

A CRUSADE FOR A CATHOLIC  
EUROPE

THE task of reconstruction which faces the present generation is indeed overwhelming. It requires not only vast economic and political readjustments. It involves also the spiritual regeneration of Europe. To-day Europe is threatened far more seriously than was the Roman Empire by the barbarian invaders for the barbarian invaders could only destroy its body, its spirit proved indestructible. It was powerful enough to wean the conqueror from his barbarous ways, and to bring forth that flower of civilization in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. With its spirit the grandeur that was Rome lived on, shaping the Empire of Charlemagne, that high-minded attempt to express the spiritual unity of Europe in a political form, permeating the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, more a dream than a reality. In a thousand ways it moulded the thoughts of Europeans, a tower of strength, a pattern of virtue, an inspiration to action. It lived on in the Church.

Europe derives her strength and her mission from Christianity alone. But the European nations have recklessly squandered their Christian patrimony. They have allowed paganism to raise its head. They have succumbed to the spirit of materialism. They have drifted so far away from God and His Christ that the present age can justly be styled the post-Christian era. They are even now preparing to settle the world without recourse to its Creator, disregarding His laws, in a spirit diametrically opposed to that of His love.

Yet Catholics know that the world can escape a third and even more terrible conflagration only by returning to the ways of Christ. Only when Catholic principles are everywhere applied, in the life of the individual as in that of nations, can a lasting peace be ensured. They know the truth; they are grounded in the truth. Are they not called upon, at such an hour, to give to the world, what the Catholic alone can give?

We may well ask, 'How can these things be?' We are human, weak, and alone. How can individuals influence the fate of nations? Yet individuals *have* in the past affected the lives of peoples. Amidst all the devastation of barbarian invasion, the prayers of a solitary monk on Monte Cassino assured the Christianisation of Europe. A shepherd girl, as lonely at the royal court of France as she was in her native Domrèmy, changed the course of history, and realised the Will of God upon earth. Though the lives of the saints may be

sources of inspiration rather than patterns to be slavishly copied, they teach us the one thing that is necessary, the use of spiritual weapons in a struggle that is spiritual.

The struggle for the pacification of Europe is primarily of a spiritual nature, in so far as it means simply the application of the teaching of Christ to every field of human activity, regardless of anything but obedience to Divine Will. This struggle begins in the heart of the believer. Long before a truly peaceful Europe, with her different nations living together in accordance with the Divine precepts, can become a reality, she must be conceived in the hearts and minds of the faithful. They must endeavour to become familiar with her long and glorious history. They must take the trouble to study her unique contribution to the civilization of the world. They must make her needs a subject of prayer. They must work and pray, and pray and work, until Europe becomes a reality clearly outlined in their minds, a reality cherished by their love.

It may be objected that such a task, which requires leisure, and above all certain intellectual gifts, can only be performed by the few. This is certainly true. Yet there remains another and no less urgent task, which is incumbent upon all, who take these matters to heart. Since false and exclusive nationalism lies at the root of the problems of our day, men must be brought to overcome their national prejudices in the spirit of Christian brotherhood, if there is to be a just and lasting peace. Before the Reformation all national differences seemed insignificant when compared with the unity of the Catholic supra-national Church, to which all nations belonged. Even wars were fought, as it were, *within* that unity; they were family quarrels, which could be settled without leaving the same bitterness that wars between modern nations are bound to leave. We may regret that Europe has lost the unity she possessed; but our prejudices blind us to the fact that the re-establishment of European unity is not beyond our reach.

As the real unity of Europe is of a spiritual nature, it can only be realized by spiritual weapons. One of the most effective in the hands of the individual believer is a very humble and simple, though by no means easy application of the doctrine of the *Corpus Christi Mysticum*. We believe that we are all members of the Mystical Body of Christ. Is it not possible to make this belief a principle of action? As Catholics we may be accustomed to live our private, and even our public, lives in obedience to the Divine law. We strive to develop our charity towards our neighbour—maybe it already embraces all our countrymen, regardless of class or creed. But unless we are willing to receive the alien, as readily as our own countrymen, we

are barren members of the Mystical Body of Christ. We are erecting barriers to check the flow of Divine Love, which He would have pulsate freely through the whole of His Mystical Body.

