

BLACKFRIARS

(With which is incorporated *The Catholic Review*)

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EDITORIAL

A PLEBISCITE is undoubtedly valuable where a plain issue is at stake and where the populace is untrammelled by coercion, ignorance, prejudice or sentiment. In a recent circular, issued by the National Declaration Committee, men and women over eighteen were invited to answer 'Yes' or 'No' to five questions under the general heading: *Peace or War?* The questions are, we fear, rather of the 'Have-you-stopped-beating-your-wife?' category. To choose between peace and war might seem to be a plain issue, and it might seem that the people of this country were free to consider the matter from an informed and unbiassed point of view. But a little reflection shows that here appearance is not consonant with truth in either instance, and the reflection is not inopportune in the Advent of the Prince of Peace.

Viewing the matter abstractly, of course peace is preferable to war, just as happiness is preferable to sorrow, joy to suffering, health to sickness, and so on. But in the concrete, with the modification of a hundred circumstances, the exact opposite may hold good. If the 1914 conditions prevailed again, for instance, we wonder what a plebiscite would reveal. The issue would then be a plain and concrete one, it is true, but the vote of the people might well go for war, and even from very high motives. But, in any

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case, the popular decision would be swayed by politicians, by newspapers, by sentiment, perhaps even by false shame, and above all many would be hampered by ignorance or disregard of the fundamental tenets of Christianity.

Nevertheless, it might be argued, this effort of the National Declaration Committee is designed to secure international conditions of peace. 'If the people of this country show that they are ready to pay the necessary price for peace, it will encourage all those in other countries who desire peace, and show that we are on their side.' But are the people of this country willing to pay that price? Their answers to the five questions proposed will not be an answer to that question. Whether Great Britain remains a member of the League of Nations or not, whether there is an all-round reduction of armaments or not, whether there is an abolition of all national military and naval aircraft by international agreement or not, whether the manufacture and sale of armaments for private profit is prohibited by international agreement or not, as long as human nature remains the same and human standards alone are adhered to there will be no guarantee of peace. Selfishness, greed, and lust of power are rooted in fallen human nature and there will be no peace until the world is united under the banner of the Prince of Peace, until men have broken out of the narrow walls of materialism and accepted the Incarnation as the standard of human life and judgment.

Even so it will be a peace that surpasses human understanding for, in a Divine paradox, the Prince of Peace comes not to bring peace but the sword. Yet even in this warfare there is peace. It is, in sober truth, the only war that will end war; but it is a peace that is given only to men of goodwill. There's the rub, for goodwill implies right reason, and right reason is informed with truth, and the Word Made Flesh is Truth. In short, international peace can be secured only when or to the extent that the nations are enlisted under the banner of Christ the King, Prince of Peace, only when and to the extent that all men measure life and the purpose of life by the measure of the mind of Christ Our Lord. Observance of the commandment of Charity is the only guarantee of peace. If the

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National Declaration Committee is anxious to know whether the country wants peace or war, let them take a plebiscite but let the one question be: Are you willing to accept the Incarnation in all its implications as the practical norm of life? Thus will it be discovered, perhaps, whether the people of this country are ready to pay the necessary price for peace.



We take this opportunity of wishing our readers a Happy Christmastide. We are happy to be able to promise them another special number of BLACKFRIARS in January, this time treating of divers aspects of the correlation between the Incarnation and human life.

EDITOR.

TOTA PULCHRA

HE that hath made thee; and hath made thee fair
Doth worship thee, the work of His own hand.
His wedding gift of stars bedecks thy hair.
Beneath thy maiden feet, by His command
She whom all sorrows worship Queen of Night
Meek homage yieldeth thee. His glorious Sun
Enwraps thee as a cape of gold. Its light
Shows dim against thy blushes as they run
Urged by thy maiden lowliness. He thus
Adorneth thee as Queen, whose flesh sin free
Gave Him His flesh. O God most courteous!
How shall I quit thee of idolatry
Who bowest in lowly rank with me, Thy brother.
And worshippest thy handwork as Thy Mother.

VINCENT McNABB, O.P.