

the Western world, the government laid what would now seem negligibly light taxes on the individual—and expected the individual to look out for his own well-being.

Now Great Britain, partly as the result of a crushing burden of direct and indirect taxation, provides cradle-to-the-grave security, i.e., subsistence livelihood to all. The United States has not gone quite so far in this direction as Great Britain; but the trend in the same direction is unmistakable.

And the results should be disillusioning to those who have believed that poverty is the main cause of crime and that a notable improvement in public behavior would follow the enactment of legislation calculated to eliminate or alleviate poverty. The American material standard of living has never been higher than in the postwar years. Unemployment has been sparse and very liberally cushioned. Little or no crime can be attributed to such a cause as a man stealing a loaf of bread or a bottle of milk to feed a starving family.

Yet the figures of crime have soared with prosperity. Juvenile delinquency or criminality has reached heights never remotely approached in the past in spite of, or perhaps because of, the fact

that young criminals have never received so much sympathetic attention from social workers, psychiatrists, and assorted do-gooders.

Slum housing is often regarded as a cause of crime. Yet it often happens that modern housing projects to which slum dwellers have been moved turn into dens of vice, filth, criminality, and juvenile delinquency. This suggests that perhaps people make slums, at least as much as slums make people.

There has been a similar experience in England, where the old law-abiding tradition has seriously declined, although the Welfare State has certainly removed the old excuse that poverty is the cause of crime. British "Teddy boys" have been as obnoxious as the gangs of young hoodlums who make life and property unsafe in large areas of American cities. Some British students of this problem believe that part, at least, of the explanation is that adolescents, earning comparatively high wages, have more money than they are able to spend wisely.

The Individual Is the Key

All these experiences after violent and gradual revolutions indicate that the true hope of improving the worth and dignity and moral and cultural level of the hu-

man being lies in changing men, not in changing external conditions. That sonorous old moral code, the Ten Commandments, is put in terms of what "thou" shalt or shalt not do. There is not a word in it to suggest that the individual can shuffle off his moral responsibilities onto some vague entity called society.

And this is characteristic of the spirit of both the Old and New Testaments. The Psalms and the Hebrew Prophets always lay stress on individual right thinking and right doing, irrespective of what may be the political and economic conditions in which the individual finds himself. Says Micah: "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

And there is this same concern with individual righteousness in other verses of the Old Testament:

"The way of transgressors is hard."

"Righteousness exalteth a nation."

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

Christian Doctrines

This is equally true in regard to the New Testament. Many

Jews were discontented with the "colonial" status of their country under the rule of Rome. But Jesus sounded a call not to armed revolt but to personal right living and preparation for life everlasting. "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's" was his reply to those who tried to tempt or provoke him into what would now be called a "nationalist" demonstration. There is the same emphasis in the teachings of the great Apostle of Christianity, Saint Paul:

"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, to be content."

"Let us not be weary in well-doing."

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

It is not that Jesus and Paul were ignorant of or indifferent to abuses of tyranny and slavery; but it was their conviction that the best and surest way to eliminate these abuses was by changing the sinful heart of the individual man.

Other Religious Creeds

This is also the teaching of other religions that have won many millions of followers. Buddhism, with its central creed that the highest happiness lies in overcoming passion and desire, is a completely individual-centered faith, with its Four Truths and