

BLACKFRIARS

A MONTHLY REVIEW

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PACIFIC ACTION

IN the last issue of BLACKFRIARS, without apology or explanation we published a series of articles on the Dominican Order. The domestic exposure may have been regarded as conceited self-advertisement, or even as implied criticism of other ways of life. Nothing of this kind, of course, occurred to the compilers of the number. The aim at least was honourable and perhaps of some importance. First of all, this April issue of the review marks its Silver Jubilee. For twenty-five years BLACKFRIARS has been edited by English Dominicans with, perhaps, insufficient reference to the ideals for which the Dominican Order and its publications stand. The policy and goal of the Order are those of the Review edited by the Friars Preachers. Thus with the completion of our twenty-fifth year we took occasion in this indirect way to re-state our policy.

The aim of the March issue did not stop there. One of the basic principles of the Dominican ideal provides so important a lesson in these days of attempted peace-making that we will here elaborate the theme in greater detail. The activity of the preacher is one which proceeds from and includes his contemplation; it is contem-

plative action. The only kind of action that is likely to make for peace is the action that proceeds from contemplation. Pacific action then is of its nature contemplative.

The future peace seems threatened in the main because the principles upon which we are prepared to order Europe and the world are material principles. Power and property are the chief ingredients of the plans for the order to be drawn from present chaos. The size of armies, the efficiency of their mechanical instruments of war, raw materials and industries seem to be the factors likely to guide statesmen in their decisions. It is of the nature of material things, however, that they cannot be possessed and given away at the same time. They can only be multiplied numerically and that by a process of birth or manufacture. Raw materials and industrial plant, power and property cannot therefore be shared in any full sense. Several nations could have *part* interest in a group of coal mines, but they could not all possess the mines wholly; the mines could not be common to separate and independent nations. The more shares in the mines the first nation gives to the second the less it has for itself. It is all a question of addition and subtraction and is worked out by figures in a ledger. A purely material peace settlement would therefore be one of mathematics. We are in fact in these days in great danger from mathematics. If statesmen plan to move numbers of men, the mathematical units, from one place to another, to dispose of raw materials, industrial areas, etc., in like manner, it will be merely a 'share-out,' which means division rather than union. And if the victorious nations at the end of the war base themselves on such a material division it is more than likely that to those who have, it shall be given—by human machination rather than by the blessing of Providence.

It is clear that the very nature of such a settlement puts it beyond hope of peace. It would be merely laying out the map for the next war, which would come as soon as the nations saw a chance of a division of material goods more advantageous to themselves. It is useless to urge the greater to give a share of their power and possessions to the less. A nation will not give generously in an atmosphere where power is the dominant factor.

The plans and actions of the peace-maker must be those of the contemplative, giving to others the fruits of his contemplation. Spiritual goods are possessed more thoroughly when they are given away; and the man who gives away what he has come upon in the secluded fields of prayer and culture finds himself with a greater store of the treasure he originally discovered. In this way, for example, the apostolic life is an extension of the contemplative. A

man in possession of the truth, or rather possessed by the truth, will gain deeper and more secure hold of what he has the more he spreads it abroad among his fellows. A spiritual 'good' can be shared by any number of immaterial beings. A thousand human minds can know the same truth, a thousand human wills can love the same Being. This can be seen in the ordinary process of the acquisition of knowledge. A man who has taken a degree entitling him to teach physics may have a thorough grasp of the principles of his science, but it is not until he has seen these principles in relation to other human intelligences and worked to impart his knowledge to these others that he can really be said to know them, to have mastered them; so the old rule was that a man did not become a Master in Theology or Arts until he had taught his subject for several years. He masters the truth as he teaches.

There is a sense in which this principle can also be applied to the moral spiritual goods, which are the virtues. The more patience or benignity one shows to another, the more patient and benign he becomes in himself. The lives of the saints show how their virtues grew in geometric progression as they poured them out upon others. The Benedictine saint seeks peace not only for himself, but to establish peace among men, and the more he extends his peaceful influence the more the tranquility of order floods his own soul. Indeed, all this is obviously true. Whatever spiritual good predominates in a man, that he conceives it his duty to give to the world; in contrast to material goods which when possessed incline the owner to withhold them from the rest of the world.

