of the two Archbishops. Dr. A. C. Headlan, Bishop of Gloucester, writing in the "Church of England Newspaper", says:

"THE controversy which has arisen out of the Albert Hall meeting of the Industrial Christian Fellowship and the speeches of the two Archbishops has been obscured by much confusion of thought. I believe that the opinions and actions of the Industrial Christian Fellowship are detrimental to the Church.

"The Christian Church is not concerned with political or social or economic ends. Its duty is to make men good Christians. A good Christian cares for his fellowmen, and therefore if he is a politician his politics are devoted to the well-being of his fellowmen.

"His Christianity gives the end. His political or social or economic science teaches him the means which may well vary in different countries and in different types of civilisation. Christianity does not condemn wealth, but the unjust acquisition of wealth and the wrong use of it. Christianity knows nothing of political rights; it teaches all men of all classes their duties. Since the French Revolution politics have been based on a doctrine of rights.



THE RT. REV. Cyril Forster Garbett, Archbishop of York

"That has created continuous controversy and strife. If all classes aimed at doing their duty, strife would cease, poverty and want would come to an end. . . . Much poverty is the result of the faults of the poor.

"We resent very much the implication of many speeches, that we must show our sympathy with the poor by supporting the demands of labour and the policy of the trade unions. I personally consider that the Labour Party have shown themselves unfitted to govern the country, that the trade unions are selfish, intolerant and tyrannical, and that they have been largely responsible for the increase of unemployment.

"I think a policy of nationalisation is injurious to the country. I have no intention of claiming that my views are particularly Christian; they are opinions formed to the best of my ability. I resent it, however, very much when I am told that I am a bad Christian because I dissent from the opinions of my Socialist neighbours. . . ."

EMINENT ECONOMIST'S VIEWS

Francis W. Hirst, the well-known economist, writing on the question in the "Manchester Guardian," says:

"SO long as the Archbishop of Canterbury does not employ his authority as an exponent of the Gospels to undermine the institution of private property and competition, or to brand as sinful such ancient virtues as thrift, or such incentives to industry as the profit motive, or interest on securities which the Government and companies have contracted with investors to pay, he has just as much right to criticise the laws of political economy as an economist or any layman has to criticise the Thirty-nine Articles, the Creeds, or the Sermon on the Mount.

"What we ought to recognise is that the appeal should be solely to science and reason. Dr. Temple's opinions (like mine or yours) on company law and banking, on savings and investments, on paper money and credit, on monopolies and tariffs, on tithes and usury, depend for their validity on the arguments he adduces rather than on Scriptural authority. . . . I would only observe that there is no reason for thinking that Christ would have wished us to nationalise our banks because He drove the money-changers out of the Temple."