

THE KING OF NATIONS

THE third requirement for peace laid down by His Holiness Pius XI is "some juridical institution which shall guarantee the loyal and faithful fulfilment of conditions agreed upon and which shall in case of recognized need revise and correct them." There can be no guarantee of loyal fulfilment of treaties and contracts without a recognition of the universal laws of right and wrong; and these laws proceed from Christ the "Lord of all." Peace and order therefore demand the rule of Christ the King. The influence of the Incarnate Word must extend over the whole of society.

When it comes to concrete realities, does not this seem quite impracticable? Pius XI wrote: "Not only private individuals but also rulers and princes are bound to give public honour and obedience to Christ." But can we visualize this "reign of Christ in the Kingdom of Christ" in a world where Hitlers and Mussolinis sprout like mushrooms in the night? Is the gentle spirit of the King of Kings a match for the powers of this world, which have seized dominion over society and are rapidly destroying it? How can Christ rule in the twentieth century? He does not enforce his laws with armaments and sanctions. No police force takes its orders from him and patrols the nations to see that they observe the eternal injunctions of their King. It is difficult enough to visualize its working even in a society that was wholly Christian in name, for the downward tendency of fallen nature always plays its part. Indeed many of the worst blackguards are Christian in name—Hitler and Mussolini are Christians, yet there seems to be no superior Christian power to stop their destructive arrogance. Since in actual fact all men do not give their allegiance to Christ, and since there are vast tracts of modern society that definitely reject him, his ruling over the hearts of men seems a Utopian dream.

Our Lord however spoke of his kingdom as of a leaven that works imperceptibly in the whole mass of dough. Gradually it brings life to the entire mixture. Those who are actual and active members of the kingdom are labouring always in the spirit of Christ to restore order and peace. His is a dynamic rule always in process of leading men, and as wide a group of men as possible, to their final goal. He is no despot imposing his authority upon unwilling serfs. He rules free men who freely give him their allegiance. Moreover he has come to restore and strengthen what is good in man. He assists man to live according to that sacrificial unselfishness which alone

can bring peace and order into the world. But we should remember that a universal and perpetual right order in this world would indicate either the mechanisation of men into contented, or rather mindless, slaves working as cogs in a machine, or the realization of a peace which is the ultimate goal of Christ's rule, unattainable in any place lower than heaven.

The group of men through whom Christ is always working to restore society does not have to face such an impossible task as appears at first sight. The true Christian has certain sure foundations upon which to build, and a power greater than his own. He has an unalterable standard of life which springs at once from the law and authority of the Creative and Creating Word of God. And precisely because this authority comes forth from the Word, who has given man his form, it appears to the healthy and thoughtful mind as just and reasonable, and therefore desirable. It is reasonable for man to act according to his true nature. It is desirable to regulate life according to the primacy of the spirit over matter, of the soul over the body, to treat one's fellows justly as possessing the same nature, to keep one's word, to rear a family in permanent wedlock . . . Such things appeal instinctively to those who have not been choked by the weeds of false teaching and by their enslavement to passion. People in good faith will respond to these laws so soon as they are made conscious of them.

Thus the rule of Christ the King has this permanent invariable authority behind it. It is an authority given from above and in that sense it is imposed and even forced; for no one can really escape entirely or all the time from the limitations or demands of his own nature. In this divine standard of living nothing can be revised or corrected; it obliges all men universally and all the time. This is the divine plan of which we have spoken, imposed on human creatures according to their natures, according to their own constitutions. Murder, unjust aggression, treaty breaking, despoiling labourers of their wages, simply do not fit into the divine plan for mankind. There is therefore an obligation upon all to observe these laws; all are constrained by the authority of the Word. And yet the only force used by the Creator to compel observance apart from grace is the impetus and inclination of man's own nature.

But man's nature has been so seriously wounded by sin that this impulse has little influence on his life. So the Word-made-flesh came to give a new Spirit that would revive this impulse. The dead scheme of an unchanging law is not sufficient to hold man within the bounds of his true destiny. The leaven working in society is a

living, an ever moving spirit that inspires society with a desire for its eternal end and draws all men towards that goal. Man has a free will and it is against the plan of divine authority to *force* men to obey the laws against their will, for that is against the very nature of man coming forth from the Word of God. He must therefore be led to choose freely to observe this authority. The Word-made-flesh breaths the Spirit into his fellow men to assist them in willing to work towards their final goal ; thus the Spirit of Christ draws men into one society round the one central pivot. For "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (ii Cor. 3, 17). This is the way the supreme King rules his subjects.

