

remain find it increasingly difficult not to turn their own politics into religion.

The motion in the House of Lords was the last echo of the old principles under which governments and parties ruled within the common frontiers of Christendom. It took the atom bomb to drag this cry for the old order from the House of Lords. Significantly the cry was not heard in the Commons, where the new religions have full powers. It was a demand that Christendom be re-born: it did not recognize that the light of true Christianity had faded in the chamber where the demand was made, had faded too in nearly every chamber of government in Europe.

THE EDITOR.

CHARITY ABOUNDING

IT is no doubt inevitable that the Holy See should have been unjustly condemned and wrongly praised by prejudiced or ill-informed people in this country and elsewhere, especially during the years of war and its aftermath. The Holy Father has been condemned when some word or action of his did not, or was deemed not to, conform to the ideology or bias of the critic, just as he has been praised according to an equally false norm of criticism. If he blessed a group of Catholics who happened to be Italians and soldiers, or expressed approbation of Catholics who happened to be Spanish, or condemned the intrinsic evil of an atheistic Communism propounded by men who happened to be Russians, he was dubbed fascist. If he gave succour to British prisoners of war, condemned the evil of Nazism as propounded by the Germans, or pleaded for the Jews persecuted by the totalitarian states, or welcomed to the Vatican the Allied Commanders and their troops, he was congratulated (grudgingly enough, it is true) on these presumed expressions of approval of the Allied cause.

It could hardly be expected that the run of mankind in this narrow, materialistic, selfish, modern world should appreciate the simple truth that the Holy Father both is and acts as the Vice-regent of Christ upon this earth; and that he has a peculiar obligation of paternity in regard to Catholics of all nations; that he has a God-given duty to proclaim to all men the basic principles of morality and to condemn in no uncertain voice, and without respect of persons, any blatant and general disregard of them; that he is bound to regard himself as the universal protector of those in need and the protagonist of justice for all mankind. In these days of windy talk about internationalism and world unity, it is perhaps too much to expect that the

talkers should be prepared to recognise one who is, by his office and in the actual exercise of that office, the personification of true internationalism (which should rather be called supranationalism) and the one prototype and hope of world unity.

If the modern world could bring itself to the acceptance of this fact even as a hypothesis and would be just enough and wise enough to examine the attitude and actions of the Holy See in the light of such a hypothesis, the present dark and grim horizon would show the first flush of the dawn of hope. The Holy See need not be judged merely on its claims; let it be judged on its actions, let the tree be known by its fruits, even in the purely material order of things.

By the very nature of the case a great deal of the stupendous and unceasing work of the Holy See cannot be known to the large mass of men. It is only by a happy exception that some glimpse of it is made available to the general public. It is such a happy exception that has been provided by the recent publication of a pamphlet, prepared under the direction of the Apostolic Delegation in Great Britain, with the aptly chosen title of *Charity Abounding*.¹ The informative and apologetic value of this unassuming pamphlet cannot be overstressed. It is a plain, almost laconic, brief (if anything, too brief) record of facts and figures relative to the Holy Father's own efforts and those of his personal representatives, the Nuncios and Delegates, throughout the world, for the alleviation of all those suffering under the calamities of war.

In an admirably chosen Foreword, His Excellency the Most Reverend William Godfrey, Apostolic Delegate in Great Britain, relates how a British officer, who had found sanctuary in Vatican City, after admiring certain paintings in the Vatican portraying the corporal works of mercy, was struck forcibly by the fact 'that the Holy See had indeed, during these bitter war years, been a most splendid example and inspiration to the world of the teaching of Jesus Christ regarding our love one for another. These pictures, so to say, came to life in the noble work done by the Holy Father and his representatives and helpers throughout the Catholic world'.

'Christian love', His Grace continues, 'like the Christian Gospel, knows no frontiers. It is not limited by time or place, nor is it confined to any nation, class or creed. . . . Wherever his fatherly hand could reach, the Pope stretched it forth and gave all that was in his power to give. . . . Families have been re-united, the missing have been traced, the starving have been relieved and those condemned to death have, on occasion, obtained clemency through the

¹ *Charity Abounding*. The Story of Papal Relief Work during the war. Foreword by the Most Rev. W. Godfrey, Apostolic Delegate in Great Britain (Burns Oates; 1s.).

intervention of the Pope, Christians, Jews, Mohammedans, Russians, in fact men of every and no religion, have felt the benefit of his timely aid. . . . In this island, where there was such sore anxiety in the hearts of many for the fate of their loved ones in the Far East, it ought to be remembered that, when every other channel was yet closed, it was through the mediation of the Holy See that messages were sent to and received from the imprisoned, and that much needed help was able to be given'.

