

IT'S CHRIST OR WAR

By Daniel A. Lord S.J.

"YOU were good to let us know you planned this trip to town," said the girl, settling herself in a chair, and laying back her coat, which the head waiter arranged in becoming background.

"Of course," said the young man, but not addressing the girl, "you must admit we were persistent. How many invitations do you usually get before you write one acceptance?"

"It depends," replied the priest, "on who invites me."

The young couple looked dramatically crestfallen.

"Just how far down on the scale does that put us?" the young man demanded.

"You'd be surprised to learn how high up you rate," the priest retorted, smiling with genuine interest. "I can't remember when I last accepted a luncheon engagement in town. My plans for town are always simple. I run up from Lakeside as fast as the express train or my own car will carry me. I transact my business at top speed. I drop into the bookshops for such new books as interest me. I snatch a bite of lunch wherever I think the service will be fastest, and I'm off before the clock in the steeple strikes one."

Father Hall almost chanted the last line, and Helen Webb and Fred Osborne, who had been reading books of old songs themselves, recognized the phrase and chanted in return:

"Father, dear father, come home with us now!"

Reunion.

"Only," sighed Helen, "we really haven't any homes, either of us, where we could entertain. Mine's an efficiency apartment shared with two untidy women of letters."

"And mine's a hotel bedroom; only the bed disappears behind a door, where no one, except all the visitors, could possibly guess it's hidden."

"Dear, dear!" mocked the priest, catching their tone. "How you creators of literature starve and suffer for your art!"

They all laughed; and Helen, with sudden earnestness, said, "Just the same, it's mighty good of you to take lunch with two benighted pagans like Fred and myself. We hardly dared to ask you. But we did hope you would accept."

"And," said Father Hall, "you see, I did."

"In which case," the young man commented, "I suggest an intensive study of the card and some adroit and experienced ordering."

Of Many Things.

They buried themselves in the menu briefly, ordered with practised speed and no inter-consultation, and then, as the waiter disappeared, smiled at one another across the table set close to the wall in the quiet hotel dining room. It was well past the lunch hour; Father Hall's appointments for the morning had fortunately made that necessary. So the luncheon guests were largely gone. and the orchestra had mercifully laid aside its bass viol and packed away its saxophones and violins, and the three friends faced one another in the happy consciousness that the food would be merely the civilized accompaniment of conversation.

"I saw your article in *The Manhattanite*," said Father Hall, turning to the young man. "Very amusing. You have a nice sense of humour. I sound terribly patronizing don't I? I mean you are clever without being satiric, and amusing without being cruel."

"Nice of you," Osborne replied gratefully.

"And no words of praise for me?" demanded the girl, with a hurt look.

"Emphatically, yes Consistently you become less Dorothy Parker and more Helen Webb, to my great joy and the real improvement of your verse."

"Following your advice," the girl replied.

"I have accepted the slightly indirect compliment," said the priest, smiling. And then, "Well, what's new or news?"

Out of a Pocket.

“New farce opened last night. I forget the name. Slightly more vulgar and much more tiresome than any of its predecessors. The last novel by America’s only Nobel prize winner is terrible and a flop: should have been called *‘Potboiler’s End.’* Everyone is plunging in the market as if the crash had never pulverized us all. Wars and rumours of wars.”

The priest seemed to focus on the last comment.

“Wars? Yes. I hear that Lloyds of London are offering two to one on another European war inside eight months.”

“I hope not,” said the girl fervently.

“Which makes me think!” the priest exclaimed, plunging his hand into his inside pocket, and drawing out envelopes, notebooks, a railroad clergy book, and half a dozen clippings. He selected one of the clippings and laid it on the table beside his cup. “The other day I ran across the most extraordinary thing in the records of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Your comment about war made me think of it. Astonishing, really!”

He stroked out the wrinkles in the clipping and pored over it with fresh interest.

Twenty-four Centuries of War.

“Two exiled Russians, now professors here in America, made a graph of twenty-four hundred years of war. Typical Russian names. Let me read them: Petirim Alexandrovich *Sorokin* and Nikolai Nikolaivich *Golovine*; and typical Russian thoroughness.”

“Imagine plotting out twenty-four centuries of anything!” cried the girl.