Where the Spirit is working there is the ebb and flow of life ; circumstances change from day to day, characters and relationships are of infinite variety. The Spirit works in liberty and applies the eternal principles of human conduct to the flux of life. Situations and circumstances in human affairs are constantly changing so that eternal laws cannot be imposed like some mechanical stamp, cutting off whatever projects beyond the die. They must be used as a mould which forms the whole material into the desired shape without loss. The authority of the Word says that it is necessary for society that each person should possess goods which are his own property ; the Spirit of the Word-made-flesh impells man to give what is his own to others in need so that all are bound in closer harmony and turn more freely towards their final goal of charity superabounding. Promises and treaties must be kept according to the divine dictate ; but promises and treaties are contracted to suit particular circumstances and the Spirit of the Word-made-flesh, working in liberty, recognises changes in conditions and the needs for revision and adjustment. Without the spirit the law is not adaptable, and unadaptable authority causes friction, disorder and strife.

Now perhaps we can see how a juridical institution, set up by men, but deriving its authority from God and applying to all men as one society, can have a guarantee. Such an institution will be guaranteed in its function by the kingship of Christ working in the world through his subjects. These subjects may be unaware that they are serving their divine Master, but as long as they are observing the laws of nature and are applying these laws in a spirit of mutual love and respect, not only of other men's rights but of their personal characteristics, they are, at least in some way, bearing the sweet yoke of the Word. The guarantee can only come eventually through Christ the King working in the world through his Spirit in his subjects. Christian truth and justice must begin to

predominate in society, so that the natural law binding men together may be imposed and at the same time raised and leavened by the love of God, the love that is called Charity.

Thus we may consider this institution as becoming operative through a twofold power. First there is the power of authority and law coming down from the Word of God in whom the nature of man is created, an unchanging nature which is multiplied on the earth through the action of the Word. The Word is a word of command : "Be so," and "Since I have made you so, act accordingly." In the last resort the only escape from that command is utter depravity and final unalterable misery. Such authority, then, obliges all men, gathers them into one uniform group, grounded on their common origin and heritage. But the second power is equally necessary. Christ's rule of authority is also one of love, so that there is no rigidity or mechanical application. "*Flecte quod est rigidum.*" The Spirit of Christ can brook no hindrance from the dead and static letter of the law. The Word is indeed the source of authority, but he is a "Word breathing forth love—*Verbum spirans amorem,*" and this is not only in the intimate life of the Blessed Trinity but also in all his outward activities. The Kingship of Christ is not a despotic power. The Spirit of Love which breathes in all his works and ways gives pliability to his rule and authority ; it tempers the wind to the lamb, it treats every man as an individual being and not as a mere unit of activity in a vast machine called the universe. Christ demands recognition for his laws and commands but he applies them by ruling the heart.

The authority of the Creator, the law of the Word, the pliability of the Spirit of the Word, these things must be the background of the Juridical Institution. These things give it its power and authority to work within the Kingdom of Christ. Though it is an institution set up by and composed of fallible men, they not only represent their respective states, they must also represent, stand for, the Word-made-flesh. They must represent to all the States the authority of the Word, because they have been empowered to administer the unalterable laws that regulate the actions of all men. They represent Christ the King, because their authority must come from him to whom all power is given. This means a dependence on the Kingship of Christ even if that dependence is entirely unconscious and unacknowledged. Indeed even the creative activity of God in keeping every individual in being is not often acknowledged, but it must be there to guarantee existence. So too, in whatever way the nations of the world may choose to erect this institution, it

can only be true to its name if it has the authority of the universal kingship of Christ. In other words it can only be a true and practical institution if the nations recognize their dependence on the eternal laws of nature and are prepared to accept the decisions of those who have been appointed to administer the law. If the states of the world continue to preach their complete and absolute sovereignty and regard such an institution as deriving the whole of its authority and power from themselves it will not be properly constituted ; it will be just another League with the same wretched fate awaiting it.

Certainly this world-wide law, informed by a universal spirit, must be administered by men and administered in the eddies and flows of time. The different circumstances of nations, their evolving history, demand treaties with many conditions and clauses to meet the varying eventualities. The same changing circumstances demand the occasional revision and correction of these treaties. And in all these conditions and adjustments individual men are concerned. Yet the juridical institution can guarantee no condition, can carry through no correction or revision, unless these men in some way recognize that they are ministers of the Word-made-flesh, that there is a Kingdom over and above the individual states to which they all must conform. Through this institution the nations must be brought to conform to the nature of man as created by the Father and regenerated by the Son.