We must endeavour to break our thoughtless habit of relegating the foreigner to a separate class in our own nation, to that limbo, where he loses all his dignity as our brother in Christ, and becomes the legitimate butt of scorn and contumely.

We must ask ourselves a few searching questions. Is it right to join in the Creed every time we go to Mass, and then act as though a German Catholic, who goes to Mass as we do, who joins in the Creed as we do, and receives our Blessed Lord as we do, has a lesser claim on our charity than the man, who was brought up in the same country as we and speaks the same language, but worships false gods, and by his every action defies the Divine precepts of justice and charity? What does Christ mean to us, if we reject those to whom He is willing to give Himself? Yet we know that His truth makes us free. And this spiritual liberation means that, provided we take Our Lord at His word in all things, we may become His instruments in the great task of transforming the face of the earth.

The real struggle for Europe begins in the depth of our own hearts. Once we have made up our minds to be Catholics first and foremost, we shall find it easier to extend our charity to the members of other nations. We shall not be worse Englishmen or Germans, Frenchmen or Poles for that. For loyalty to the supra-national Church does not do away with national loyalties. It includes them, as provincial ones (in the secular order) are included in the national loyalty.

We shall be better citizens, because we are obeying God's commandments more fully, and we shall have built a bridge, where before there was none. There are, of course, men and women who have in their hearts overcome the prejudices of false and exclusive nationalism, for whom belief in the Mystical Body of Christ is a principle of action. Relying on this doctrine, we should give it a new force in our lives.

The change of spirit envisaged here can only be brought about by regular, instant, and united prayer. A small beginning has already been made in this direction. On May 5th, 1942, a number of priests, religious, and lay-folk joined in the first '*Novena for a Catholic Europe.*' Knowing that a just and lasting peace can only be brought about, if Catholic principles are everywhere applied, they implored the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Love and Master of History, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to grant the world a Catholic Europe. The prayers of the Novena were, '*Come Holy Ghost,*' with Versicle and Collect, and three '*Hail Mary's* in

honour of the Sacred Wounds. The *Novena for a Catholic Europe* was repeated every month, and many Masses offered for this intention. In January, 1943, it was approved by His Grace, the Archbishop-Bishop of Southwark, who expressed his desire that 'as many as possible should join in praying for a just and lasting peace.' Since then the Novena has gained the further approval of the Apostolic Delegate, the Archbishops of Westminster, Birmingham and Cardiff, and the Bishop of Menevia.

Since then a further step has been taken, a '*Crusade for a Catholic Europe.*' Members undertake the monthly recitation of the Novena prayers, to which, at the suggestion of the Apostolic Delegate, there has been added the short indulgenced ejaculation, 'Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Thy kingdom come' (300 days Ind.), which sums up all we pray for. Members must endeavour to overcome the prejudices of false and exclusive nationalism in themselves, and must spread the Crusade by all means at their disposal. This Crusade is a movement of prayer to prepare our hearts for the working of the Holy Ghost. The spirit of the Crusader is one of humble and prayerful readiness, 'Lord, what will thou have me do?' We do not yet know, where He will lead us. But we do know, that we, too, in our generation, are called to do our utmost to restore all things in Christ.

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## ON POETIC KNOWLEDGE (II.)

At the beginning of this essay we noted that what a philosopher, reflecting on poetry, observes first of all is that it belongs to the sphere of Art or productive activity. Now the proper end of Art is not knowledge but production or 'creation,' not in the manner of physical nature, as radium produces helium or one living thing another, but in the free manner of the mind; it is intellectual productivity *ad extra*<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> There are *Speculative Arts*, logic for instance. As such they remain purely intellectual and the Will has nothing to do with them apart from the decision to exercise them. They bring the notion of Art to its limit where it is still realised and even most purely realised, because there is still a *factibile*, but where all is achieved within the mind. Note too that although one may speak of the poetry of logic, as of mathematics, inasmuch as both are contemplated *objectively*, yet within logic itself poetry and poetic knowledge have no place at all. If, then, logic be the purest form of art, it seems that poetry in its pure state (of which I speak later) and art in its pure state are diametrically opposed.