“I should imagine,” Osborne suggested, “that twenty-four centuries would show a considerable fistful of wars:”

“Nine hundred and two,” replied the priest, “from the high point at the crest of Roman pre-Christian conquest, to zero, at the very moment when, significantly enough, the Prince of Peace was born, in a rapid rise during the barbaric invasions, until the year 1925. That is as far as our Russians went:”

“Bolshevists or Whites?” asked the young man.

“According to the account, they were imprisoned under the Czar for being radical and exiled by the soviet for being conservative. So you can classify them yourself.”

“We’ll let that ride, thank you,” said Helen, smilingly, and the priest looked again at his clipping.

“Now here’s the thing that astonished me. Could you guess what was the most peaceful period in history since the birth of Christ?”

The two young people looked thoughtful, puzzled, and completely at sea.

“I couldn’t, either,” hastened the priest. “This came as a complete surprise. The two professors studied wars on the basis of numbers actually engaged, the numbers engaged in proportion to the world population of the time, number of casualties, number of countries involved, disastrous effects. With zero for absolute peace, they found that the century of greatest world peace, with the percentage only 2.7, was the twelfth century of the Christian Era, from the years 1100 to 1200.”

“I shouldn’t have guessed it,” murmured Osborne.

“Nor I,” the young woman agreed.

“But immediately after that, as I recall,” continued Osborne, “the Crusades continued, didn’t they, and plunged Europe into an era of uninterrupted war?”

War Rises.

“Correct in a way,” the priest said. “Here they are on the chart. Of course, I’ve always thought the Crusades were the most misunderstood wars of history, in spite of the fact that the name ‘Crusader’ is now used for every splendid and disinterested fighter in whatever cause. I hate to think of Islam or Mohammedanism completely in control of Europe as it was for centuries in control of Greece; and it would have been but for the Crusades.

“However, they continued, and we find the percentage pushed up to 31.32. From that minute on, there is a slow rise until the Protestant Revolt.”

“You mean the Reformation?” corrected Helen mildly.

“Sorry. It’s a matter of a point of view. The percentage reached a new high during the religious wars and continued to rise, until, in the eighteenth century, it was 567.5.”

“Why. that is almost two hundred times what it was in the twelfth!” cried Osborne.

“Your mathematics are good. It is exactly two hundred and ten times as high. But now take a deep breath. We are coming to the first quarter of our highly civilized, politely refined, culturally correct, 20th century. Can you stand a shock?”

“We’ll try to bear up.”

Our Disgrace.

“Remembering that zero is complete peace and 2.7 the twelfth century, the first quarter of our 20th century rises to 13,735.98!”

“My stars!” gasped the young man.

For answer, the hands of the young woman contracted as if the statement really hurt.

“It’s a bit of a blow,” the priest continued, “to realize,” and he made some rapid calculations on a menu card, “that our generation is actually five thousand and eighty-seven times as bloodthirsty and warlike as the men of the twelfth century and more than four hundred times as warlike as the knights of the Crusades, who have been regarded as the very symbols of professional warriors.”

When, Not If.

They ate in silence for a moment. Then, with a quick gesture, Osborne laid down his spoon.

“I’m afraid you’re taking away my appetite, Father. I just started to realize what the percentage of the next war will be.”

“If there is a next war,” Helen interpolated, trying to act as if she meant the doubt she expressed.

“If!” snorted Osborne. “If!! You mean when. There is no if about it, unfortunately. All you have to do is look at the way the whole world is getting ready for it.

“I know,” she admitted. “H. G. Wells the other day predicted the world’s greatest war to be waged between the years 1940 and 1949.”

“And,” Osborne supplemented, “in this blessed spring of 1934, as Father just reminded us, Lloyds of London will bet you two to one that there will be a war in Europe inside of eight months.”

“After Last.”

“Did either of you,” asked the priest, “read General McArthur’s recent article called *‘The War After Last’*?” They shook their heads. “He claims that the principles and practice of war have developed more since the last war of 1914 to 18, than they developed between the Spanish-American and the last one (the so-called Great War)—gas thrown with the accuracy of shells; aeroplanes with a cruising range of three thousand miles and a carrying capacity of five tons of high explosive; tanks moving, not as they did during the World War, at four miles an hour, but doing forty over broken ground; a modern rifle with the effectiveness of a World War rapid-fire gun; and one man equipped to have the fighting effectiveness of a former company. As for the death rays—”

“Frankly, Father,” Osborne expostulated, “I don’t believe in them.”

