

result might be called "the political gospel."

Emphasizing the similarity between religious and social idealism, Santayana stated that political guidance is the natural role of "a systematic religion." Perfection of society, he said, "is precisely what wise legislation and good government profess to do: so that the spheres of systematic religion and of politics, far from being independent or incommensurable, are in principle identical."⁵ So, it seems almost natural that religion unshackled from spiritual purpose would tend to become a political force, rather than an influence for voluntary, moral application.

In any religious mind, Paradise and social perfection occupy similar planes of thought; absolute social harmony corresponds with the heavenly ideal. Therefore, the important distinction between spiritually oriented religion and religion of the rational variety lies not in the desire for human perfection, but in the manner in which perfection will be attained. In secularized religion, the earth-godly power of law replaces spiritual force as the regenerator of imperfect man. The state displaces God. The Son becomes only a source of Christian ethics accord-

⁵ Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, p. 163.

ing to which society is to be governed. The evil fruits of human individualism wither away under the influence of law, an impersonal force which remolds disruptive personal will.⁶ Certainly no one should be too surprised to find "modern" church spokesmen collaborating with the secular equalitarian leadership; with the spiritual quality removed, both stand exposed as dedicated social idealists.⁷

⁶ It is difficult to ignore the similarities between this thinking and that of Marx — the general ideas merge into one predominant thought: through compulsion, human nature can be "perfected." In a fairly recent study, Harold J. Blackham provides an interesting summary of "theocrats" who seek to stabilize society (eradicate individual will) through impersonal law (Harold J. Blackham, *Political Discipline in a Free Society*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1961).

⁷ In contrast to the modern church, fundamental Christianity profits from Scriptural knowledge of human nature and seeks perfection only in Paradise. Fundamentalist churchmen quite definitely reject physical compulsion as an instrument of Christian attainment — this has been the case ever since Christianity, the "law" of example and persuasion, replaced the physically compulsory Mosaic law. Dietrich Bonhoeffer (the controversial German Lutheran theologian executed by the Nazis at Flossenbürg) exemplified the fundamentalist attitude by calling on the church to leave its shell and respond to the problems of this world. Throughout his writings, Bonhoeffer pleads for the church to do one thing: witness for Christ through personal example and persuasion. He specifically rejects church politics and

A Duty of Leadership

In a society founded on concepts of popular government, however, leadership's primary duty is to promote a sense of reality, as well as humanitarian idealism. Its main functions are to cultivate individual moral and legal responsibility and to remain loyal, itself, to the fundamental law of social organization. The two tasks are equally important; both can be unbearably frustrating to men who cannot discipline themselves to acknowledge human imperfection. The responsible leader suppresses the urge to discharge moral responsibility through the catharsis of legislation, and thus preserves that most important virtue of authority — moral restraint.

Through its example, leadership testifies that Constitutional order can be maintained through moral dedication to the principles of humanity and personal application to the political business of self-government. On the individual's voluntary assumption of both responsibilities rests the future; and whether or not the individual meets the demand will depend largely on the example of leadership. Doctor Harold Bosley,

the idea that social progress and the "Kingdom of God" are related (See the authoritative analysis of Bonhoeffer's works: Martin E. Marty, ed., *The Place of Bonhoeffer* . . . N. Y.: The Association Press, 1962).

former Duke Divinity School dean and now pastor of Christ Church, New York City, emphasized this point at a Methodist conference last July. Because the churches, the government, and other groups tend to "shrink back from direct involvement," Doctor Bosley said, the Civil Rights Act and the 1954 Supreme Court school decision were enacted.⁸ When moral leadership begins to ebb, expect a legislative flow.

Undisciplined Human Nature

An old rule of human behavior indicates that a person will usually tend to abandon a duty which someone else tries to assume for him. Another ancient principle suggests that authority, secular or religious, has an intrinsic disposition toward assuming the "burdens" of others. These two fundamental truths point out the central problem of any hierarchical system. The desire to lift responsibility from the stooped shoulders of those in the lower ranks may arise from lust for power or from human compassion; but whatever its origin, it is destructive if it enables individuals to escape basic moral and political responsibilities.

Undisciplined human nature seems to abide by one rule: It is

⁸ *The Houston (Texas) Post*, July 4, 1964.