against the Odendaal Commission's proposals, one would gather that all of them are. For have not Chief Hosea Kutako of the Herero people (numbering 35,000) and all his ten counsellors, declared their dissent? (*p.* 162). Why the exceptionally intransigent leader of this exceptionally intransigent little community should be quoted for the reaction of hundreds of thousands of others in South West Africa is not even considered. Kutako having spoken, 'Certainly the reaction of the Africans has not been left in doubt.' What would 'Dr Gallup have to say about that one? What would the churchmen themselves have to say if Dr Verwoerd were to cite, as proof of his personal popularity with the Bantu, the applause of a handful of leaders of 10 per cent of the Bantu population?

A choice of explanations

Is it conceivable, the puzzled reader may ask himself—is it credible—that there will have been no one—no single one—among or within consulting distance of this working party who was well enough acquainted with the matters considered to know, and to know very well, how inadequate, how positively pernicious, from the standpoint of the initially uninstructed, trustful, reader some sections of this report, and in particular those treating of separate development and of the South West Africa case, were bound to be? The history of the mandate as here epitomised could hardly have been produced by anyone whose concern was not to implant, or reinforce, certain prejudices in the reader's mind. The *suppressio* and the *suggestio* are persistently employed. It is hard to believe that there can indeed have been no one sufficiently well informed to appreciate how unfaithful to the serious enquirer was the material to be incorporated in this report.

That would no doubt be the simple explanation. But alas it has about it a strong complexion of improbability. It fails to make sense of marked characteristics of the report. It leaves us without an answer to such questions as, How came the working party to be content with so unlikely an account of the assumptions and constituent elements of the programme of separate development? How came they indeed to comment on that matter at all? How came they to include so unilluminating a description of the system of 90-day detention? How came they, in the matter of South West Africa, to pronounce not merely on what Her Majesty's Government, but on what the Hague judges, might appropriately do? How came they to affect so much faith in proposals so unlikely to materialise, and in the possibility of generating confidence in their outcome? Is not the passage about the hoped-for universally acceptable settlement itself almost in the nature of a confidence trick? The simple Christian who succumbs to such a passage is surely more simple than even a Christian ought to be. Yet it seems only too conceivable that some Christians, wishful thinkers as they may be, may prove simple enough

for that. But what, one still may ask, can be the object of so trading on men's capacity to be bemused?

The recourse to the proposal for an international guarantee is really nothing short of an implied confession of failure. It is better, the working party seem to feel, to cover up their inability to square the circle with a recommendation that the circle be squared, than to admit that without the squaring of the circle there can be no solution and that nobody knows how to square the circle. To foster white confidence in those by whom the whites must feel themselves betrayed will be hardly less impossible than to square the circle.

It is at this point it becomes imperative to consider just whom it is that we are critising when we find fault with this report. For the policies of, for example, a British cabinet all its members have, conventionally, to share responsibility. If they were unprepared for this, their proper course would be to resign. With the members of this working party it has apparently been different. The fact of their not having formally dissociated themselves from what was going into the report is not, we are told, conclusive of their having severally assented to it (*p.* 97*n.*). All of them have contributed some of it, but none has said yes to it all. There is anonymity but no unanimity. So it is only that notional personality, the working party itself, as distinct from its individual members, who can be taxed with inconsistency if there are contradictions or shifts of emphasis in the report. And if the report as a whole has, on the contrary, an organic unity and a consistent message, this could be attributable either to happy chance, or to the successful efforts of one or two, just as easily as to a community of conviction between some, and other, members of the party. If there is a party line it is statedly not the line of individual members of the party.

When one reflects on the conditions in which such a body does its work, this is not wholly surprising. It is not merely that not all the members can be present at every session. Of those most often present not all need have been present to the same extent. It was waggishly observed in the days of the League of Nations Council that its members had become amenable to a four-fold classification. There were those who spoke and understood, those who spoke but understood not, those who understood and spoke not, and those who neither spoke nor understood. Certainly in many such working parties there have tended to be those who knew more and those who knew less of what the business was really all about. James Harvey Robinson taught modern America to distinguish between the 'good' reasons and the 'real' reasons for what people did. Sometimes one may similarly distinguish between the ostensible business and the real business on which men are concertedly engaged. It is accordingly proposed now to offer a bit of pure but not gratuitous speculation on what may have really been the business of this working party.

What, officially, was the overall strategic concept, and was the veritable concept any other?