“Maybe not. Neither does General McArthur, apparently. Yet a man from the laboratories of one of our biggest electrical companies told me five years ago that the next war might be fought by radio, and that even then the death ray was perfected enough to wither to ashes a rat in a trap. ‘We expect some day, and that not too far off, to be able to reduce to ashes a battalion, sending the death ray by radio.’ That was what he said. He may have been talking nonsense. But he seemed to mean it.”

Undodged.

“Let’s get off the subject of war,” cried Helen, closing her eyes.

“My dear,” the young man replied, “I wish to high heaven we could. But with every nation armed to the teeth, with

Russia and Japan waiting to see which will strike first, and Germany rattling the sword, and Poland, Italy and France mustering enormous standing armies, and more than half the world under dictators, who are always a prime cause for war, and China one vast battlefield, Cuba just recovering from civil war and Austria in the heart of it, what can we do except think about war?"

"Unless," said Father Hall quietly, "we think a little about how it can be prevented."

"If we only knew!" the young man groaned. "I don't want to go to war. None of us want to. But how under heaven can we stop the mad rush?"

Self-interest.

"Well, there are reasons of self-interest that might appeal."

"Self-interest!" Osborne scoffed. "Every nation that's fool enough to go to war is convinced that it will be the winner, that the other nations will suffer, but it will come out of the war with its self-interest glutted with new possessions, new power, new territories, and new revenues in the form of indemnities. Self-interest! That's what makes them so crazy to go to war!"

"Yet, in the long run, what it costs all of us! The last World War from 1914 to 18 cost \$20,000 an hour for every hour since the birth of the Saviour." This was Father Hall's rejoinder.

"Not really!" Helen gasped.

"Do you wonder? The barrage that precedes one regiment's going over the top costs more than the total endowment of Yale or Chicago University. But that's not what costs most heavily. Where are our leaders in the world today? Why can it be said of our generation that it is an age of the mediocre? We haven't a first-rate painter or composer or playwright; our political leaders, with rare exceptions, are fumblerers; our giants of finance rushed us headlong into chaos. Where are the men who should be leading us? I heard a lecturer answer that question some weeks back: 'They are lying dead in Europe under the rows of stone crosses.' It is always the best who go first to war, and it is the best who die, leaving without leaders the generation they should have led in every form of achievement.

Shadows.

"Self-interest? I don't know, but we might appeal to that. For if the last war cost the world what it did in money and men and culture, if everything in art and literature and commerce has to come to a dead stop until a war is won or lost, if the depression was spawned out of that World War as inevitably as deep shadows follow an explosion, what's going to come out of the next war? There are men who predict a complete collapse of our civilization. There are prophets who foresee real dark ages. I personally don't see how our present civilization can withstand another world war. Do you?"

They sat in thoughtful silence while the waiter prestidigitated their plates before them. But they were thinking far less of the food than of the tremendous question that Father Hall had raised.

Once United.

"How did this frightful state of affairs come about?" asked Helen at last. "What makes us, with all our culture and abilities and refinement, thousands of times more bloodthirsty than the men of the twelfth century?"

"Because," said the priest, slowly, "during the twelfth century we came closest to having a perfectly united Christendom. And today the world is divided by hatreds, deep and long-fostered and so radical that they drive men almost against their wills into devastating wars."

"I'm afraid that needs a lot of explanation," said Osborne.

"Did you ever hear of the Holy Roman Empire?"

"Yes, I did. Voltaire has a joke about it somewhere. He says that it was a kind of government that existed during the Middle Ages and that it was called the Holy Roman Empire because it wasn't holy and wasn't Roman and wasn't an empire."

They all laughed.

That's like Voltaire," Father Hall nodded. "The only thing the matter with his comment was that he missed the

whole point. Of course, it wasn't really holy, for it was made up of ordinary men of affairs. It wasn't Roman, because the emperor was a German. And it wasn't a real empire, because there was too much fine personal and political independence in those days. But it was more than any of those things. It was an ideal. And men live and rise only by their ideals."

"I don't think we understand that," Osborne confessed.

"Well, the Holy Roman Empire was the dream of a united mankind. It was a brave ideal (something like our ineffective League of Nations) of a unified Christendom dominated by two interrelated powers, the Pope for spiritual things, the emperor for civil matters. It was more a hope than a reality, but it was a hope that men and nations could sit around a council table in an empire that was Christian and talk over their affairs like brothers instead of like sworn and distrustful enemies.

