

BLACKFRIARS

A MONTHLY REVIEW

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CHRISTIAN REJUVENATION

ON the fifth anniversary of the outbreak of war the Pope spoke of the need of all Christians to work together for the re-establishment of order in the world. Never was a reminder so urgently needed. In 1940, when everything seemed to be tumbling about our ears, under threat to our common existence, the Christians of England hustled together in Christian Councils and like gatherings with noble titles and noble ideals; the Sword of the Spirit and later Religion and Life were the most notable. But as we emerged from the storm and success met our armed forces we became apathetic; Christians sorted themselves out again into their proper compartments, so that by now co-operation among Christians has dwindled to desultory debates and discussions. As immediate danger has receded and we have approached the verge of peace, the urgency of a 'Christian Order' has in fact increased a hundredfold, as the Holy Father has indicated, but we are apparently not prepared to work together energetically for peace except under threat to our own personal lives and property. Now is the time, far more than in 1940, for a nation-wide demonstration of Christian solidarity on the principles of social and international order. The Sword of the Spirit, Religion and Life, Christian Councils and the many other similar groups—what have

they been doing since 1940? Have they anything ready, prepared by joint effort, for this business of making peace? Is there any chance, at this eleventh hour, of our hearkening to the words of Pope Pius XII? It is no new message of his; but we have neglected it so far, and we shall probably leave the role of peacemakers to such men as Mr. A. P. Herbert. This Member of Parliament has averred himself a Christian in the same sentence in which he denounces the Pope's call to Christian forgiveness and love of enemies as being the sentiments of a weak mind (cf. his letter to *The Times*, 30/8/44). Such 'Christians' are likely to build their peace on a cordite dump, for they are animated by the same spirit as their professed enemy, the Nazi.

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Mr. Churchill has set us a better example. Shortly after his visit to the Pope he gave the most healthy advice to Italy that has yet come from an English statesman, and he followed it by a message to Poland which has encouraged us to think that our Christian word is not the mouthing of a debunked religion's cant. The advice he gives for the restoration of a stricken country and the tests of the freedom which should be enjoyed by all citizens in peace conditions should provide a good foundation for Christian co-operation. Mr. Churchill's points have nothing specifically Christian about them; they are sound natural reasoning. This means that pagan or Christian can take them as his own. If they are left to the A. P. Herbert and Quintin Hogg type of Christian the freedom therein outlined will be restricted to exclude the true religion of Christ. The Prime Minister, they will say, was speaking of political freedom, let us keep religion out of it. If Christians can 'get together' only under stress of severe personal danger, religion will decidedly be kept out of it.

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Mr. Churchill's tests are good ones; and Don Luigi Sturzo must be one of the Italians most gratified at the whole speech, which could be shown to outline the natural reasoning behind much of Don Sturzo's Christian sociology and politics. It comes in fact as a belated offering from England, which has so far ignored his jubilee, celebrated with much enthusiasm in America earlier in the year. We may here take the opportunity of celebrating that jubilee by quoting from the Editorial comment of our best-esteemed contemporary across the Atlantic, *Commonweal*, for May 19th, 1944:—

'. . . Don Sturzo is in American, far from home. Don Sturzo is fighting for the freedom of the Italian as he has fought for that freedom all his life. Justice and freedom for the Italian

people. That is what he has pursued all his life. When the Popes spoke about justice and freedom in the social order he set forth to lead the Italian people, the peasants and the workers, towards the achievement of these ideals, the putting of them into practice. Don Sturzo went into politics, he founded a political party, the *Partito Popolare*, because if everything was clear on paper, it remained to make things work, to make justice work, in practice, through political action and votes. This was no German Center Party; it was not the Church's party; it was a party in which Catholics, conscious of their duties toward the political and economic life of their country, brought their ideals and their strength into immediate and positive action. Don Sturzo and the Popular Party won the respect of every decent Italian political leader. When Fascism was forming, the Popular Party never compromised. Don Sturzo never compromised. When fascism triumphed, Don Sturzo and the Popular Party were deported—clearly, entirely, with no period of lingering doubt and bargains.

' . . . For years now we have judged Italy by the tyrant who ruled Italy, and by those who stood by and allowed him to lead Italy into catastrophe. But now the voices of those men are silent and there is the voice of Don Sturzo which is still speaking. We can hear it now. Italy is regaining the friends she lost as we listen again to this voice speaking the same words it has always spoken, the words justice and freedom.

' . . . An old man who has been a priest for fifty years, an ambassador of the new Italy, an Italy which is a prolongation of an ageless Italy, the worthiest ambassador of an Italy which shall live in freedom and justice.'

