

**CHRISTIANITY
AND THE GROWTH OF
INDUSTRIALISM
IN ASIA, AFRICA
AND SOUTH AMERICA**

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INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AMONG PRIMITIVE PEOPLES

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NO one will argue that the industrialism of the Occident has produced a society which is satisfactory, either in the economic or in any higher sense. Its defects are patent, and it is not my purpose here to expose them. But I wish to consider firstly whether we are not, by our present industrial and commercial policies in colonies, reproducing even in an exaggerated form the evils associated with our own early industrial evolution, and secondly, whether it is not possible not only to avoid the worst of those 'growing pains' but also to aim at and eventually establish a social organization free from at least some of the defects of our own.

As to my 'firstly,' the evidence given in the pages of this report is to my mind conclusive. It would be easy to extend it, to recall the horrors of the past and of the present, to point to diminishing populations, disorganized society, increased alcoholism, increased disease and debased morality among primitive peoples. It is equally possible to indicate tendencies and policies which must inevitably, if past experience be trustworthy, lead to the continuance and probably the intensification of these social evils.

Happily for the honour of the colonial powers, it is also possible to detect light in the darkness of the picture. It is true to say nowadays that the welfare of subject populations is at least as important in the eyes of administrations, and sometimes more

important, than their productivity. This is true of course in varying degree, varying not only according to the goodwill of the responsible administrator—a matter much too dependent on chance to be left as important as it is at present—but also upon the conception of policy in regard to colonies held by the different mother-countries, and upon the accidental reasons which have led to the taking over and administration of colonies. In the British Colonial Empire a certain stand-offishness combined with paternalism has sometimes succeeded extraordinarily well in comparison with other policies; there is evidence, however, that it becomes inadequate once a certain degree of evolution is reached by the people thus administered. The French policy of ‘assimilation’ under which the Annamite or Senegalese or North African is asked to consider himself a Frenchman is somewhat negated by the existence of the inferior civil status known as the *indigénat* and does not apparently succeed better than the British. The Dutch policy, which has produced vast riches and a dense population in Java, might be characterized as one of severe justice; it has not produced a native society free from the evils that affect the West, and it has evolved certain apparent disruptive tendencies. In the Portuguese Colonies everything appears now to depend upon the force of character and the goodwill of the local authorities in the colonies themselves; a long history of mal-administration has left an Augean stable which is heartbreaking to contemplate. American control over subject peoples reflects the fact that in the United States themselves great financial interests have not yet been brought adequately under the control of law and into line with the general interest. Present-day Italy appears

to be pursuing a frankly imperial colonial policy, and finally Belgium's honest and sincere attempt to wipe out the stain of the Congo record (for which she cannot fairly be held responsible) is seriously hampered by the temptation of great riches.

In all of them, without exception, the great problem of to-day is, fundamentally, how to bring the native to work harder than he has hitherto been compelled or felt obliged to do. In his own interest it may be admitted at once that this must be accomplished. A higher standard of comfort and well-being for himself, a further stage in his evolution demands of him, just as it does of the Westerner, an increased effort. Unhappily, it is not only this motive which is at work. The western man has found that *his* further progress can be realized not only by his own effort, but by that of his less happily situated fellow-men in the tropics. More and more he depends, now for his luxuries, soon for his necessities as his standard of life advances—for the luxuries of one generation easily become the necessities of the next—upon the labour of the African or the Asiatic. Hence the pressure to produce which falls with rapidly increasing weight upon the latter.

The call upon him has increased astoundingly during the last two decades; I doubt indeed whether any parallel is to be found in the economic history of the world. Recent inventions have, by accident it would seem, almost all called for raw materials from the tropics; recent advances in knowledge concerning the production, manufacture and conservation of food-stuffs, have added to the burden, as have the discovery in tropical areas of valuable metals and minerals.

In one sense—the sense which would be effective

if the call were made upon independent peoples capable of directing their own affairs—this situation would be their great opportunity. But in the present circumstances it is not so much their opportunity as their misfortune.

It is perhaps simplest to estimate what the industrial revolution among backward peoples means by a comparison with the same revolution in our own western countries. Whatever doubts one may have in our own case as to the revolutionary nature of the change which came over our social and economic life with the advent of modern industrial conditions, one can have no hesitation in applying the term 'revolution,' with its implication of rapidity and overturning, to the same change when it takes place among primitives. It is a real revolution. With us the change came relatively slowly; we were to some extent prepared; for centuries we had been gradually passing over from subsistence farming and manufacture for local needs to farming and manufacture for commerce and even for export. Among primitive people there has been little or none of this preparatory evolution; they have for the most part laboured for subsistence and subsistence only, and the change is therefore all the more violent.

