

Charles Malik *speaks*

In an era of specialization, Dr. Charles Malik of Lebanon is an outstanding example of the broadly educated man, the cultivated gentleman, the versatile individual. He is at home in many fields and is held in especially high esteem as an educator, philosopher and religious leader, diplomat and statesman. In these fields he speaks and writes with authority, based upon scholarly research, wise reflection, and extensive and varied experiences in his own country and abroad.

Born in 1906 in Bitirram, Lebanon, he attended the local schools and the Presbyterian Mission High School in nearby Triloli. Then he took his bachelor's degree from the American University of Beirut and his master's and doctor's degrees from Harvard University, spending a year at the University of Freiburg, Germany.

After completing his formal education, he taught at the American University of Beirut, worked in a publishing house in Cairo, and served on a Rockefeller Foundation expedition studying bilharzia in Egypt. Then he returned to the American University as a professor of philosophy and later as head of the department.

From 1945 to 1955 he served as Lebanon's diplomatic representative in the United States and at the United Nations and in 1956 he became Minister of Foreign Affairs for Lebanon. At the U.N. he has been chairman of the Commission on Human Rights, President of the Security Council and the Social and Economic Council, and President of the General Assembly.

In these troubled and turbulent times he speaks with clarity, courage, and conviction:

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ON LEBANON . . .

“ . . . Lebanon—where East and West have been meeting one another intimately, blending, creatively, challengingly, peacefully, for thousands of years.”

“Lebanon is one of the homes of freedom of thought and conscience in the world. . . . The message of Lebanon is to stress both in theory and in being—truth, reason, love, tolerance, moderation, and freedom. In her modest and imperfect way, Lebanon has sought and will continue to seek to live and mediate this message”

ON THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST . . .

“The Near East as the cradle of Western civilization appears . . . to be a very precise, living, relevant and stable concept—far more profound and enduring . . . than the ‘Middle East’ which strategic pragmatism has conjured up for us today, but may have to drop altogether tomorrow.”

“The Near East in general, and certain parts of it in particular, mirrors most sharply the final problems of the world. He who wants to see how human existence, including his own, is perilously hemmed in and riddled by all these issues, let him come to the Near East.”

ON A NEW SPIRIT IN THE ARAB WORLD

“ . . . perhaps the best way to sum up the new spirit in the Arab world is to say that the people are awakening as they have never done before. The chasm between governor and governed is gradually closing. The will of the people is making itself felt more strongly than ever before.”

ON THE UNITED NATIONS . . .

“ . . . a place of unending usefulness both in action and in vision”

“The United Nations is not an association of peoples but of governments, and only indirectly of peoples in the case of democratic and representative governments. . . . This is indeed as it should be for the United Nations was conceived, constructed, and constituted by those organs of civil power and authority which we call governments and not by private clubs or organizations, not by idealistic dreamers about peace or perfection. The United Nations is essentially political and responsible. It deals essentially with relations of power.”

“The United Nations must be an absolutely universal society The Charter does not say that the political, social, economic, cultural or ideological constitution of a nation in any way affects its qualifications for membership.”

“That the great powers have had to critically confront one another at the United Nations all these years has been good and most educative to all of us, especially to the great powers themselves. False doctrinairism and abstract sentimentalism are corrected only by the constant view of the obstinately real. History may record that this constant educative confrontation was chiefly responsible for the great powers having to accommodate themselves to one another.”

“ . . . The Universal Declaration of Human Rights may well turn out, in the long perspective of history, to be the most important single achievement of the United Nations in its first decade of existence.”

ON SOME CRISES AND CHALLENGES OF OUR TIMES . . .

“. . . The West really faces three fundamental challenges: the challenge of Communism, the challenge of the rising East, and the challenge of freedom, namely, of the West's own internal problems, above all its political, moral, and spiritual problems”

“There is a general weakening of moral fibre. One gains the impression that the great fund of moral strength which has been handed down from the tears and labors of the ages is not being creatively replenished

“Quality is in eclipse. Quantity and size dominate. Not the better and truer, but the larger and physically stronger: these call forth moral approbation.

“I must say in all humility that the leadership of the West in general does not seem to be adequate to the unprecedented challenge of the age. There is a tragic dearth of men, men who are so genuinely in touch with the truth and with the hearts of their fellow men as to have only to open their mouths to be loved and believed and followed. The world desperately cries for masters; for it is only the voice of conviction and truth that is going to save us.

“There is a corresponding bankruptcy of ideas. There is this in this realm an unequal struggle for the hearts of men between Communism and the West. Communism displays a set of generic ideas—I believe for the most part false—in which it passionately believes, for which Communists are willing—I believe misguidedly—to die. There is no comparable ideological passion in the West.”