In seeking justice and mercy we inevitably desire to spread these virtues abroad. Love inclines us to give ourselves to others, and as we give so we deepen and strengthen our love. In any pacific action, then, the first principle is to impart to others these good things of the spirit which we desire for ourselves. We desire to obtain justice, then we must first set out to be just to others. In seeking a just order among nations this is of the greatest importance: it means that the primary action is one of giving to others and the abandonment of self-seeking among the nations.

Strictly apostolic propagation of truth and culture—as long as these remain objective, free from the subjective aberrations of nationalism—should lie at the root of all tranquillizing efforts, for it is the extension of the pacific and contemplative spirit. In order to consolidate the true order of justice among nations it is not sufficient to see that the smaller ones receive what is strictly due to them by rights. There must be also a real movement to share the specifically human goods of religion and culture which will increase

by being shared and will form the only sure binding force among men. We cannot, for example, be indifferent as to whether the government of a nation upholds or persecutes Christianity; such indifference can only arise when religion is treated as a material commodity to be divided up like land or raw materials. To regard the religion of one nation as of no concern to the others, is to regard its attitude to human nature as of no concern of others and so to allow Nazism and the other modern attacks on humanity a free breeding ground. Religion and things of the mind must be shared in order to provide some positive basis of communication.

It is therefore of the first importance that men should seek to share the fruits of their contemplation, in the sense implied, in order that the nations may live in a spirit of communion and peace. There was once a time when the universities as well as the Catholic faith were international and provided the principle of communion in a family of nations and the means of reordering and reorganising after the warring family quarrels. To-day, however, we scarcely dare suggest that international colleges for workers should be founded, because internationalism has been so much abused by the mathematical and material spirit referred to above. It is nevertheless absolutely necessary that the nations learn to share the things of the spirit, to pool the treasures of the intellectual life. It is useless to restrict the communion of nations to some abstract forms of international law based on the rights of man. Christian virtues and Christian culture must be extended to all. At the same time the victors must avoid at all costs the role of an old aunt teaching naughty nephews how to behave, and that can only be avoided by a realisation that the things of the mind really are common and not English or American, French or German. A religion that is catholic provides the only ultimate basis for pacification, so that there must at least be a movement towards a genuine re-union of Christendom. Failing that there must be a catholic sense regarding the common heritage of culture. Exclusive national culture constitutes an attack on the brotherhood of man only one degree less virulent than that of a national religion. Let there be no douanes between French, German, Italian, Russian or English culture; duty exacted on these will go to pay for a more barbaric war in the future.

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The National Peace Council has recently been engaged in stalwart work along these lines, searching unflinchingly and with greater success than any other group at the present time for a positive and constructive peace. They have produced some excellent litera-

ture in the form of pamphlets and books. One is not expected to agree with all the views of the authors of these publications, nor does the N.P.C. commit itself to them, but the Council is evidently determined to leave no stone unturned that might reveal a way, if not the way, to peace.¹ Some of these essays consider the material, economic re-adjustment required for a general re-establishment of order among the nations. But none of them is limited to this; they all take the more 'contemplative' view, showing the hopelessness of peace by compulsion (Dr. Jacks—though he thinks it inevitable); the need for the re-establishment of civilised values (Professor Laski—though in order to abolish hatred he proposes to liquidate not only Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo, but also Fr. Coughlin, Mosley, Franco, Laval, and many others!); the impossibility of educating Germany from outside (Professor Leibholz). Of particular value is the Rev. Henry Carter's book, which gathers in a short space the documents of the plans and proposals of all the international functional agencies, U.N.R.R.A., International Labour Organisation, and many others—the Earl of Perth rightly says in his Foreword that 'the work cannot but prove of the greatest assistance to all who are concerned directly or indirectly with social relief and recovery.'

But perhaps the most important service that the Council has done for peace is to have sponsored in *Peace News* (Feb. 16th, 1945) an article by Mr. Christopher Dawson on 'World Barbarism or World Order.'

'The immense advance in material resources and technical control of which the present war is a monstrous and perverted manifestation could revolutionise the conditions of human life on a world-wide scale if only they would be re-directed to the service of humanity in a constructive spirit. But before this can come about, there must be a profound change in the whole spirit of our civilisation. It is a religious rather than a political issue, since it involves the deeper forces of religious faith and spiritual will which are the really creative elements in social as well as individual life.'

