State, the citizens of England and America will find pried loose from under them one of the stones upon which their own vital liberties stand. The end of the road we started down in 1936 is before our eyes. All people everywhere, for their own good, must resist its being reached.

CHURCH AND STATE IN SOUTH AFRICA

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"THE State and the Churches do not form an antithesis in South Africa. On the contrary, the one is the team mate of the other." This is the verdict of the authors of the Report of the Commission for the Socio-Economic Development of the Bantu Areas within the Union of South Africa. If this were an accurate description of the relations between the churches and the state in this country, then something would have gone sadly wrong with the churches, for all through the Christian era the relation between church and state has been one of the most stubborn problems which has confronted the civil and ecclesiastical authorities alike. Moreover, since the Renaissance, the question of the relation between church and state has been an issue that any person who takes seriously his responsibilities in church and state cannot escape facing for long. This is inevitable, for since that time the various activities in which men engage have been regarded as autonomous. No longer have people viewed such activities as subordinated to the claims of religion. The result is that politics acknowledges no superior; business is regarded as an end in itself; and we hear a great deal of talk about "Art for Art's sake". Even in education, a field of activity in which the training of persons is recognised as being the primary function, there is frequently a strange reluctance among educationalists to accept the Christian view of the nature and destiny of the persons who are being educated. Indeed, the story of the church since the rise of the modern state has been very largely the record of the increasing loss of the moral and spiritual authority of the church over the everyday life of human beings.

At the same time the church has never ceased to claim that it

alone has the Gospel of salvation, and for this reason every department of human activity ought to be undertaken and carried through in conformity with the unique, final, and universal revelation which has been entrusted to the keeping of the church. Truly, in the Middle Ages the church had undertaken to try and control the state. But praiseworthy as that attempt was to bring men and nations to obey the law of God, it failed, as it was bound to fail, because, while the Christian must work and pray for the coming of God's Kingdom in this world, he has to remember that this Kingdom cannot come in its perfection within history. Later Luther tried to resolve the issue by making the church subservient to the state, on the naïve assumption that rulers would always be Christian, while in Geneva, Calvin attempted to subordinate the civil to the ecclesiastical authority. The student of history cannot fail to realise that the relation of church and state has been a perennial problem. And the churchman knows that it is a problem that is inherent in the nature of both church and state.

It is possible to visualise church and state working together as "team mates" if all the members of the community are convinced Christians, which they are not and never will be. Failing that, the only chance of this happening, is for the church to limit itself to the practice of a cultus, and for the state to take control of all the rest of human life. But the church can only do this at the terrible cost of betraying its destiny, for the church has a deep concern with many of those things over which the state has undoubted authority. And what is true of the church is also true of the state. While it is true that the primary purpose of the state is to maintain order, it has also to concern itself with the welfare of its citizens, including their moral welfare. Once it does this, then it enters that sphere which is the area in which the church is charged to operate. Thus it is that the relation of church and state is bound at all times to give rise to various problems, and indeed, sometimes to result in open conflict between the ecclesiastical and civil authorities.

No doubt ideally the state ought to be the team mate of the church, but to claim as is done in the Tomlinson Report that "the one is the team mate of the other" is a vivid example of what the psychologists have come to describe as wishful thinking. It may be maintained that the authors had the Dutch Reformed Churches in South Africa particularly in mind when they penned these particular words. But I doubt very much if these words are entirely applicable even to the Dutch Reformed Churches, for it seems to

me to do a grave injustice to these churches to assume that they can be identified with present policies. Signs are not wanting that there are divergencies of views within these churches, as within all churches in South Africa, on the policies now being implemented by those in authority in the state. Also, one has reason to believe that on more than one occasion there has been tension between the Dutch Reformed Churches and the civil authorities on particular issues. That is what we ought to expect, for as I said earlier, given the kind of situation in which we find ourselves in South Africa, or in any other modern state for that matter, the church that is yoked to the state in the way visualised in the Tomlinson Report has already betrayed its calling and can scarcely claim the right any longer of being a Christian community. This must be so, because no church that is worthy of being a church can ever admit the pretension of any state to be an end in itself. It is not that the church objects to the state exercising the power that rightly belongs to it and which it must use in order to maintain community life. What concerns the church is the purpose for which the state uses its power, and the responsibility with which it is exercised.