Normally, in looking for an answer to questions such as these, one would first consult the statements of the rapporteur. But in this case, alas, there is no mention of any such person. Whether the chairman and secretary shared, or divided between them, the responsibilities of such a person is not disclosed: and one is warranted in wondering if they did. These officers might only have been concerned to write into the report whatever was pressed for by any, without being resisted by any, of the members of the party. If this were so, much might depend upon the finesse with which particular items were offered for inclusion, and the stage at which this happened. In order to refer to spades in the report it might not be necessary to name them as such. The word tools might suffice, in a context where tools would make sense only if read as meaning spades. And where it might be hard to get something expressly recommended, it could be simpler to have it referred to as just a possibility.

What will here be, altogether speculatively, assumed is that among the participants, or in their background, there could perhaps have been one who, clear-minded from the outset on what must on no account be included and what on no account left out, and experienced in the ways of working parties and of those by whom they are worked, was the true anonymous architect of the report. For, whether there existed such a one or not, it seems permissible to observe that, to anyone reading the report with the attention that it merits, it must be *as if* the genesis of the document had indeed been the work of a 'master mind.'

This is not, of course, to say that one is bound to assume that the less satisfactory features of the report are otherwise to be accounted for than in terms of our simpler explanation. It is entirely conceivable that this simpler explanation is after all the correct one, however unflattering this may sound to the sagacity of the several members. But one is certainly entitled to insist that the more disillusioned explanation has also its measure of appeal. Indeed a greater measure. For not only is it suggested by the broad impact of the report; it finds endorsement in a more detailed analysis of what the report contains. How, except on the assumption of a conscious and unregretted bias against South Africa, is anyone to account for the treatment here of separate development? How even for its very inclusion in a report in which it was so strictly non-essential? How in particular is one to understand the apparent indifference to what spokesmen for apartheid may have said as to the rationale of the border industries, or the measure of independence to which the homelands may ultimately aspire? Why does the working party refer to a possible discounting of ties of blood without mention of those ties of wartime comradeship which it might be even harder to discount? (*p.* 71). Why is the line on legal issues so often slanted against the South African position? Why is the appendix on 90-day detention so unrevealing on the

reasons for the system, to the point of silence on the very existence of the movement whose destructive exploits the method of 90-day detention—for getting together the evidence on which to prosecute for sabotage—was designed to thwart? Why, where that aforementioned young policeman is quoted on the prevalence of torture, is the fact omitted that the man in question was himself the accused person in the case? Why in the matter of the proposed round table conference, from which so much is ostensibly to be expected, is there no discussion whatever of who in particular is to decide on who in particular is to attend; no discussion on how the conference is to proceed, on what sort of result it is likely to reach, or—most important of all—on what sort of consequences may be expected to follow in the event of its eventuating in nothing better than an agreement to disagree? Why is this purely hypothetical solution put forward as if so intrinsically reasonable? Is it not appreciated that to demand something that will satisfy African aspirations while leaving the Europeans with nothing to fear is just about as realistic as to advise that a river run uphill? Why, in respect of South West Africa, do the working party presume to hand down a judgment in the matter which, as they themselves twice remind us, is still *sub judice*—and this after conferring with the legal agent of one side only in the case? (*p.* 83). Why do they so pointedly soft-pedal the fact that on what at one time was the principal issue—namely, the suggested legal necessity for all the mandated territories to be placed under United Nations trusteeship—South Africa's widely reprobated interpretation of the law was eventually upheld by the International Court? (*p.* 157). Why is the position in Security Council proceedings—where, besides her veto, Britain has also a voice, so that her role is far from being merely that of having to say yes or no to proposals placed before her by the representatives of other countries—so uninstructively explained? It is in order to lend credibility to the erroneous doctrine that, should the matter of South West Africa come presently to the Security Council, Britain may find herself with no honourable alternative but to agree to the application of sanctions—or, not having agreed to it, to apply them all the same? And in what spirit is there twice slipped in, without elaboration and as scarcely more than a hint, the opinion that, for the leading western powers, the ending of apartheid is merely a matter of overcoming their legal scruples and having the necessary resolve? Why in questions where South Africa has the law on her side does the working party speak so rebelliously of the defects of the law?

To all of these questions the answers are simple enough, assuming that there is acceptance of our less simple explanation of the report as a whole. It would thus surely be unreasonable to require that this less simple explanation be rejected out of hand, when it accounts for so much that needs explaining, while the other explanation explains so little, and leaves so much unexplained.