"Of course, all of that was based upon the great Catholic concept of a humanity every member of which is the child of one great Father in heaven. The Church was the divine and the empire was the human working-out of the great Catholic dogma of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

"And because those ideals were flourishing and strong, the war ratio sank to the all-time low of 2.7. An ideal of a united mankind, born again and ineffectively in our modern League of Nations, actually was for a time working and bringing results in world peace.

Greatest of Centuries.

"That was, of course, a united world. One common culture dominated Europe. Out of that peaceful twelfth century was to blossom what has been called, and perhaps rightly, the Greatest of Centuries."

"The thirteenth?" asked Helen, interested. The priest nodded his assent. "That thirteenth century, with its unified Gothic architecture springing up in the largest cities and the smallest towns, its unified art suddenly bringing into existence a Gothic and a Cimabue, its united literature flowering in the world's greatest poet singing his unified song of three worlds united in a great Catholic concept—"

"Dante," said the young man in recognition.

"—and the development of its democratic concepts of government, came as inevitably as autumn harvest after the warm, laborious summer, following the peace and unity of the twelfth century.

"Why, men even had the world's only successful universal language. And an English student could transfer from Oxford and Cambridge to the University of Paris or Bologna, and step into his classroom to hear and understand a unified Scholastic Philosophy being explained in the universal Latin, and a lawyer from Madrid could plead his case in Rome or London or Paris or the free cities of Italy or Germany in the same world language.

United World.

"Of course, the empire as an ideal was only the outward symbol of the close unity that was the unity of faith. Men knelt together at the same altar and received there the same sacraments. They looked forward in a common faith and hope to an eternity they must spend together. Over the individual standards of each nation was the unifying standard of the cross, and men saw that standard worked into even their national emblems. They had the same universal Father-in-God, the Pope, and the same unifying canon law, which was identical in every country. And the one living Sacrifice was offered up by the same united priesthood with much the same ritual and language in every country of Christendom.

"There were robber barons and predatory knights and petty fights among handfuls of greedy lords over some parcel of land. But back of all that was a unity of thought and faith and ideal that bound them together in the concept we know as Christendom. And Christendom was bigger than any one nation as it rose superior to any one class or group."

Inevitably Father Hall knew what the first question would be. And it came.

"Well, what happened to all that fine idealism? How did Christendom split itself into such warring unity as we know today?"

Collapse.

Father Hall looked at his questioner with a wry smile.

“That’s a long story and a sad one, with plenty of human selfishness in it,” he answered. “It began when corrupt Mohammedan morals infiltrated into Europe and the Renaissance started to dominate European thought.”

“I thought,” said Helen, surprised, “that the Renaissance was one of the grandest things that ever happened to mankind.”

“In many ways it was. Certainly it released once more the great flow of pagan thought and beauty that had for a time been welled up in monastic libraries. It was a great cultural reawakening. Art never reached again the heights it attained under the approving eyes of Renaissance Popes and princes and cardinals.

“But like so many other things, it sinned by excess. The rediscovery of pagan art and literature and philosophy brought all the thrill of the new and the clever, and in no time scholars were despising anything that was not pagan. Cardinals were known to forbid the reading of the Gospels at table because the Latin was not Ciceronic. Pagan morals began to be practised. Clever men looked no longer to Christian Rome, but to pagan Athens for their culture, and preferred the snug little earth-hugging temples of effete gods to the great soaring cathedrals of the Eucharistic Christ.

“Had not the hearts of men been turned from faith in heaven to interest in Olympus, and from a love of Catholic truth to a consuming enthusiasm for pagan literature, and from the worship of the Christian altar to the cultivation of pagan shrines, the Protestant Revolt, or, if you prefer, the Reformation, could never have occurred.

Splitting the World.

“And when that came, Europe was hopelessly and forever split. Whatever you may think of the religious effects of Protestantism, its effects upon the unity of the Christian world were terrible beyond all describing. The unifying altar was smashed. The standard of the cross no longer was a rallying standard for the nations. Even Latin ceased to be the world tongue.

