

# "The Church and the Criminal"

by

Rev. J. A. HOYLES

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*A review by Rev. L. L. Rees (Chaplain General)*

IN THE FIELD of practical work on behalf of the offender, individual Christians in this country have a fine and honourable record. A large number of prison visitors, after-care workers, prison and borstal governors, assistant governors and officers, probation officers are motivated by their Christian concern. But for a long time many of us have been conscious that in the sphere of thought, of philosophy and research in this area, Christians have tended to contract out of discussion and those who describe themselves as humanist, agnostics or even atheists are to the fore. Even where Christian insights have been expressed they have been expressed in isolation from the diverse and often unintegrated insights of others. A request I made about four years ago to the librarian of the Cambridge Institute of Criminology for books on criminology written from a specifically Christian standpoint produced a very short list, mostly of brief references—some not more than a paragraph or a page—in some general books. Yet if the Christian claim is total and comprehensive, wherever a judgement is made that reflects upon a

human situation comment by Christians should be forthcoming and any survey of human behaviour which recommends certain habits, attitudes or principles of conduct are answerable to the morality of Christendom. Without the contribution of the theologian the insights are incomplete.

The Reverend J. Arthur Hoyles, already known to many within the Prison Department as the Methodist visiting minister at Grendon and Spring Hill and as the co-ordinator of our Methodist ministers, has done us a considerable service in the writing of his latest book *The Church and the Criminal*. In the words of the publishers "this book expounds the proposition that Church and State must work together in finding the answer to crime. Because the treatment of criminals by the secular State has been unpalatable to the Christian conscience, the Church has been tempted to contract out of the administration of justice. Some of the questions discussed are: Can Christian morality be adequately expressed in the law of the land? When a person is guilty before the law, is he also

guilty before God? How can punishment be reconciled with the Christian injunction to forgive one's enemies? What is the relation between evangelical conversion and psychiatric treatment? Can there be such a thing as a Christian prison? Although there is perpetual tension between the Church and the State, a working partnership must be maintained. Sometimes Christians have to compromise their principles. The Church's duty is to transform secular justice so that its own insights may be enlisted in the rehabilitation of the criminal."

There is an interesting foreword by Dr. Leslie Davison, whose own essay on "The Principles of Penal Reform" finds its place in the extensive bibliography which reflects the wide background reading that has gone into the preparation of this book. I found the chapter on "Guilt and Culpability" and the

one on "Punishment and Forgiveness" particularly relevant to current thinking, whilst this chapter on "Correction and Conversion" should do much to disarm the suspicions of our colleagues from other disciplines. On page 110 he quotes Dr. Stafford Clark as saying "it is a red herring to assume that modern psychology rests upon a determinist and materialist basis. Pain, guilt and failure are inevitable aspects of the human situation and although they may be mitigated by medicine, they demand a religious solution".

The book pleads for a working partnership between Church and State, between the sociologists, the psychologist, the philosopher and the theologian. This will not be possible until dialogue between them produces understanding, and understanding produces respect and charity. Arthur Hoyles' book will do much to stimulate and contribute to such a dialogue.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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THE RT. REV. J. T. HUGHES, Lord Bishop Suffragan of Croydon began his involvement with prisons in 1952 when as Canon Missioner of Southwark he was invited to conduct a mission at Dartmoor. The relationships initiated led him to maintain contact with men both in and out of prisons. He has been much in demand as a Conductor of Missions in prisons.

VERNON HOLLOWAY, M.A., joined the Prison Service in 1954 after studying psychology and philosophy at Oxford. Has recently returned to Wormwood Scrubs as Principal Psychologist.