Consider for instance the treatment accorded to the topic of basic human rights. The report mentions the Universal Declaration drawn up in Geneva in 1947, but it leaves the reader unassisted on the technical status of that document and what it contains. True, there is no provision for enforcing it. True, it is not binding on anyone. But it was after all agreed to by the accredited representatives of a number of countries, and this the less surprisingly in that it was tailored to their requirements so as to enshrine the highest common factor of the social philosophies of them all. But how different in relation to that document is the position of South Africa, whose requirements the framers of the declaration had made no attempt to meet, and whose spokesmen made no secret of their inability to go along with what was being accomplished. This might surely have been worth recalling, in a context where it is in effect suggested that South Africa is violating human rights 'as set out' in the declaration. If the declaration was going in some sense to be binding even on those who neither signed it nor voted for it, what point could there ever have been in having anybody sign it or vote for it at all?

Assuming it to have been the ambition of the working party to offer their readers a mature understanding of the economic, as opposed to the moralistic, aspects of the wages question, or to enlighten them on the legalities of the sanctions issue, or fully to acquaint them with the story of the mandate, would they conceivably have contented themselves with such a handling of these matters as they give? But no, that may not after all have been their ambition. Help for the more intelligent of their readers may not have been their prime concern. 'The fundamental point of departure,' they confess, 'must be the witness of the Church in the new Africa. . .' (*p.* 90). This almost savours of a conscious choosing of 'consumer' as against 'quality' culture, or an editorial decision to go for mass circulation rather than the communication of the truth.

Had it been the ambition of the British Council of Churches to obtain a balanced analysis of the total situation within which British Christians must confront the issues of sanctions and South West Africa, would they so have packed their working party with personalities, and backed it with consultants, who were so unlikely to be open-minded on certain basic themes? If these gentlemen were to act as a jury, it was bound to prove itself a somewhat special jury, representative not so much of the man on the Clapham omnibus as of the fellow on the other side, from South Africa's, of the hill.

If, say, an American president appoints a committee to advise him on what to do about the communists, he is unlikely to include a proportion of communists, or even of known fellow-travellers, among its number. And the British Council of Churches reveal themselves as hardly less positively committed in respect of apartheid than any president ever was in respect of communism. It is as if, instead of saying, Let us have a panel to investigate the situation and to tell us what we need to know,

the British Council of Churches had said, Let us get a body of persons, sound on the principal issue, to tell the public what they, the public, need to think.

The contrast in temper between the sections on sanctions and on 90-day detention, points strongly to the deduction that they were the work of different minds. That is, assuming that the latter passage was prepared *ad hoc* at all. It might well have been bought off the peg at some anti-apartheid emporium around the corner.

Occasionally it is disclosed that a certain view was that of 'a majority of the working party' (*p.* 65). No clue is vouchsafed as to how the minority regarded the matters in question.

Most curious is the revelation, in a letter of Bishop Boys in *Southern Africa* (April 2 1965), that a proposal put forward under 'Governmental action' was not in fact a recommendation of the working party. Someone not a member of the working party had put it forward, and the membership as a whole had thought it worth passing on without comment. This clearly makes a difference to the status of the proposal, but who would have suspected it from a reading of the report?

Politics and Christianity

The report, we are assured, is the work of 'British Christians.' And of these our hypothetical supermanipulator could also himself have been one. For there are Christians and Christians; and, while we may indeed be Christians, the trouble is, as Karl Barth somewhere remarks, that we are all such a lot of other things as well.

And, if the thinking to be done is intrinsically secular and technical, so as to involve the putting on of thinking caps other than that of the simple Christian, it is as well if those Christians who are to do the thinking are capable of wearing to some purpose those other kinds of cap. When for instance a Christian gets his sums wrong the result is bad arithmetic, not bad Christianity: and similarly when he errs in his thinking on legal, or social, or political, or strategic sorts of issue. Where, of course, the questions are questions of value, the distinctive values of a Christian may lead him to distinctively Christian results. But when appreciating political issues one is as often concerned with questions of feasibility as of abstract moral rightness. The 'right' thing to vote for may mean the measure most likely, in the given circumstances, to achieve an aim acknowledged as right. And matters of feasibility are best appreciated by men of political experience, as opposed to those with a responsive Christian conscience but little familiarity with how, in a human world, it is in political practice most painlessly and expeditiously possible to get things done.