“It’s hard to describe the way that Europe was split along national lines by this terrible division into religions. A Scotchman looked with suspicion upon an Englishman, not merely because he was not Scotch, but because he worshipped God in an Anglican cathedral (recently Catholic) instead of a Presbyterian kirk [recently Catholic, like St Andrews]. A German crossed the borders into France to find a different people, estranged from him by tongue and creed. A Frenchman passed into Switzerland and could not kneel in the Calvinistic chapel.

“Where, a century before, all Europe had knelt together at the sound of the Angelus or felt the same throb of devotion as the Host was lifted, the singing of the Angelus suddenly inspired hatred in the hearts of half of Europe, and the Host, once the placid sun looking down upon a united Christendom, became the centre about which stormed some of the most bitter wars. The Netherlands regarded Spain less as a national than as a religious enemy. Lutheran Scandinavia first carried its pikes in religious warfare against Catholic countries and then deliberately shut itself away, from fear of popish contamination. The Huguenots split France into civil war, as Calvinists split Switzerland.

Never Again.

“From the dawn of the Protestant Revolt to the present nations have grown more national, their viewpoint less and less that of mankind and of the world, because their faith and hope and worship have split them into suspicious, distrustful, deeply hating camps. Men could no longer sit round a council table and think of one another as brothers in a common human family, as sons of the same heavenly Father and mother, integrating units in the great family of nations that was Christendom. As I said before, whatever you may think of Protestantism as a creed, it split Europe into nations different in tongue and custom and worship and faith and philosophy and even hope of heaven. No wonder that from the rebellion of Luther until the abortive League of Nations we never so much as saw an attempt on the part of the nations to reunite the world.”

Man Against Man.

“You blame Protestantism for a great deal,” said Osborne thoughtfully.

“I don’t want to seem to exaggerate,” replied the priest. “And there have been many, many other forces of

disunion. The world has since been torn apart on a thousand different lines. The growth of individualism, for example, is part of our problem of a divided world. During the eighteenth century the new philosophers, Voltaire and his group, cut away not merely nation from nation, but individuals from individuals. They denied God and thus destroyed any possibility of a family spirit among His children. They questioned the natural character of the State, and the united feeling of the people faded. Until, during the following century, Nietzsche and Ibsen positively cheered on as a hero and a superman that individual who made war on society itself, and who stood alone, isolated, solitary, independent, and rebellious, fighting for himself and by himself.

“In fact, we entered this 20th century persuaded that war was essential and one way to advance the race.”

Survival of the Fittest.

“Why, what do you mean by that?”

“Did you ever hear of the Darwinian theory, the Survival of the Fittest?”

“Of course.”

“Did it ever occur to you that it is not only a complete justification of war, but a positive call to battle? Supposing, of course, that it is true; which it is not.”

Both Helen and Fred looked a little bewildered.

“Now, I’m not talking about evolution as such. That’s another story. I’m merely referring to Darwin’s explanation of how evolution came about, and few, if any, really reputable scientists hold with him nowadays. At any rate, he maintained that the race progressed through struggle. There was war between the species; and the fit survived, while the unfit went into the discard of palaeontology.

“That was a pleasant enough theory as long as it referred to dinosaurs. But when men took it up as a method of living, war, and terrible war, was inevitable. Before the Great World War we heard a great deal about cultures—not merely the German culture, but the Russian, French, English, Italian cultures. Men were wondering which of these cultures would survive, which had a right to continue. So, to find out, they fought the battle of those cultures in the fields of Flanders. We may say that, whoever was or was not responsible for the war, its battlefields were the experimental laboratory for the Darwinian theory of evolution. Men fought to see which nation had the right to survive and be dominant.

War of Classes.

“Marx, of course, applied that same theory to economics. Evolution along economic lines must be by struggle, a struggle of one class against another. With him the proletariat was the class that had the right to survive, but it could survive only after it had fought and crushed the capitalistic class, as the sabre-toothed tiger had fought and crushed the dinosaur. So the Soviet was born in blood and has been nurtured in a fierce struggle of class against class.”

“I thought,” objected Osborne, “that socialism was really a unifying force. It is the bringing together of nations into one great party called the Third International.”

“Not of nations, but of classes within the nations. If the Protestant Revolt split the world into warring nations, the Third International has split the nations into warring classes. The first split was like a great chasm in a mountainside; the second split was like the division into strata. But it was a division just the same.

Cultures, Not Culture.

“In time to come the historian of our age will look back and say of us that we were an age without culture.”

