

Christians in Britain are being persecuted. Senior Bishops have written to the newspapers to complain about it. And we have to face the fact that we are being persecuted. But this ought not to trouble us too much. First, the degree of suffering we are being called to endure is nothing like – or not yet like - that of Christians in Pakistan where they have their houses and churches burned down. Or in Sudan and Somalia where Christians are being slaughtered – as in Iraq, Nigeria and some of the former Soviet republics. There is an even more important reason why we should not fear persecution. Our Lord said,

*Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad...for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

It is true that there is an aggressive secularism and a militant, philistine atheism on the march in Britain. The mass media seems crowded with professional God-haters. These people belong to a new Establishment, an ideological elite; they have political power and enormous influence: and now, through the enactment of new legislation, they have the authority of the state behind them. These secularists despise Christianity and they have declared often that they wish to see our faith banished from public life. Social trends and changes in the law these last forty years have been all in favour of the secularists and against us. Christian ethics was for centuries the moral climate of our nation. This has been destroyed and replaced by edicts promoting *diversity*. By the enforcement of *multiculturalism*. By the various so-called *reforms* in social policies.

Recently, the government has admitted that it has deliberately shaped its immigration policy to promote *diversity* and, in its own phrase, *to change the character of the nation*. These efforts have succeeded. Multiculturalism is not the pleasant image of people of different races and cultures living happily side by side, as the social engineers who devised it would have us believe. Multiculturalism has produced racial separation and – in such as the East End, the Midlands, Bradford, Oldham, Rochdale, Blackburn and Huddersfield – actual ghettos. When this happened in South Africa, it was condemned as *Apartheid* by the same people who are promoting it over here.

Meanwhile, churches are closing by the thousand and, whereas there were six mosques in Britain in 1961, there are now 1700. Take together immigration and the comparative birth rate and Britain – along with the rest of Europe – will be predominantly Muslim within a generation: and at that time my youngest grandchild will still be only thirty years old. He and the rising indigenous generation will inhabit an alien culture. They will be strangers in their own land. Of

course even to draw attention to these likely outcomes is enough to incur the charge of *racism*. This is how dictatorial bureaucracies silence their critics: they invent *thought crimes*

What is so distressing is that these ills have not been forced upon us by enemy action. We have willed our own demise. We have acquiesced before the new laws, the new social trends. We have been complacent and so we have been dissolved by history. We had things so easy for so long, we took our way of life for granted. There was John Major's nostalgic image of the old lady cycling through the village to Holy Communion. There was the universal assumption that when the word *God* was pronounced in public in this country, it referred to *the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ*. You would have been laughed to scorn if you had suggested it would soon be *offensive* to put up the Crib at Christmas or against the law to wear a Cross at work.

If you were a City Rector or churchwarden, you would not hesitate to ask the bank in your parish to help you pay for the leaking roof. Now *diversity* prohibits business support for the church. Many firms will not even advertise your church services among their employees. The City of London Corporation will pay for a handrail on the church steps, provided it is understood that what they are paying for is its use by tourist rubbernecks and devotees of organ recitals and other *cultural* activities – but on no account will they pay anything if it is to help people attend Christian worship. Churches are now obliged to register with the Charity Commissioners. Deliciously ironical as this is when you consider that the very word *charity* derives from the Christian Faith.

So now, so late in the day, we find that a quiver of senior bishops has woken up. They discover a spiritual wasteland in which Christians are being persecuted. The surprising thing is that men so deeply asleep for so long have managed to wake up at all. But the truly astonishing thing is to find they are shocked to discover that our country is the way that it is. For it was they, the bishops and our rulers in the General Synod, who colluded with the secularisers, making sure that the church accommodated its theology and its moral teachings to the new social policies.

At the same time those appointed to be leaders and guardians of the faith, threw out the basic texts of English Christianity – *The Authorised Version of the Bible* and *The Book of Common Prayer*. This is more than mere philistinism and cultural vandalism: it is iconoclasm perpetrated by those who were appointed to care for the icons. But guess what? Next year marks the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *The Authorised Version* and all those superannuated, non-believing citadels such as St Paul's cathedral will make a beano of it. Places who never use the AV will bring it out for a junket and then put it back in the cupboard for another 400 years.

At the same time the ruling elite among the bishops, deans and canons, cathedral apparatchiks with jobs for life, denied the miracle stories of the Gospels and even the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection. (Remember one of their most influential books was called *The Myth of God*

*Incarnate* which denied the divinity of Our Lord.) While losing no opportunity to cast doubt on the faith they promised at their Ordination to uphold, they vigorously championed world religions, interfaith dialogue and religious pluralism in all its forms: the Archbishop of Canterbury notoriously wishing to accommodate aspects of Sharia law. How strange for Christians to play up Sharia while ditching real the Ten Commandments and replacing them with the bogus nostrums of antiracism, diversity, compliance and the insane reaches of environmentalism

This is not a side issue. It is not even *only* a religious issue. We are talking about the loss of Christian civilisation. And those who by their secularising contrivance and ideological malice would bring this civilisation down are as ignorant as they are arrogant. They know not what they do. For it is Christian civilisation which has given to the whole of Europe, and to this country in particular, not just a parade of dazzling cultural achievements in art, music, architecture and literature, and a decent set of political liberties, but an intellectual coherence never so fully attained before. And, as the great mathematician A.N. Whitehead, Russell's collaborator on *Principia Mathematica*, declared:

*There is but one source for science also: It must come from the Medieval insistence on the rationality of God.*

Where the eastern religions of Hinduism and Buddhism, and their prettified imitations in Hampstead drawing rooms, have preached otherworldliness and renunciation, a world of pure spirit, and where their modern opposite, the creed of materialism, insists there is nothing beyond earthly satisfactions, Christian civilisation has given us the only metaphysical principle upon which lasting coherence can be built: this is the vision of reality in which spirit and matter are at one: the Incarnation: the Word made Flesh: the God who is also Man.

This whole world of art, morals, law and science is bound up with the Christian life - not as an abstract principle, but as actually lived over generations of private prayer, reading the scriptures, meeting to receive the Body and the Blood and daily trying to practise charity. All this has now very nearly gone. And if it goes completely, then all the good things we have come to rely on and to love will go with it. *They will not survive the death of the faith to which they owe their significance.*

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the philosopher R.G. Collingwood saw this danger and said:

*Civilisations sometimes perish because they are forcibly broken up by the armed attack of enemies without or revolutionaries within; but never from this cause alone. Such attacks never succeed unless the thing that is attacked is weakened by doubt as to whether the end which it sets before itself, the form of life which it tries to realize, is worth achieving. On the other hand, this doubt is quite capable of destroying a civilization without any help whatever. If the people who share a civilization are no longer on the whole convinced that the form of life which it tries to realize is worth realizing, nothing can save it.*

I will adapt Collingwood and end with this: The gravity of the peril lies especially in the fact that so few recognize any peril to exist. When Rome was in danger, it was the cackling of the sacred geese that saved the Capitol. I, Peter Mullen, am only a priestly goose, consecrated with a cassock and surplice and fed at a rectory table; but cackling is part of my job, and cackle I will.