
The Brandt Report—a Christian Reaction

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Archbishop William Temple pointed out in 1941 that religion must be concerned with the total life of society, including economics and politics. To those who accused him of stepping into highly technical matters, he replied that, as a Christian, he had an obligation to support the cause of the under-privileged and if they were to be supported, then this meant working for economic reform. To this end, he convened the Malvern Conference 'to consider . . . the new society that is emerging and how Christian thought can be shaped to play a leading part in reconstruction following the war'—an ambitious agenda.

Members of the Church like R. H. Tawney played their part in the whole movement which we associate with the Beveridge Report and the creation of the so-called Welfare State.

Temple struggled in the 1940s with a concept of a new social order. Today, we are obliged to struggle with a concept of a new international order. Whilst in their essential nature men and women remain much as they always have been, great changes have overtaken our economic, social and political systems. Our postwar international system is characterised by its greatly increased complexity. There are now, for example, something over 150 states in existence and the complexity of their interaction one with another is enormous. There is a similar increase in the lines of conflict. The power conflict—political/ideological, East-West—has developed partly separately and partly in interaction with the North-South conflict, whilst the issue of conflict over resources has changed many relationships between nations. There is an increasing intensity of interaction between nations, coupled with very rapid change. There is a tendency for issues to grow not only rapidly, but in size. There has been a rise in the earth's population, a rise in the consumption of oil, a rise in the expenditure on weapons and war during the postwar years.

As a Christian, I would be failing in my responsibility if I also ignored what we all know to be true. There are 600 million men and women in the so-called 'developing' countries who can neither read nor write. That is 100 million *more* than in 1950. For every 10 children born in poverty, two die within a year; another before the

age of five, and only five survive to the age of 40. Malnutrition affects millions. The nutritional level for one out of every two in the world population is so low that millions of infants receive less protein than is sufficient to permit optimum development of the brain. This is not empty rhetoric: the above figures refer to men, women and children with hopes and aspirations and as much right to live as you or I.

There is also a factor which I wonder if we take seriously enough in Britain at the moment, namely the increased linkage between domestic and international affairs. Domestic policies are increasingly related to international politics and vice versa. Whether we like it or not, we are *obliged* to think in international terms and resolve some of our problems on the international stage. It is within that context that I welcome the Report of the Brandt Commission. The complexities of everyday society compel policy-makers to seek out new theoretical frames of reference for proposed action to meet the appalling problems of the age.

The Brandt Report provides such a frame of reference. I believe that it was so well received by so many men and women in this country because it pointed us in the right direction. As one writer commented

academics can and will find many flaws in the Brandt Report, however, it is the best Brandt Report we have and it has got the essential direction right . . . what is now needed is the sustained follow-up and implementation of the central thrust of the report.

It was in the early 1970s that Dr Henry Kissinger said: *We have the ability to conquer mass starvation by the year 2000. What we lack is the political will.* President Carter at the same time said: *Help me to create conditions in which more humane policies become possible.*

With the best will in the world, it is difficult to say that our country has given a strong moral lead on Brandt within the international community. I always fear that we are in danger of subjugating the international imperative to the domestic imperative and, if that is so, then it may prove to be a very dangerous and foolish mistake.