ON SOME POSSIBLE STEPS TO PEACE . . .

"The Western World must articulate in its living and life-giving truth, and embody in its words, deeds, institutions, works of art, and bold plans that which will sweep men off their feet. This is the greatest need of the moment."

"If the West allows anything to cause it to fall out with itself, history will judge it with the utmost severity. A new effort is therefore needed to reassert, in all genuineness, freedom, and conviction, the fundamental unity of the Western world."

"Concerning the economic situation, there are three impossibilities. (1) It is impossible to trade freely with Western Europe and at the same time to be right in blaming them if they trade with anybody else. (2) It is impossible to defeat—or at least hold in check—the Communist revolution throughout the world and at the same time not to give up many of your comforts. (3) It is impossible to have peace and contentment in the world—or at least a modicum of these things—and at the same time to maintain indefinitely your standard of living on a level twenty to thirty times above that of Asia and Africa. The practical consequences to be drawn from these three impossibilities are obvious."

"The best way to combat communism is by the development of strong healthy governments and administrations. Then, by paying much greater attention than before to the realm of ideas and attitudes. And only in the third place by turning to the whole problem of social and economic justice. It never does anybody any good to let things drift. The forces of freedom have drifted in the past in this area with . . . disastrous results."

ON THE DISCIPLINE OF SCIENCE . . .

"So long as the dominant culture of a nation is poetical or literary or imaginative or anecdotal or primitively agricultural; so long as the costly discipline of science is not respected or sought for its own sake; so long as positive science . . . is not given its rightful place in the life of a nation; so long as responsible leaders, whenever they are up against something serious, something laden with destiny and decision, react to that situation by telling a story or reciting a poem or repeating an anecdote, instead of humbly seeking the judgment of science and abiding by the voice of reason,—in short, so long as a nation or a culture is confused as to the place or relationship of nature, reason, and man,—then such a nation or culture must expect and accept severe limitations in the role it can play in the great international game."

ON EDUCATION . . .

"The most expert technician and the most erudite scholar—will be singularly deficient as a man unless he also loves the arts, trusts in reason, delights in free but responsible argument, appreciates great literature, seeks first principles, knows something of the great classics, understands that past ages are not dead, enjoys some mastery of the basic instruments of thought, values the transparency of friendship as the greatest thing on earth, and stands in awe, in some fear and trembling, before the ultimate mysteries of life."

" . . . there is really no end to learning The term of the pupil must come to an end The thoughtful life of action must therefore issue into the active life of thought"

ON ULTIMATE VALUES . . .

"The peace of man is a necessary and honorable thing, but it is different from the peace of God. The peace of God is the actual reign of the Holy Ghost in the Church, here and hereafter. I cannot derive this peace by reason The peace of God is a pure gift of God, but a given and continuing and available gift And yet man's nature, man's reason, man's peace are in no way distorted or displaced by this gift; on the contrary, they are perfected.

"I know the kind of certainty that obtains in mathematics, in the sciences, in philosophy, in whatever there is of reality in international and intercultural affairs, and in pure friendship, but the certainty and reassurance which the Holy Ghost infuses into the soul, when, acknowledging on its knees its sins and sincerely repenting itself of them, it pores over the mysteries of the Bible, even the most difficult of them,—far surpasses any of these other certainties."

"Beyond war and peace, beyond economics and politics, beyond the atom and its potentialities for good or for evil, beyond the question of whether Western civilization can be saved, beyond even any immediately personal suffering or sorrow or profound secret unhappiness or even sin, beyond all this towers the supreme question whether we really know and are comforted by what Christ meant, both in itself and in history, when he said, 'These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.' "

ON THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES

"I believe the real issue of our times is whether America, having completed the tremendous century-old task of taming and integrating a whole continent, will now turn, with the same zeal which characterized her material adventure, to the intellectual and spiritual foundations of her own life, rediscovering and reaffirming them, to the end that she might mediate them to the whole world. I also believe that America could not in reality perform this task except by being absolutely faithful to her Christian tradition, without which she herself would have been impossible in the first place."

"Can America develop such a type of man who sums up in his character such a quality of understanding, of humility, of truth, of humor, of moral stature, of strength and resourcefulness of mind, of pregnant ideas, of universal sympathy and friendship and love, as to enable him by the sheer weight of his being to overcome the disadvantages of mass and discontinuity? It has not dawned upon America how much is required of her to develop this kind of humanity. But such a development is possible. When it is achieved, America may understand and be understood by Asia.

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