Problems may arise when what Christians are advising on are operations in the mundane political field. Where the report calls a halt with the comment that 'in such calculations' Christians can have no place, it

means at most that they can have no place in their capacity as Christians. It cannot mean that all who do participate in such calculations are as if by definition less than Christian. The working party, having conducted its readers to such a point, can, as a Christian body, withdraw from the discussion. What it cannot do is to ordain that the discussion shall not further proceed. So, if the prestigious description of Christian thinking is not to be applied to the grim conclusion, the thinking that has led the reader to the need for such conclusion may nevertheless have been, in the relevant sense, Christian thinking—thinking, that is, *by* Christians, though on issues not inviting distinctively Christian thought.

But the quality of technical thinking is not determined by the standing, as a Christian, of the thinker. If the history, the economics, the sociology, and the legalistics, the strategics and the political meteorology are technically good, they deserve to be commended without regard to whether the thinking is that of a Christian or not. And if advice offered by Christians is technically or politically unsuitable it must be rejected, however elevated the sentiments by which it is inspired.

The working party speak piously about a 'Christian' decision for or against trade sanctions. But what *is* a Christian decision, and how does it differ from one that is purely political, a choice made in the normal course of the global political game? No doubt the Christian statesman may prefer a moral decision. But, suppose the decision which an abstract morality enjoins would be politically imprudent, how essentially moral would it in that case be? One doesn't ask pious Christians to discard their pious language. But should they not confine it to issues to which a pious approach is germane? (They themselves allude to hot air and hypocrisy as having characterised much comment on South Africa [*p.* 20].)

Mathematical issues require to be tackled in a mathematical idiom, philosophical in a philosophical, political in a political. This perhaps is what is ultimately involved in rendering unto Caesar...

The fact is that the incongruity of their writing in so distinctively Christian an idiom on issues so essentially mundane becomes at a certain stage apparent even to the members of the working party. And at this point they accordingly drop out from the line of march. The padre may imbue the troops with courage before a battle but he does not accompany them over the top. The working party's attitude to the use of violence by the state is that of him who says, 'Humanly speaking this might seem to be a case for the stiletto. We have no liking for the weapon, but here it is. We neither prescribe nor forbid its use. Others, not we, must advise about that.'

In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that Bishop Ambrose Reeves, wearing as to the manner born a secular thinking cap for coping with secular issues, is disappointed that the working party should recoil from the politics of violence*—'prophylactic violence based on the moral

**TV Times*, February 11 1965

indignation of mankind'—to which their analysis has brought them so near. Willing, with them, the promotion in South Africa of conditions in which the Government must topple, he fears not to will what he sees, and thinks they too should see, as the means. Their attitude is vulnerable, he perceives, in point of logic. Is it not rather as if a team of astronomers were determining with the help of a computer the age of the universe, and were, as Christians, to reject the result—and the computer too—as offensive to their brand of religious belief?

But the working party have taken a subtler line. The Government, while doubtless paying heed to their proposals, will arrive at decisions of its own (*p.* 95). They are not therefore bound to avoid giving advice of such a sort as it may have to reject. So, if they find difficulty in usefully advising, this cannot only be because their advice may not prevail. Rather it is because, besides what they derive from the gospels, they are affected by other factors too; by their status as having been appointed by the British Council of Churches; by their commitment to the cause of the black peoples in South Africa, and to that of Christian missions in the continent as a whole; by their penchant for a dogmatic-moralistic, as opposed to a constructive, therapeutic, approach; by their relative lack of the expertise for the handling of some of the issues that arise; by their proneness to accept at their face value *ex parte* statements from partisan informants; by their erroneous preconceptions with respect to South Africa; and by their official Christian optimism.

Sometimes one has objected to the effort of a preacher to make his religious message the more palatable by serving it with a political sauce. Here, one's complaint must read the other way. It is not this time a case of people using politics to make religion the more acceptable, but the other way about. Here it is politics that is seeking an entrée to a Christian milieu by clothing itself in the vestments of religion. Is this not perhaps taking undue liberties with religion? Will the Tories face the next election with the slogan that nationalisation has no warrant in the Bible?

For, while there are the politics of the state, there are also the politics of the churches. Though different, these two sorts of politics may sometimes make similar demands. They both, for example, may come tomorrow to see white South Africa as expendable. They both, for example, may see it as important for them to do so, as much for the sake of the image in Africa of the churches as of that of Her Majesty's Government. But this is a political not a Christian calculation, and ought to be presented as strictly such. We must be warned to beware of those who come to us in priests' clothing, but inwardly are other things as well.