Moreover, the change is not due to an expansion of the needs or desires or ambitions of the peoples themselves; it is imposed upon them from outside, by persons who have no direct share in their aspirations, and who are brought into their midst by the desire to benefit themselves. The 'profit-motive,' so eloquently denounced at Jerusalem by Bishop McConnell, here acts almost entirely without restraint and acts also through persons alien to the mass of the population. The restraints which moderated its

ill in our own cases either do not exist in the areas we are discussing, or are so feeble as to be unimportant. There is, for example, no communion of feeling between the worker and the employer, no sense of common interest, of common nationality which might tend to a mitigation of the lot of the bottom dog. The worker has no political power, no direct influence on the policies of the aliens administering his affairs; still less has he the possibility of successful revolt, either in arms or by way of strike. He has not even the knowledge of good and evil in regard to labour conditions. He is unorganized; any attempt at combined action on his part is foredoomed to failure in the face of the might of his exploiters. He is in fact, and in most cases, not permitted to organize; the governing races, perhaps, mistrust his ability to limit himself to 'trade union action' and fear 'direct action.'

Even less than the European worker does he participate in the results of his increased activities. Wages are generally abominably low, and if they were higher it is questionable whether they would be wisely spent. It is true that very frequently wages are not the most important factor in determining a native's choice of employment; harassed as he is, he seeks amelioration of his lot in better conditions rather than in higher wages. It is characteristic of his case, perhaps, that as yet he seeks negatives rather than positives. For him the absence of cruelty, of blows and whipping, of crushing daily work, is often more important than the positive advantages of higher wages. In the profits accruing from his activities his share is small or non-existent; even his country itself participates little. They go to swell the riches and increase the comfort of others,

more 'enlightened' than he. Consequently, when he is 'down and out' there is no poor relief on which he has the right to call, no 'dole,' no provision for sickness or accident—for all of which the industries of more developed lands must now provide.

I do not think the point needs further elaboration. The 'industrial revolution' among backward peoples is by *a priori* reasoning likely to be more devastating in its effects than it was in our western lands, and we have abundant evidence now to demonstrate that that reasoning is justified by the event.

I come then to my second point, where I ask whether it is not possible to avoid the worst effects of the revolution and at the same time to secure the establishment amongst these people of an order of society which will not repeat the defects of our own. Let it be said at once that much is being attempted, and that something has been done. There are many instances of enlightenment among colonial administrators, of courage against enemies from within and from without, which justify one in going forward with hope.

There are, it seems to me, two aspects of our problem; the first is the adequate restraining of the action of the 'profit-motive,' and the second is its replacement by a higher and different motive, namely, the creation of an order of society amongst these people, founded, to quote the Treaties of Peace, upon social justice.

With the first of these matters is bound up the whole system of labour protection, the abolition of slavery, and of these forms of labour which have been wittily described as 'Slabour,' the regulation of hours and wages, the protection of women and children, the insurance against sickness, accident and old age,

the provision of adequate housing accommodation, education, food—all these measures which our ultra-Socialist friends used to describe as ‘palliatives,’ which can and do co-exist with the present western industrial organization of society, and the finance of which is provided from the gains of industry. We must see to it that the gains accruing from the industry of primitive peoples—gains on the whole higher than those obtainable in the West—are not liberated from these charges. In effect, this is to see that the worker shall benefit in a higher proportion from his labours than he does at present. But this is not all; the costs of general administration also must be borne by these gains—there is no other source. And here again the native should receive greater attention than he has hitherto done. The new policy, laid down in connexion with the areas under mandate, must be extended to all similar colonial areas, and must be interpreted in the most liberal sense. Briefly, it is this: that the policy of the administration should be directed in the interests of the native peoples. What a difference one would see in the budgets of a vast number of colonies if this principle were rightly interpreted and applied! With the intense need of these areas for education, should we still see budgets where a beggarly one per cent of the revenue is devoted to this purpose? Public hygiene, the provision of water, of means of communication, poor relief—in almost every case I have no doubt that immensely more can be done, and can increasingly be done, if a financial policy tending to the retention in these areas of a greater proportion of the riches drawn from them could be put into practice. It will be objected that such a policy might have the effect of hindering

the investment of capital. My reply is that the present tendency is frequently towards a too rapid investment of capital in these areas, with resultant labour burdens which the population is unable to bear. Capital comes rapidly where profits are high, and profits are usually high where the proportion of the wealth obtained devoted to the interests of the native population is small! The Permanent Mandates Commission has suggested the calling of a halt in cases where the industrial development is obviously having ruinous social effects, and in my view this is the highest wisdom. The opposite view is merely the 'get rich quick' policy—applied not by the native peoples, but by alien speculators.