This is all the more important in days like our own, when it is becoming increasingly clear in South Africa that we are not dealing with the liberal state of the nineteenth century rooted in religion, nor even with the rootless liberal state at the dawn of the twentieth century, but with the state that is set upon planning and ordering the life of its citizens. To say that, is not for one moment to suggest either that there has not been much cause for the interference of the state in the realm of education, health services, care of the aged and young, and unemployment, or that many definite benefits have not come from such interference. At the same time, we have to remember that while social planning has some meaning and justification, as Hans J. Morgenthau reminds us in "Scientific Man *vs.* Power Politics": "Very rarely, if ever, are the social planners justified in saying, 'we planned it this way'. The good that results from the execution of their plans is generally not the good they anticipated, and the evil that comes from their plans is either not the one anticipated or is not anticipated at all. The purer the intention and the more comprehensive the plan, the wider will be the gap between expected and actual results. This cannot be otherwise, since the more planned, i.e. the more abstract and logically coherent the plan is, the greater will be its incongruity with the contingencies of social life". Whatever may be our

views of the scope and limitation of planning, it is our lot to live in a society in which the state is ever increasingly concerned with ordering the life of the members of that society.

The assumption that lies behind some of the official utterances of the state, which suggests that the state has unlimited power is, I believe, an assumption that brings us to the very heart of the issue. It is an assumption which must always be challenged, because not only does it spell social tyranny, it is also an ethical absurdity. But, having asserted that limits must be placed on the power of the state, we must go further and try to discern the points at which that limitation is reached. That is a much more difficult question to decide, but I believe it is a task the church must not shirk if it is ever to regain the initiative in the life of society. I know of course that there will be those who will retort that such concern is not the proper business of the church. Yet, as Dr. Carnegie Simpson has pointed out in his book *The Church and the State* in speaking of the actions of Leo and Gregory I, "It is true that the business of the church is to proclaim Christ's Gospel, and is not to be a political rule. Yet what we see here is that in the course of history—or to say in a more religious and in a more deeply true phrase, in the providence of God—the Church in Rome was placed in a position where, if it could not protect civilization and save the world even politically, nothing else could".

Not for one moment do I wish to suggest that the church in South Africa to-day finds itself in as grave a position *vis-à-vis* the state as these Roman pontiffs of a former age did. But I believe that the trend of events in the political sphere in recent years lays a heavy responsibility upon the church in its relationships with the state. It may even be that the day is not far distant when the church may have as decisive a role to play in national affairs as it has had to do on more than one occasion in its long history. At any rate, for my part, I believe this is a day in which the church needs to be specially vigilant, without at any time allying itself with any one of the parties or factions now engaged in a struggle for power; or, for that matter, identifying itself with any particular system of government.

It would be a falsification of the situation in which the churches find themselves in South Africa at the present time to suggest that any church, as church, is suffering open persecution from the state. However, this does not mean that all is well between the churches and the state. Quite apart from the fact that the

attitude of the authorities towards certain individual churchmen has had some elements in it which have savoured almost of persecution in one form or another, there is bound to be increasing tension between the state and any church in which some of its members believe that the power of the state is being used oppressively and unjustly towards those who belong to particular racial groups in the community. The passing of the Suppression of Communism Act, and the mass of racial legislation which has been enacted since then, have all contributed to aggravate the relations between the state and some at any rate of the churches in South Africa.