The separate nation is obliged to submit to a juridical institution of the sort under discussion not simply according to its own good pleasure. It cannot judge on its own authority its relations with other nations. It has to recognize the possible need of correction and revision in its treaties and agreements with other nations, but it cannot correct and revise independently and without reference to a more universal standard than its own particular good. It must recognize the authority of Christ the King working through the juridical institution even though it is itself partly responsible for its functioning. And yet this means no world state in which the nations lose their autonomy and liberty. They do not have to lose their individuality, becoming merged into one vast organism directed from a single bureaucratic head. Each nation leads its own life without interference from others. It orders its own affairs and does not take orders from any other political, secular power. To form a World state would be as defeatist as putting all citizens into prison because there is a possibility of each committing a crime. To attempt to destroy nations because nationalism has been abused is

the senseless escape of the iconoclast who destroys good things lest someone misuse them. The true nation must preserve its personality and independence, but it must be within the framework of the Kingdom of God.

What we have now firstly to ask is : Have I personally any responsibilities as regards this juridical institution, which is to safeguard the Peace of the world ? As we have seen, the only hope for such an institution lies in the re-Christianizing, at least up to a point, of society in general. And this is to be done by the leaven of really living Christians. Although this leaven works as a whole, as a single unit, because under the motive power of a single Spirit, it depends none the less upon the co-operation of each individual Christian. Each one must co-operate with the Spirit and offer himself to its movement. Thus the success of the institution, indeed its very formation, depends to some extent upon my own initiative, i.e., upon my response to the movement of the Spirit. It depends upon my attitude to the Law and upon my obedience to the dictates of the Word-made-flesh. If I am a loyal subject of Christ the King I shall bring the establishment of this Christian order a step nearer accomplishment.

I must therefore learn to be subject to the law of Christ the King. This means that I must avoid two dangerous evils. Firstly, the Christian ideal must not be set out as a fixed and rigid rule of life. We can insist too much upon the unchanging nature of the laws of God and so become unbending and unadaptable. If we demand a mechanical conformity to his will we shall turn ourselves into the traditional Pharisee type. The Pharisee is not a moving and living spirit among men, making for unity, peace and life. He is a mechanical device as lethal as any modern weapon of war. If the Christian to-day does not adapt himself to the new circumstances of life (without of course compromising the Word's dictates of Truth and Right) he will help to make the world a little more disorganized. And so he will make it more un-Christian, further from the influence of the Kingship of Christ. The Catholic should not set himself up to judge the rest of the world in cold detachment. He must follow the judgment of the Word that breathes forth love in his every expression. There is no leaven without the Spirit. So we must avoid the considerable danger of seeking to impose the law in the letter that killeth. The universal aims of the Juridical Institution are 'in the case of recognized need' to effect revision and correction of the conditions of agreements and treaties. This attitude should be reflected by the individual Christian. He should make quite certain

whether the things he insists on implacably are of the eternal nature of God's order coming down from the Word, or particular applications of these eternal truths where adaptability is required.

Secondly, we must avoid the other extreme of regarding the Spirit as working irrespective of the constituted order of things. A constant stress on the spiritual side of the Christian life sometimes tends to overlook the walls of the channel within which it must flow. It is easy to insist on love without the authority of the Word, forgetting that it is the authority of the Word that breathes forth love. It is easy to insist on the ethical teaching of our Lord as though it were nothing but love—no rule, no law or authority, but simply the movement of affection and devotion. This of its nature leads to individualism and therefore to anarchy. In other words, if we wish the states to recognize and observe the higher authority of this institution we must be ready to act ourselves under obedience. Individually every Christian must accept the authority of the Church, respect the pronouncements of the Pope and hierarchy. And in the other sphere he must accept the authority of the State and act according to the just laws of the land. He must be at once a faithful Christian, faithful to the commandments of God, and a loyal citizen, loyal to properly constituted authority which is one of the manifestations of Christ's Kingship.

The Individual must therefore avoid Pharisaism and live by the Spirit ; he must avoid anarchy or living without law ; he must subject himself to the rule of Christ the King. Thus this Peace Point is only possible if the individual Christian, who to-day has to face a world in disastrous conflict, increases his subjection to the King of kings. He must follow the rule of Christian living in the Spirit of Charity which is the Spirit of Christ. It may seem that the individual can give very little help, but if every limb and member of the human body resigned itself to sheer inactivity simply because it was not the whole body or an influential member of the body the whole man would stand no chance of life. "*But doing the truth in charity*, we may in all things grow up in him who is the head, even Christ ; from whom the whole body being compacted and fitly joined together, by whatever joint supplieth, according to the operation in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying (the building up) of itself in charity" (Ephesians 4, 15). It is in this way that the individual is a member of the Kingdom, and it is the Kingdom that alone can guarantee the proper functioning of an international juridical institution.

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