Importance is attached by the working party to the possibility of a renewal of dialogue with Afrikaner churchmen in South Africa. But alas it is not to be dialogue as between partners equally free either of guilt or of social constraint (*p.* 24). It is sometimes forgotten that Christian

churchmen at one time looked on sickness as God's punishment for sin. Nowadays we know enough first to enquire how in fact a patient got into his unenviable condition. But when the patient is a whole social system, and the condition is as exceptional and as problematic as that of South Africa today, the tendency is only too common to regard South Africa as responsible for even having the problems which are her inheritance from the past. And since present-day South Africa is thus deemed as if of her own volition to have brought her present problems on herself, the sense of superior righteousness in those who, themselves blessedly unaffected with comparable problems, have the opportunity to lecture the South Africans, is natural and agreeable enough.

But there is a further disturbing feature about this proposed dialogue. It is to take place in the atmosphere to be created by pressures on the Republic from abroad! One may perhaps be excused from commenting on that idea.

And finally, there is apparently to be a difference between the assumed moral status of the standpoints from which the parties are respectively to enter the debate. The working party do indeed profess an awareness of their liability to bias, but this admission does not affect the rigidity with which they take position on crucial points. They will insist, in the proposed discussions, upon what *they* see as being the principles at stake in the confrontation of black and white in the contemporary world (*p.* 26). And when they speak of the conditions of 'fruitful dialogue,' it is hard not to take them as meaning that everybody must first begin by subscribing to certain basic tenets—namely theirs. For instance, their idea that the only way forward is to accept that economic integration cannot be indefinitely divorced from political and social integration: there is evidently to be no question about this. Nor yet about the idea that integration is the most desirable ultimate solution. Nor about what they call the 'basic consent problem,' (*p.* 15), implying that the future shape of South Africa must be something to be consented to by all. And that it is on the part of South Africa—white South Africa—that a change of heart is indispensable; and that it is white South Africa that must carry the 'cross of reconciliation,' reconciliation, that is, between the two [*sic*] communities, white and non-white—the coloureds, Indians, Xhosa, Zulu, Tswana, Tsonga, Venda and the rest being conceptually lumped together as one of the two parties to the postulated bilateral deadlock of today. Presumably it has got to be accepted that South Africa is being ruled by 'violence' in a sense in which other countries are not. And that the true ethos of separate development is the 'exploitation' of black by white. And that by the Christian understanding of history must be understood the British rather than the Afrikaner Christian version of it. And that the 'moral' judgment of the world as expressed at the United Nations is moral in the sense that it must necessarily be immoral not to agree, or comply, with it. And that, while there are 'positive possibilities' in the

working party's own proposals, there are none in the separate development programme now being tried.

The curious thing is that, while approaching the encounter with such an armoury of undiscussables, the working party seemingly find so incomprehensible the white South African's insistence even on one. Not even on the vital question of the sharing of the franchise do they accept the inevitability of the Afrikaner's immovability. Peoples, they must know, have communal convictions—the British their attachment, perhaps, to individual freedom, the communists their certitude that capitalism is doomed, the trade unionists their sense of the paramountcy of the claims of social justice. Why then may the Afrikaner not have his? Before one can base any hopes on a coming negotiation one must surely have identified at least a point or two on which negotiation might conceivably succeed. There is little hope of this if one side, while unyielding in its own main positions, sees the vital interests of the other as sacred cows.

If ever a people seemed to have been beaten virtually to its knees it was the Boers in 1902. Yet even then the British found that the problem of the 'native franchise' had better be left for negotiation some other day. What, even after two and a half years of fighting, the Boers were then still refusing to concede, even at the point of a sword, their sons are now being invited to surrender, at the point as it were of a pin!

Rigidities—mental and institutional

In speaking of there having existed in 1901 a conflict between 'two policies,' the working party appear as misinforming even themselves (*p.* 36). What existed then were not just two policies—like the alternatives of inflation and deflation—but two traditions, two communal creeds, two social philosophies, two ideologies if anybody prefers the word—in short, two 'camps.' Just as the distinction between the communist-dominated world and the so-called free world is more than just a choice between the platforms of rival political parties, so in South Africa is the distinction between the Afrikaner-Nationalist and the 'liberal' views of life. Some people may perhaps think that Britain might be a less stuffy kind of country if the churches renounced their addiction to theism and entered with neighbourly flexibility into a dialogue on sharing assumptions with their atheistic friends. But the advocacy of atheism is not an alternative policy for the Christian church—even today. The difference between theists and atheists is more than just a choice between policies. And so are the differences between individualists and totalitarians and between fascists and believers in democracy. These are contrasts between entire ideological systems. In planning for a dialogue between the exponents respectively of sun-worship and of moon-worship it would be time-wasting for the advocates of either to stipulate that the others must begin by abandoning their basic beliefs.