

# BLACKFRIARS

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## EDITORIAL

ABYSSINIA is providing a test case not only of the value of the League of Nations, but still more of its *values*; it is not merely giving the League an opportunity of proving its effectiveness in dealing with aggression on the part of one of its members, but also applying the acid test to the League's professions of disinterested zeal for universal peace. More than once in these Editorial notes we have suggested that there can be no true league of nations where the bond of unity is not based on a common recognition of Christian principles, and especially of objective truth and fraternal charity. We like to believe that England has been actuated to some extent by such motives as these in her support of the League, at least in the sense that the people, as distinct from the politicians (professed and otherwise), have desired peace from higher than merely selfish reasons. Yet we are frankly disturbed by a downright statement on the part of an American contemporary for whose opinion we have the highest regard, *The Catholic World*, in the current editorial of which we read: "No student of *Realpolitik* imagines for an instant that England is disinterestedly zealous for the League. She is for the League as long as the League is for

her." In spite of his expressed anticipations we do not accuse him of "anti-British prejudice"; we are grateful for an honest outside opinion. Yet we believe that it is not true of the mass of our people, and we believe (or is it that we merely hope?) that the people of England will not allow itself to be hoodwinked by its politicians in this vital matter. It may be that the Englishman-in-the-street has put his trust in a league of nations which does not in point of fact really exist. But it *can* exist, if only the people of this and other Christian countries can be made to see the true state of affairs and are allowed to voice their determination. War between two members of the counterfeit league is already a grim actuality; but the evil may even now be remedied, provided the Italian war-fever is not allowed to become an international epidemic.

Many sections of many Christian communities have sensed the remedy, perhaps even without properly diagnosing the cause of the disease, by appealing to the Holy Father to intervene in the cause of universal peace. (Some few foolish critics, blind to elementary facts, have blamed him for not "stopping the war" as though he were a kind of world-dictator in international politics.) He has done the one thing that he could do, and the only thing that can promote true peace; he has urged and implored the Christian people to put into immediate practice the tenets of their professed Christianity. There lies the solution: it is not the Pope that can cause or assure peace; it is the people alone that can do this. The Italians, already infected with the virus of an ancient pagan imperialism, cannot or will not hear the voice of the Father of Christendom; for this moment of febrile madness the sign of the fasces has overshadowed the sign of the Cross. But the rest of the nations have still time to inoculate themselves against this infectious disease, symptoms of which have already begun to appear even in England. It might well seem incredible that the war-fever could again take possession of our people within such easy memory of the horrors of the Great War and its aftermath. But this is not to reckon with the power of politicians and the press. Whatever be the mainspring of the League's action, it appears to have acted with wisdom and prudence in dealing with the present critical situation; it has taken immediate steps to apply the ice-pack to Italy's

fevered brow; it remains to be seen whether some more effective treatment is demanded. But, we insist, the League cannot ensure present or future peace in the world until it, and still more the peoples it represents, hearken to the plea of the Vicar of Christ; if the politicians will not listen, then it behoves the people themselves to *hear the word of God, and do it.*

In this connection, it is not without some sense of shame, as well as of interest and admiration, that we accidentally lighted upon a new paper, called the *Free Press*, which we discover to be the organ of an association known as the M.C.P., or *Militant Christian Patriots*. Our shame arose from the realization of the fact that it was left to an apparently non-sectarian and lay group to organize an association whose programme is "to wage a militant campaign for the triumph of Christian principles in everyday life . . . political and moral." We do not intend here and now to sponsor the movement in all its details; its admitted nationalism and imperialism might possibly prove to be its undoing, and certainly make us a little cautious; and the *Free Press* will not resent our caution in view of its own exposure of poisoned springs which issue in apparently limpid streams. Nevertheless we willingly quote with entire approval the following extracts: "Dismayed at the sight of so many Christian churches that have allowed the Church Militant to become a Church pacifist, the M.C.P. members proclaim their belief in the divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ . . . ; they regard it as the corner-stone of Christianity. . . . In the moral sphere they will expose and militantly oppose all movements subversive of Christian faith and ideals. They will specially endeavour to protect and save youth from all anti- and pseudo-Christian attempts to drag it into the whirlpool of unbelief and immorality. We alone are to blame for the terrible plight in which we find ourselves. The precepts and the doctrine given us by Jesus Christ remain as life-giving and as true as they were two thousand years ago; they will endure to the end of days as sole guarantee of universal good. Human understanding, conscience, the distinction between good and evil, have not varied either. . . . To fight a power built on self-interest, ambition, cruelty, cunning, greed, egotism, vanity and conceit, requires the weapons of disinterestedness, vigilance, humility

and the wish to work steadily, day by day and hour by hour. . . . Let each one of us give individual support to the rebuilding of our Christian institutions. Let everyone develop a militant spirit as opposed to the apathetic toleration of evil which has invaded all spheres, including our churches." All these quotations are from the Editorial; the rest of the paper is mainly devoted to an exposure of, and an attack on, an organization called *Political Economy Planning*, "which has already reached a position of unparalleled power in every branch of this country's activity." For the moment, however, we are not concerned with this or the other warnings therein contained; but we are very much concerned with the fine practical ideals set forth in such passages as those given above. Granted that the declarations are to be taken at their face value, the M.C.P. goes to show, at the least, that our repeated plea for the adoption of Christian principles in national life is far from quixotic and will find ready support outside as well as inside the Catholic Church. It is a proof of that deep spirit of Christianity which the materialism and Godlessness of our times has not yet succeeded in destroying, and it holds a promise of future peace amongst Christian peoples. We Catholics, above all, cannot dare to overlook its great possibilities.

EDITOR.