“Now, Father,” protested Helen, “that’s not really fair. Few nations have been as cultured—“

“Just a minute, please,” said the priest, smiling. “We have culture almost too numerous to mention. But we have no unifying culture distinguishing our era. Put together at any table the ten leading thinkers of the world, and you will find them representing ten distinct lines of thought. They will agree in almost nothing. And if their theories were all up in the air, concerned with purely academic questions, it wouldn’t much matter whether they agreed or tore out one another’s hair. But they agree not even in the most fundamental matters of the meaning of life, the purpose of existence, whether there is a God, and of what sort, the meaning of right and wrong, the power of the State.”

What of Science?

“I think,” Osborne objected, “that though I’m a man of the pen—”

“Typewriter, darling. No one could read your scrawl.”

“—the typewriter,” he continued, with a bow to his gentle corrector, “I have to stick up for science. Ours is a scientific culture, and that, surely, will bind the world together, as aviation does or radio or rapid transit from continent to continent.”

Father Hall shook his head in disagreement.

“Sorry,” he said, “but science has created no united culture for us. If it has done anything, it has agreed only on objective facts, the contents of a test tube, the distance between the stars. But in its theories explaining those facts or in the theories it deduces from those facts, science is at odds with itself on everything. And God knows what horrible instruments of destruction science placed in our hands for the last war and is placing for the next. There is no unified scientific philosophy in the world today. But there is unlimited scientific machinery to destroy life and wipe out cities and increase to staggering proportions the killing power of man.”

A Torn World.

The transition of plates from the main course to dessert was effected rapidly. The three sat silent, thinking intensely.

“Ah,” Father Hall continued in a lower voice, paying little heed to the fruit ice that melted in the glass before him, “God pity our disunited, torn, dismembered world. Nation against nation, class against class, colour against colour, sect warring on sect. Systematically since Luther sliced half of Europe away from the unity that is Rome and that half sliced itself into a score of discordant creeds or lack of creeds, Europe has divided itself, until now the nations stand on tiptoe, agreeing in nothing, loving and holding nothing in common, suspicious, envious, isolated yet surrounded by sworn and open enemies, poised so that the flicker of a feather would precipitate them into world chaos.

One Force Remains.

“Look at them: Shall we be surprised that Japan clamours for the sovereignty of the Pacific, its militarists in power, when it sees all Christian Europe ready to spring into what may be suicide? France surrounded by a circle of steel and cement, and groaning with an unbalanced budget that it never can balance so long as it carries its terrific armies and air force. Russia with the world’s largest standing army and an only temporarily delayed policy of stirring up all the labouring classes of all the nations into class revolution. Germany clamouring for the right to arm in vengeance for its unforgotten, unforgiven defeat. Suspicion in every eye and a hand itching for sword or machine gun or the controls of aerial bomb carriers. And nothing on which we can bring them together in a common brotherhood or a sense of kinship. Nothing, except—”

He paused, stirred a lump of sugar into his coffee and gazed into the distance with rapt expression.

“Except what?” gently prodded Helen.

“Except, Helen, the power that during the twelfth century welded men together to such unity and cohesion that the war ratio sank to an all-time low of 2.7. There is now, as there was then, only one world-wide culture, only one binding force for the nations; it is what Christ referred to as ‘one fold and one shepherd’.”

“The Catholic Church,” Helen stated rather than asked.

“Just that,” the priest answered.

He paused for a sip of coffee and then went off at a momentary tangent.

“The other day, through the mail, I received a poster sent out by Bruce Barton. Know him?”

“Oh,” replied Fred, casually, “I know who he is. Advertising man, essayist, publicist—”

“‘*The Man That Nobody Knows*’,” interjected Helen.

With Outstretched Arms.

“Well, not exactly,” the priest said, laughingly. “But the author of the book. He’s much concerned, as we all are these days, about world peace. His poster was a picture of Christ extending His arms out over a war-torn world,

pleading for peace and unity.

“The picture had its inspiring elements and its elements of surprise. Christ, heaven knows, has been permitted little enough place in the making of wars, or peace either, during the last fifty years of bloody history. Christ has had little place in the literature that has been the dynamite blowing modern Europe into fragments. He has had little enough to say to those men who shape the destinies of nations, and who today sit as despots in two-thirds of the world’s capitals. It was pleasant to bring Christ back into public relationships, even in a poster.

