

'Can it really be said that the Church is above and outside all economic systems and political parties? Is it not true that we are caught up in the capitalist machine? Is it not true that we continue to sin by omission by allowing social order to be confused with stratified disorder, and in practice lending our support to structures which enslave men? (p. 7). . . . Religious freedom in capitalist countries only exists in so far as religion, concerned with maintaining social order and authority, upholds the prevailing situation. If, in conscience, it denounces injustice and the structures of oppression, then religion is regarded as dangerous, subversive and Communist. Religion is asked to remain in the sacristy, to be no more than a cult, and to preach without interference in social problems (p. 21). . . . When will the Churches—even if they run the risk of moving out of the religious field to invade the territory of politics, decide to denounce injustices from whatever system they arise, in the secure conviction that without justice there will be no peace? (p. 23). . . . It is impossible to stay in the sacristy. It is impossible to stop only at the "love of God". The love of God compels us to love men. Love, not just with words, but with acts and with truth, requires that we take on the problems of our brothers (p. 27). . . . The Soviet Union forgot its socialist ideals and built an empire. . . . Is there not a distortion of socialism in China as in Russia? (p. 39). . . . What course will an authentic Marxist praxis take in our time?' (p. 39).

These are the words, it perhaps need hardly be said, of Archbishop Helder Camara. They come from the speeches he made in the course of his recent visit to Germany and England. They have been collected and printed by the Justice and Peace Commission.¹ It is a useful and excellently produced pamphlet and its main contents will come as no surprise to any reasonably well-informed Christian. It is not just that Camara's name and his views are known throughout the world but that they have become in the last decade or so part of the ordinary thinking of a vast mass of Christians. It is an achievement in large part due to Helder Camara that his views would now be taken for granted as more or less right by most Christians who are not inhibited by their own self-interest.

It is this that makes so extraordinary the Foreword contributed to the pamphlet by Cardinal Heenan. It is difficult to understand why the Commission entrusted him with this task but they could hardly have expected so astonishing a contribution. Amongst other things, Cardinal Heenan alleges that Helder Camara is 'regarded with suspicion and even hostility by some excellent Catholics' (Which excellent Catholics? Where? In the Brazilian Embassy?). He says that this is not surprising and after a ritual acknowledgement that saints are frequently unpopular he says: 'I do not think he can

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fairly be blamed for this' (no question, one notices, of blaming the excellent Catholics). 'He is largely the victim of his foreign supporters.' It is a line of thought that is not unfamiliar: Jesus was once widely believed to be the victim of Paul. Cardinal Heenan says that 'His sermons and speeches may sometimes be reported as if they were the ravings of a demagogue'. The sting here is not in the least removed by his adding that if we study them *carefully* they are more like homilies.

What can only be called the discourtesy to Helder Camara lies not simply in the use of this kind of language with its suggestion that it is only natural to be misled into thinking the Archbishop of Recife a bad Catholic and a raving demagogue; it lies in the tastelessness with which the Cardinal makes use of such a man simply to carry on his little war with liberal and left-wing Catholics in England.

'The Archbishop', says Cardinal Heenan, 'is not a Marxist. He does not seek salvation in the Soviet Union or in Red China.' Only an almost culpable lack of information could lead him to suppose that this is what Marxists do. Culpable if for no other reason than that in this very pamphlet, which the Cardinal exhorts us to read, Camara is at pains to distinguish these régimes from authentic socialism and Marxism. 'It is important to know', he adds, 'that the Archbishop is more a man of prayer than a man of action', as if it were not perfectly obvious that he is a man of prayer in his whole life, contemplative and active—obvious, that is, unless you take it for granted that active struggle against injustice is somehow incompatible with prayer.

It is a sad and ungenerous little article but we should recognize that a great part of the blame for it must lie with the English Catholics. It is not just that in the past we generated the attitudes so embarrassingly displayed in this Foreword, but that in leaving behind these attitudes we have somehow contrived to leave behind as well one of our most conscientious bishops—still battling with shadows and caricatures of his fellow Catholics, still entangled in antitheses that have nothing to do with anybody's real Christian life: prayer *versus* active commitment; 'His textbook is not *Das Kapital* but the Gospel'; 'The fervour of his spiritual life probably does more than his eloquence for those who suffer injustice'; 'If you want to understand Helder Camara you must read his words rather than those of his friends and supporters'; 'Missionaries from abroad who have preached politics more than religion'. And so on. There is not much one can say except to acknowledge that it is largely our fault and to offer our apologies to Archbishop Camara.

H.McC.