Indeed, the Suppression of Communism Act is a good example of the effect that a great deal of recent legislation must of necessity have on church-state relationships. Truly, the Marxists are making a supreme effort to solve the problem of the relation of church and state by attempting to identify them. This they are doing by investing a form of the state with all the traits of religion: a strict dogmatic system; a division into orthodoxy and heresy: an unchanging philosophy; the holy scriptures of Marx, Engels and Lenin, which can only be interpreted and which must not be questioned; the division of the world into the faithful and the unbelievers; the Party which is hierarchically organised; fanaticism, excommunication and execution: the emphasis on original sin in the form of exploitation. Here is a state which has become a church with a vengeance. At first glance it appears that any Christian church must wholeheartedly support any legislation which is devised to suppress Communism in South Africa. But if we take the trouble to examine the Suppression of Communism Act, we find that the methods to be employed to achieve that end are such that the church is bound to oppose them. Quite apart from the fact that the probability is that such legislation will only succeed in driving Communism underground, there are grave objections to it.

The serious dangers which would result from taking the punishment of Communists outside the normal processes of law must be obvious to us all. For centuries now it has been demonstrated that the only guarantee of justice for any individual is the rule of law. Once the free access of any citizen to the courts is denied, then the freedom of all citizens is placed in jeopardy. Further, the fact that anyone who is named as a Communist may be deprived of his livelihood and have his movements restricted at the dictation of a cabinet minister, ought to cause us grave misgivings. The

judgment of the Appeal Court in the case of Emil Solomon Sachs made this very clear when the learned judges agreed with him that "The provisions of section *nine* of Act 44 of 1950 were, as pointed out by Sachs, of a very drastic nature. The person who was subjected to an order issued by the Minister under that section was so subjected without any charge being laid against him and without any trial". Perhaps the most serious objection that can be made to this Act, however, is the fact that under it the term "Communist" may be applied to any citizens who venture to criticise the *status quo* in South Africa. Indeed, the terms of this Act are so wide that anyone who is named by the Minister is only a "communist" in the technical sense laid down in this legislation, and may have little or no resemblance to a Communist in the accepted sense of the word. Here I believe is an example of tyrannical and unjust legislation which the churches ought to oppose by every means in their power, even if such opposition leads to a worsening of relations between church and state in this country.

While some churchmen have been deeply concerned by this or that piece of racial legislation, many of the churches were profoundly disturbed by the passing of the Bantu Education Act, because their endeavours in the field of education had for more than a century been an integral part of their missionary work. How great their enterprise had been can be gauged from the fact that at the time of the passing of this Act *six-sevenths* of all the schools in the Union for the education of African children were under the control of various churches and missionary societies. It is true that various churches reacted differently as to the practical action they decided to take as a result of the Bantu Education Act. Nevertheless, a great many people in many of the churches were agreed that the intention of the legislation was to assign the African to a place of permanent inferiority in South Africa. They concluded from much that had been said and written on this subject by those in authority, that this system of education violates the principles of true education because it is designed to train children for an assigned status in life, and is in direct conflict with the teaching of the church that all men, whatever their colour, are created by God in His image, and all stand in the same need of redemption as sinners. To such church people the Bantu Education Act was a clear example of the state overstepping the legitimate exercise of its power; the plainest illustration that has been given so far in South Africa of the state trying to exercise ever

increasing control over the lives of its citizens. Nothing that has happened since the passing of this Act has warranted a change in their original conclusion by those churches which condemn this legislation. On the contrary, a great deal that is happening in African education merely underlines and sharpens those original misgivings on the part of some at any rate of the churches in this country. It will be a long time before the churches forget either the cruel dilemma in which this legislation placed them, or the injustice that it is inflicting on the African people in order to preserve white domination.

Not that the churches are only concerned when the state acts in such a fashion that it restricts their own sphere of influence in the country. On the contrary, they are bound to be concerned with the welfare of all citizens; a duty which places heavy responsibilities on the church in a multi-racial society like our own. Here we do well to bear in mind Maritain's words when he declared that the aim of the state must be "to procure the common good of the multitude, in such a manner that each person, not only in a privileged class, but throughout the whole mass, may truly reach that measure of independence which is proper to civilised life and which is ensured alike by the economic guarantees of work and property, political rights, civil virtues, and the cultivation of the mind".