Reckoning

“But how little to blame Christ was for the torn and shattered world over which His sad eyes were looking. He never meant that His Church should be a thousand dissonant sects, all saying different things at the top of their lungs and doing different things at the top of their bent. He no more intended national churches than He intended that men should try to bring together all religions by eliminating what is important and essential in all of them. He prayed that ‘they might all be one as You, Father, and I are one.’

“Luther and Henry VIII. and John Knox and Gustavus Adolphus and Voltaire and Rousseau and Darwin and Huxley and Kant and Karl Marx and Ibsen and Nietzsche and Shaw and Lenin and Hitler will be asked some day by that Christ, no longer gentle, but a just judge, by what right they tore the nations into warring elements.

Centre of Unity.

“Yet the presence of Christ in that poster was significant. In Him and only in Him is the centre of a world unity that can bind together the nations in a greater thing than nationalism.”

“Don’t you like the word nationalism?” asked Helen, almost in surprise.

“Like it?” said the priest, “I hate it. A patriot is a man who loves his country. A nationalist is a man who hates all countries but his own. Nothing can be built on hate but more hate. Anything constructive can be built on love. And a man who loves his country loves other countries, as a man who loves his mother loves other mothers for the sake of the mother who is his own.”

“I see,” and Helen’s voice was convinced.

“But, as I was saying,” the priest continued, “this turning back hopefully to Christ as the centre of unity and the hope of peace is important, provided Christ has left for us a means of unity and a hope of peace. He has. He gave it to the world long ago. During the rising tide of war, when civilization went crashing down under the iron-clad feet and the iron-shod hoofs of Teutonic invaders and their horses, the Church kept the elements of civilization in her bosom and restored, through them and through its unifying faith, Europe to that pre-Reformation idealism. Christ constituted His Church to teach all nations, to bind men together in a loyalty to Him, to keep them at peace through the realization that they are all sons of God and all brothers of the Saviour.

Elements of Peace.

“Those elements that made for peace in the twelfth century exist in the Church today. If they were accepted by individuals and the nations, war would be practically impossible. As a man thinks, so he acts. As he believes, so he lives. And as the nations think and act, so are they governed in their dealings with their fellow-nations.

“There is the magnificent doctrine of the Mystical Body, for example. Have you ever heard of it?”

“I’m afraid not,” was the answer.

“It’s too long to explain now and too difficult and too beautiful. But in substance it is the greatest possible argument for unity and peace. Christ taught, and St. Paul, following Him, taught, that every Christian becomes, through baptism, a part of the Mystical Body, of which Jesus Christ is the head and all Christians are members. It is a magnificent concept, this welding together in a single unity of all Christian mankind, whatever race or colour or class may divide. But its consequences are startling. How dare one Christian, a member of the Mystical Body of Christ, make war on another Christian? Doesn’t he see what he is doing? He is striking at someone closer than a brother. His sword stroke is almost a form of suicide. For he is striking at one who is morally identified with himself in the Mystical Body of Christ.

“More than that, what he does to a fellow-Christian he does to Christ. His sword thrust, his levelled machine gun, his zooming aeroplane, passes through and beyond the body of the man he has slain and strikes at the heart of the world’s Saviour.

‘As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me.’ ‘Saul, why persecute you Me?’ The blows of Saul had been levelled at the early Christians; they passed through them to strike at Christ Himself.

Brotherhood.

“There is no unity offered to humanity like this. No unity that can give men this sense of oneness and the absolute necessity for peace.

“But looking beyond the Christian world to the world of the unbaptized, the Catholic Church points out the universal sonship of the human race. God is not merely a creator; He is an all-merciful and provident Father. He created yellow and black and red quite as well as white; and in the Christian theory of the brotherhood of men under the fatherhood of God all men stand together children in His gracious sight. War becomes a kind of fratricide. I cannot strike at the life of my brother.

“Perhaps there is no place in the world where men are so closely united, so levelled to the common denominator of a beloved humanity and lifted to the same heights of divine condescension, as before the altar of a Catholic Church. The moment that Christ in the Eucharist enters the human heart it achieves a dignity and an elevation, a union through joint companionship that has all the symbolism of the banquet from which men rise no longer enemies but brothers of the common table. At the Communion table all men sink to a common depth of humility and rise to a common height of companionship with Christ, the Captain and Leader.

World Unity.