Mr. Dawson does not leave his judgment in the air. He reminds us of the moderation and constructive vision of the peace of 1815 which has at least brought peace between England and France

¹ *Towards World Recovery*, by Rev. Henry Carter (2/6); *Peace by Compulsion?* by Dr. L. P. Jacks (6d.); *Re-educating Germans?* Dr. G. Leibholz and E. F. Allnutt (6d.); *Will the Peace Last?* Prof. H. J. Laski (4d.); *The Road to Security*, Prof. D. Mitrany (4d.), from The National Peace Council, 144 Southampton Road, W.C.1.

for 130 years. That provides a pointer to what might be achieved in a wider field.

But Mr. Dawson with all the other writers on peace is compelled to fall back on the slender hope of a general change of heart on the part of victors and vanquished alike. It is in fact the only hope—and the rock upon which all future hopes for peace will founder; for humanly speaking the chances of its being brought about are of the slenderest. In this way Dr. Belden's plan for abolishing all war (by the simple expedient of getting the 500,000,000 Christians throughout the world to pledge themselves to refuse the Act of war when called upon to do so by their church leaders),² is as practical as any other. Unhappily the kingdom of God is not of this world.

There are indeed arguments in favour of more limited negative aims which might be practical even without a world-wide conversion of heart. The abolition of military conscription has been proposed as a practical solution. A number of Bishops, including Cardinal Manning, submitted a *Postulatum* to the Vatican Council to this effect, but there was no time to consider it. It ran: 'The present condition of the world has assuredly become intolerable on account of the huge standing and conscript armies. The nations groan under the burden of the expense of maintaining them' (cf. *The Catholic Peacemaker* newsletter). Then Benedict XV advocated the abolition of conscription at the end of the last war. Mr. Stormont Murray, who discloses and discusses this fact in the *Bulletin for Conscientious Objectors* (Feb., 1945), nevertheless warns us that this is only a small part of the universal conscription now taken for granted. If we accept the conscription implicit in nearly every phase of industrial life to-day we cannot have a conscience to object to military service.

'If in his working hours and also in his mechanised leisure-time occupations, the initiative, responsibility, skill and creativity of the human person is systematically denied, the powers-that-be need not worry about where their cannon fodder is to come from. . . That the C.O. movement arose with reference to war rather than to the many other social evils has always struck me as strange. It has to do with the decline in religious belief, I presume, and the consequent valuation of this life as the only life, and therefore the loss of this life as the supreme tragedy.'

Even this limited aim, then, involves far wider issues, since war is the symptom of a disease rather than the disease itself.

² *Pax Christi. A New Policy for Christendom To-day.* By Albert B. Belden, D.D. (Carwal Publications, 3/6).

Real hope therefore lies more in the immediate practical diagnosis of present social ills and direct suggestions as to their remedy rather than in utopian dreams of no armies and no war. The statement on a Just and Lasting Peace issued in February by the Hierarchies of England and Wales and Scotland is particularly welcome for this reason. It is fully 'contemplative,' in the sense we here use the word, and it applies the general principles of democracy to the present situation. It is to be hoped that the N.P.C. will include this statement in its published documents. And with it the Council might publish the excellent summary of the Christian principles of nationalism and internationalism compiled by Bishop Muench and adopted by several Catholic Societies in America,³ and above all Pope Pius XII's Christmas address on Democracy. Hope is slender, but such as it is it lies in the immediate application of spiritual realities to the present human entanglements.

THE EDITOR.

NOTE.

The National Peace Council (144 Southampton Row, London, W.C.1) makes some recent announcements; (a) Closing date for the National Petition for a Constructive Peace is April 14th (though completed forms should now be sent in as soon as possible), and the Council appeals for the fullest effort to increase the number of signatures before that date so as to strengthen its influence on the San Francisco Conference and the British delegates to whom it is to be presented; (b) The Council's standing Peace Aims Conference is to discuss *Democracy and the Post-war Settlement* at St. Hilda's College, Oxford, from April 13th to 16th, and though accommodation for non-members of the Conference is limited, applications to attend from members of interested organisations will be considered; and (c) The Council and its associated organisations are to hold a mass meeting in support of 'A Constructive Peace' at the Central Hall, Westminster, on May 30th.

³ To be had for ten cents from *The Central Bureau Press*, 3835 Westminster Place, S. Louis, 8, Mo., U.S.A.