If we are willing to accept such a description of the aims that states ought to set before themselves, then we have to admit, surely, that so far they have not been realised for the great bulk of our population. The majority of people in South Africa have few, if any, guarantees for earning a reasonable livelihood; they cannot own land in the urban areas, except to a very limited and totally inadequate extent; and they have only the barest political rights, and those of an indirect nature. In such a situation the churches have a duty to urge upon the leaders of the state the necessity for them to take such action as will safeguard the fundamental rights of personal liberty for all citizens; to promote such conditions as will encourage the development of personality for all, whatever may be their racial group; and to encourage the free association of individuals in groups for any purpose which is neither vicious nor immoral.

If the leaders of the community take such a task seriously, then they will be compelled to try and secure as far as possible an equitable distribution of wealth and do all in their power to preserve justice between men in their dealings with one another, and in

general protect the weak and helpless against the powerful and the strong. Not that the church will suggest that all this can ever be done in one fell swoop. In practical affairs, that which is desirable has always to be correlated with that which is possible. There are times when some abuses and injustice have to be tolerated as, for example, when their removal would lead to even greater evils. But the fact that certain evils may have to be tolerated for a time is no justification for acquiescing dumbly in things as they are in our country. That it is impossible for political leaders to accomplish all that they desire in any given situation, is never any excuse either for them or for us to sit back and do nothing. Even less is there any justification for the church being an absentee in contemporary history.

But quite apart from the direct effect of any particular legislation upon any section of the community, numbers of which it must be remembered are members of this or that church, the churches are certainly hampered and frustrated in their work by the effects of a great deal of such legislation. For example, the large movements of Africans from one locality to another in the urban areas confront the churches with problems of a magnitude which very few citizens appreciate. Even if they receive compensation for their buildings they are faced with securing a great deal of additional money, and a great deal of time and energy has to be expended on a building programme which could be far more usefully employed in other ways. But there is far more at stake here than money and buildings. Any who are familiar with the life of the church know full well the patient work that is necessary over a long period of time to build up habits of worship and a sense of fellowship in any local church community. It is always a heartbreaking business to have to close a centre of religious activity, and while from time to time it may be necessary, this never lessens the problems that such action raises for the church. When this has to happen, not because of any real necessity, but only because masses of people are being moved from one area to another in order to implement a particular racial ideology, the churches cannot fail to be resentful. In this, as in other ways, action is being taken by the state which is bound to make the work of the churches much more difficult; action which some church people at least are not convinced is at all necessary.

Not that the churches are in any sense dismayed. Down the ages the church of God has weathered far worse storms than that which now overhangs the churches in this country. But it would be

foolish to pretend that much recent action has not added considerably to the difficulties confronting the churches in their work. The fact is that much that is now happening in the legislative and administrative spheres, of necessity, is bound to heighten the tension between the church and the state. This does not necessarily mean that such tension will develop into open conflict with the state. For one thing, the members of the churches, like the great majority of the citizens of South Africa, have been so conditioned by events that many of them are now prepared to accept policies which even a few years ago they would have opposed. Further, the fact that the churches are divided from one another tends always to weaken their position *vis-à-vis* the state. So much will depend upon the faithfulness of the churches to their calling. That calling remains unchanged in the changing conditions in which the churches have to live and work. It is to live by the demands of the Gospel, whatever may be the policies and actions of the state. And to accept the consequences of so living, whatever those consequences may be.

Yet the first duty of any church is to see that in very deed it is the church, for only thus can it make its proper contribution to the life of the community. First and foremost this means that churches have to look towards God in worship. At the same time they have to serve people. As they attempt to do this they are bound to come into relationship with the state. Even in the easiest of situations this relationship will create problems for which there are never any final solutions. Indeed, for the churchman there are never any final solutions, for here he has no abiding city. As Maritain once pointed out, "Worlds which have arisen in heroism lie down in fatigue, for new heroisms and new sufferings come in their turn and bring the dawn of another day". Still, because the churches in South Africa, as churches everywhere, are faced both with heaven and with history, they dare not turn their backs upon the happenings in contemporary society. Only by betraying their calling can they shirk the responsibility which lies so heavily upon them in the present complex historical situation in which God places them.