The pamphlet itself is relatively short and necessarily inadequate, for we might well say of the unending efforts in this particular cause of Charity Abounding, what St John wrote of the acts of our Lord himself: 'If they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written'. Nevertheless it provides more than enough to bring a warm glow of wondering pride and grateful affection to the heart of the Catholic, who will perhaps learn for the first time something of why the Pope is truly called the Holy Father. It will certainly also give to the non-Catholic some material idea of what we Catholics mean when we speak of the Pope as the Vicar of Christ. The work of communication between prisoners, refugees, internees and their relatives and friends alone was almost unbelievable in its scope and effectiveness. In 1940 fifty-eight thousand enquiries in sixty-two languages were dealt with in the Vatican information office, where 'Babel became the continual Pentecost of the Church'. In the next year more than seven hundred and forty-six thousand messages came in; whilst in 1943 the number had risen to one and a half million, and that at a time 'when the almost complete disruption of communications made the sending of any message almost intolerably hazardous and lengthy'. In all, from October 1939 to December 1944, using couriers, post, telegraph, air-mail and radio, the office dealt with 1,840,360 incoming requests and messages, and sent out 5,630,214. Not indeed that this office was a ready-made machine. On the contrary, it was brought into being to serve this particular need by Pope Pius XII who, as he himself said, recalled what he had been able to do in the name of Benedict XV during the earlier war. He it was who inspired its beginning, fostered its growth, and had it under his personal direction.

If that magnificent effort were but evidence of the loyalty and willing cooperation of the Pope's Nuncios and Delegates throughout the world, and of the equal loyalty and service of their willing helpers, it would be a magnificent tribute to Catholic unity and charity. If it were the sole evidence of the Catholic claim that the Pope is the personal representative of Christ upon earth, it would go far as a motive of credibility. If that one section of the work of the Holy

See were its total contribution to the war years, it would be an astounding achievement which the whole world should acclaim. But it was, in fact, only one section even of its material contribution. Even apart from the all-important work of catering for the religious needs of Catholics in prisons and concentration camps, material needs of all kinds were provided for. Food was collected by Vatican lorries and despatched to all prisoners, as far as was humanly possible. Books and calendars and Christmas cards were printed on the Vatican presses and sent to them. The Nuncios and Delegates organised the collection and distribution of food, clothes, tobacco, soap, musical instruments and of every other requirement. Special relief was organised for refugee Poles, and in Greece 6,000,000 cooked meals a day were the result of the Vatican's efforts. Through the generosity of Mr Myron Taylor, a large quantity of medical supplies were placed at the Pope's disposal. And so the unending and moving tale of Charity Abounding, 'which seeketh not her own', goes on.

It would be an irreparable loss for any Catholic not to have and to ponder over this matter-of-fact record of Christ-like charity. It would scarcely be less of a loss if it were not known to the many thousands of others of our countrymen who look for deliverance from the present chaos and seek in all earnestness a practical way to world peace and humanity of living. Great Britain is beholden, more than can be said, to its Apostolic Delegate for thus lifting the veil that normally covers the selfless, unceasing and universal charity of Holy Mother Church.

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V E Z E L A Y

VEZELAY is a place extraordinarily little known considering its beauty and historic interest. Situated some 150 miles south-west of Paris, in Burgundy, almost at the very centre of France, it was in the 12th century one of the great shrines of Christendom. To Vézelay pilgrims went from the whole of Europe to pay honour to St Mary Magdalen whose body the Benedictines claimed to have taken there from St Maximin. There in 1146 when the nave of the present basilica stood in all its newness, St Bernard preached the 2nd Crusade before King Louis VII and a multitude assembled from every Christian country. From the pulpit of the basilica 20 years later St Thomas Becket, in exile, solemnly excommunicated Henry II. To Vézelay went Henry's son, Richard Coeur de Lion, to take the Cross with Philip Augustus in the 3rd Crusade. St Francis's first foundation in France was made there, the Cordelerie on the slope of