Mr. Churchill's words fit easily into these phrases, for he took occasion to offer the old friendship of England to the true Italy regained. Don Sturzo's jubilee year has indeed brought new life for him as he watches the final liberation; but the anxious work of restoration has yet to be begun. They whose charge it is will do well to fit Churchill's speech to Don Sturzo's words.

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One of the most urgent problems to be tackled by an active and efficient Christian co-operation is that of Youth. The success of Fascism, Nazism and Communism has been the success of its capture of the young enthusiasm of its children and adolescents. Restoration in Europe has largely to be the work of redeeming this corrupted youth, of liberating a young generation enslaved to a set of fool-hardy ideals. There is an impression that defeat at arms has achieved a change of heart. Do not let us fall into such a dark hole of stupidity. Mr. Churchill in his speech found it necessary to warn

Italy 'She would be very unwise to let herself again fall into the clutches of this Fascist totalitarian system in any guise in which it might present itself.' The Youth must be converted. It will not be converted by defeat at arms; a very great barrier to conversion is removed by such defeat, but that is only the first step.

Youth will not be converted by another Youth Movement, however Christian. For Youth Movements are the modern invention of the devil. They are an unavoidable invention, following necessarily upon the devil's destruction of the family. In a country made of families there is no separate and distinct 'class' of youth; the young are an organic part of the whole family. An age group is not an organic part of anything: it is the conclusion of a mathematical deduction. But without the natural groupings of the family and families we have to fall back on these mathematical formulae. The country becomes a vast orphanage and in order to establish any order the ten-year-olds, the seventeens, the twenty-ones must be bunched together in 'forms.' And upon those 'forms' we build our movements. Hitler and Mussolini have acted as diabolical fosterparents in their own two orphanages. We shall not be able to mend matters by introducing benign Christian aunts in their place; the turbulent youth of to-day will make them into Aunt Sallies, excellent guys for debunking Christian movements.

A Youth Movement may be necessary so long as the orphans remain in their orphanage, and it may even be successful. Catholic youth organisations in this country have already made their mark. But they are always dangerous; they are always open to political influence. The State is anxious, often with best intentions, to make use of youth movements. Thus our own Government is frightened at the lack of responsibility in the rising generations; it instinctively feels that the grip of society is loosening as young hooliganism increases. So the Government not only suggests the raising of the school age, but it attempts to organise its own youth movements and naturally becomes either covetous or jealous of existing organisations for the young. The result is a step nearer to the totalitarian systems we have watched abroad. In a recent speech at a Conference on this subject Bishop Mathew gave some very wise advice, warning us among other things not to let the youth club become a 'substitute family.' That is the real danger of all youth organisations, and the substitute family means loss of freedom, the marshalling of Fascist ballilas and the like. In the present issue of BLACKFRIARS we include an article on the general dangers of the nationwide youth movement in England. The author speaking of this particular movement has no occasion to mention the necessary background of

religion and the family; it is taken for granted that these are fundamental.

In a Christian attempt to restore peace it might be necessary to give the Christian name to youth movements at home or abroad. But these should never be regarded as any more than first-aid while the slower but real cure is begun. The rejuvenation of the nations (our own included) must come from within the nations themselves, and not through an organisation or even a system of education imposed from outside. It must spring up in the hearts of men with a new sense of Christian values; the Christian values of fecundity and chastity within the dynamic unity of the family, the Christian values of virginity and contemplative prayer which bring supernatural power to families who give the tithes of their children to religion. When youth is no longer a class but has been absorbed once again into family life it will cease to be a problem suggesting 'movements' as a solution. The responsibility of youth will be the responsibility of the Christian family.

If Christians—many of whom are in part to blame for the present chaotic state, especially the older Christians—could make the teaching of Christ effective in this one point, the Pope's most earnest wish would have been generously fulfilled.

THE EDITOR.

C O R R E S P O N D E N C E

TO THE EDITOR OF BLACKFRIARS.

Dear Sir—Your appreciative review of the book on Albert Schweitzer by the late Professor Kraus gives the impression that Schweitzer too is dead and his work done. We should be glad to reassure your readers that he is in fact extremely busy at Lambarene, and at the end of each long day's work in his hospital he is engaged on the final draft of the third volume of his *Philosophy of Civilization*. This, as your reviewer says of his teaching as a whole, has especial significance at the present time, and we hope to publish it under the title *The Civilized State* as soon as may be after the war. You say that 'he hoped also to complete his studies on St. Paul in the tranquility of the jungle': this was achieved by the publication of *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* in 1931, nineteen years after the appearance of *Paul and his Interpreters* to which your reviewer refers.

It is appropriate to the greatness of the man that he should be able to support at once the most strenuous physical and intellectual activity in an equatorial climate without the refreshment of those visits to Europe which he is accustomed to make in times of peace.

Yours faithfully,

A. & C. BLACK, LTD.