Another objection will occur to many minds. Not all these areas are endowed with the riches necessary, even when the labour of their peoples is fully organized, to provide for the social policy I have outlined. That is true also of Europe and the West. There are factors which will tend to equalize matters, if left to their own working. Of these probably the most effective is freedom of movement and of intercourse. There is a second possibility also; some colonial powers have not been afraid to incur expenditure from their own revenues to aid their weaker dependencies—not, I am afraid, always from the purest of motives—but the extension of the ideas of inter-dependence and mutual aid amongst nations, fostered by the creation and working of the League of Nations will, I hope, strengthen the high ideal that we are members one of another, and that there is not only a *noblesse* but a fortune of situation that makes the rendering of help to others a sacred duty.

So far, I have not touched directly on the second question, whether it is not possible to create a system

of society among these primitive peoples which shall not repeat the defects of our own. Here we are on less sure ground, and readers may well ask whether, if the policy (admittedly 'palliative') above outlined be carried out, the resultant social organization may not be greatly superior to ours, whilst not perhaps differing from it in nature, and not entirely free from the same defects and the same dangers. Here, too, in despite of certain experiments such as the social organization of British West Africa, we have not much satisfactory evidence to go on. But it seems to me that these are possibilities which should not be neglected. We already are alive to some of the evils of 'capitalist production' in these areas. The *concessionaire* system is dead in many colonies, and no modern administration will again permit, it is to be hoped, the incursion of this soul-less scourge upon defenceless peoples. Similarly, the value of other large capitalist organizations, even when not given the powers and privileges of concessions, has been doubled, and there is a marked tendency to limit where possible the extent of individual industrial concerns, and to reserve to the natives themselves, sometimes as individuals, sometimes as social communities or organized co-operative societies, the exploitation of the wealth of their country. In such cases the administration must, and does usually, undertake the task of education and general supervision, sometimes also of financing or facilitating the financing of the enterprises. Co-operative production and sale has the effect of more widely distributing the riches obtained from labour, and of preventing or at least retarding the development of an exclusive employing class. And in this connexion it must not be forgotten that a native employing class tends

perhaps to be less influenced by general social or humane considerations than the more experienced white employers.

The whole situation may perhaps be described in a few words, which I hope will not affright any one in this connexion. The task of the administration in these areas is not, in my opinion, merely to 'hold the ring' but to intervene actively. Either it should itself undertake the development of the riches of the country—and this, I think, it should always do in the case of extensive works where native initiative and native capital cannot suffice for the purpose, or it should aid, encourage and supervise native effort. In both cases the principle of the mandate I have cited must be the determining guide—administration in the interests of the natives themselves.

Otherwise, I hardly see the possibility of winning the battle for the future of these peoples. The forces arrayed against them are formidable and formidably armed. Those in their favour have so far fought a losing battle—the evils of industrialism have gained upon them. They are relatively few in number: a few colonial administrators who see further than the present, but little instructed, public opinion. (I must hasten to say that there are many administrators who see the evils of the present and who combat them most courageously, and that the general policy of many colonial ministries is becoming more and more humanitarian.) Missionaries have exercised a restraining influence at times—not, in my opinion, with all the force they might have employed. They, and medical men and women, and a large number of officials, have devoted themselves to the welfare of the natives, and have often made the last sacrifice.

But devotion is not enough. They have so far failed in the fight for lack of knowledge, lack of support, lack of a policy. On missionaries, who go so far and learn so much, more than on any other group, falls the duty, I believe, of supplying that necessary knowledge, organizing the support, and taking the initiative in the formulation and application of a policy in regard to primitive peoples which shall result in their being brought forward gradually to the light of civilization, and of a civilization not fouled, as is ours, by the blight of industrialism.

Writing after the meeting at Jerusalem, I can here express my profound joy and satisfaction that the Protestant missionary societies there represented have determined to undertake the organization of their knowledge on the social welfare of the primitive peoples to whom they minister and to create an organ of research, which will, I am certain, have the most beneficial effects. What is called for is concentration of effort in the three directions I have named: the collection and collation of knowledge, the education of public opinion and the organization of public support, and the formulation and advocacy of policy. It seems to me that the new research organization inspired by the spirit of Christ and armed with knowledge is destined to play a vital part in assuring for millions of our less-favoured brothers a real 'place in the sun.' May God speed its efforts!