“But those outside the Catholic Church know almost nothing of the continued unity that is Catholic. A Catholic is never a stranger in another country. Something that rises above the limits of nationality greets him. The same Christ is on the altar. The same Mass is offered in his presence. The same style of architecture fashions his church. In the same mellow love, the Sacraments, identical with those he knew at home, are conferred upon him (often in the same mellow Latin). He kneels at the side of German, Frenchman, Spaniard, East African, Chinaman, Indian, in a common act of worship and a common impulse of faith and hope.

“No wonder that it is the Church and only the Church today that has a world viewpoint and a world philosophy of life. When the rulers of the world speak, they address one people of one class. When the Pope speaks, he speaks with a world voice, addressing all the nations and all the people.

“While philosophies speak with stridently discordant voices, within the Catholic Church the Scholastic Philosophy speaks in common-sense voice with perfect unity of principles and perfect logic of application. And that philosophy once more rises above national and class lines and is a rule of thought and mode of life for all the people.”

A Different People.

“That’s all interesting,” said Osborne with a new respect, but a decided note of questioning. “But I must say it is a very different picture from what I have been shown of the effect of Catholicity on the world.”

“I’ve not the slightest doubt of that,” the priest answered. “But were you equally surprised to find out that the world was most at peace in the twelfth century, when the world was most Catholic?”

“Yes,” admitted the young man, “I was:”

“Then don’t be surprised if there are other things as much against what you have been told. No group and no organization has been so caricatured as the Church; and no lies have ever been uttered more maliciously or more ignorantly than those against the faith and its effects on the world.

“Chaos or the Church.”

“But I am telling you that, as I see life, the choice from this point on is the Church or chaos. You can choose the one you wish. Seventy-five years of intensive science that deliberately excluded God, of national rapacity and class

warfare. have developed us to a point where we are thousands of times as bloodthirsty as we were in solidly Catholic days. Our cultures, far from uniting us into a humanity one in idealism and one in purpose, have divided us into hostile, warring, suspicious, greedy, self-centred nations and individuals. And in all these cultures there is no principle on which the individuals and the nations can unite.

“But given the God of the Catholic faith, His fatherhood is inevitable and our brotherhood an immediate consequence. Given the Christ who called Himself the vine of which we are the branches, we are welded into this mystical unity with Him, becoming, as He prayed we would be, one flock with one shepherd. And through the Church flows to our minds that satisfying, convincing, beautiful unity of thought which is faith and philosophy, while to our hearts flows that unifying flood of grace that welds us into an ever closer unity. Permitting the widest freedom of endeavour and search, the Church yet gives the individual a sense of unity with all other individuals which forever destroys isolation and antagonism. While loving the patriot, the Church reminds him that humanity comes far and away before country, and that he can only love his own country safely and surely when he joins to that love an understanding of the love for those of other nations.

One World Culture.

“There is only one world culture, and that is Catholic.

“There is only one road to unity of minds and hearts, and that is the road indicated by Christ, who alone is the way, the truth, and the life.

“We have tried the other cultures and wandered the other roads, until we find ourselves today on the brink of what will, if it comes, be a war beyond all precedent or prophecy, with chaos and ruin at its ending. Can’t we turn back to the organization which not only claims to be able to unite men, in which there is neither Jew nor Greek, black nor white, slave nor free, but which, at the height of its power, almost succeeded in crushing all war from the earth?”

The waiter brought back the change from the cheque, and Osborne waved it away absently. They rose and, after Helen had slipped on her coat, walked together to the hotel entrance. The shadows were long on the streets and the sun was far down, but none of them noticed the time.

“As You and I”

“If you’re coming soon to town again, may we have this pleasure once more?”

“How about your running down to Lakeside the next time?”

“We may at that,” Helen replied. “We’re terrible barnacles once we are fastened on anyone we like.”

“Not making the slightest effort to shake either of you;” the priest replied. “Come soon:”

And he swung off, leaving them standing just a little dazed on the sidewalk.

“Sounds grand,” said Osborne at last.

“Almost too incredible,” she replied. “Back to the office?”

“No, I’m knocking off.”

“Wonder what he is thinking about the two of us,” Osborne puzzled.

“Don’t try to guess,” she said, wisely knowing that they could not.

Perhaps they would not have understood how pointedly at them was addressed the fragment of prayer he uttered as he strode down the twilight street:

“I pray that they may be one, as You, Father, and I are one”

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