

Sursum Corda

Triumph On Heels Of Disaster

By Rev. James M. Gillis, C.S.P.

There is an old saying: "The Devil fishes in troubled waters." True enough, but God can fish in troubled waters also. In fact it might be an interesting theme to develop that religion and the Church make more progress in tragic and terrible times than in times of peace and comfort, pleasure and luxury.

One might imagine that the three centuries after Augustus Caesar in the Roman Empire would have been impossible days for the growth and development of the Christian religion. Rome was not only wicked; it was rotten to the degree of decadence. The things that happened under Caligula, an emperor less well known to Christians than Nero and before him Tiberius and after Nero, Helio-gabalus would be called nowadays, incredible and therefore impossible. Any one who wishes to read of the national and world-wide degeneracy of a once great people and of what had been the greatest empire ever constructed may find it in a hundred histories. We need not go into that matter in a little piece such as this. Suffice it to say that for downright licentiousness, profligacy and for the cruelty that goes with profligacy we have nothing nowadays that comes within hailing distance of what happened when the Roman Empire was slowly rotting away.

Perhaps the most expressive description of it, in two lines is that of Matthew Arnold. On that hard day in world, disgust and secret loathing fell. When deep weariness had stilled lust made humbly life well. The world had gone so far in viciousness that it had come to loathe its own viciousness. It was like a man who having given way for many years to his baser passions and having fallen deeper and deeper into practices that are disgusting even to himself, stops on because he cannot stop. He gets no pleasure out of his sin. That stage has long since passed. He hates his sin, hates himself, hates life, hates the world and all in it. He has reached the nadir. So had the world in the days of the decline leading to the fall of Rome.

Well, you would say that such a time was no time for a religion to get started and that such a society formed no seed ground for the planting of the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ. But as everyone knows the rottenness of Rome turned out to be as it were a fertilizer of Christianity. It grew with abnormal speed and developed unparalleled beauty. Perhaps we have never seen religion so pure and strong and vital and beautiful as it was in the most corrupt period of history. Explain that if you can. It is an anomaly.

Now here we are again in a period of weakness and decay. It seems as if religion must fare very badly. In one country Russia a tyrant lifts his finger and blots out a Church and to all appearances a whole religion. One hundred and seventy-five million people have been deprived of religion and as far as we can see there is no tremendous uprising among them to have it restored. At least there is no revolution in the interests of religion. In another country Germany, some seventy-five million seem to have acquiesced in the introduction of a new heathenism and with it persecution of Christianity. Along with that irreligion comes as you might expect, cruelty and all manner of wickedness.

In our own country social and moral conditions are nothing to boast of. Consider the periodical literature which has gone so largely to photographic magazines, many of them indecent, shameful, together without reticence and all but pornographic. Consider the kind of stage shows that are tolerated under the name of burlesque and Follies and for that matter the indecency of what is thought to be reputable musical comedy.

Consider the corruption in political life and business life and the relative degeneracy of great professions like that of law and medicine.

Add to all that the war which has already on three continents produced a condition of moral anarchy and will have the same effect on this continent if it strikes us.

The sum total is disconcerting if not frightening. Some say it is appalling. And you might think that these days would be sad days for religion. But history teaches otherwise. Chaos, anarchy, nihilism, moral and political degradation has always been a preface to new conquests for religion. In a hymn which speaks of the danger to the Church from the Circumcision of Saul of Tarsus, before he was converted and became St. Paul these lines occur:

"O teach Thy Church the lesson
Still in Her darkest hour
Of weakness and of danger
To trust Thy hidden power"

Older people will not like to see the triumph of the Church over these dangers that now beset us and more that threaten us. They will go down to their graves thinking that the bottom has fallen out of the world and that religion has tumbled through into the gulf.

But young people will live to know better. They will see once again what has happened before the glorious resurrection after the tragic crucifixion of religion.

(Copyright 1941, N.W.C.)

Five Years Ago--

—in the files of the CATHOLIC COURIER

From Dec. 3, 1936, Edition

Cooperation between capital and labor, along definite Christian lines alone can save our industrial life from chaos, warned Archbishop Edward Mooney, Bishop of Rochester, in summing up the two-day sessions of the Catholic Conference on Industrial Problems held in Rochester.

Research of two Fordham University professors, Dr. William T. McNiff and Dr. Leonard J. Piccoli, was expected to establish in the near future a new, practical method for reviving human victims of industrial electrocution.

An Alumni Association to hold together graduates of Holy Family High School, Auburn, was formed at a meeting of the alumni at the high school library. Charles Lindsley '33 was elected President.

The Liturgical Movement

You wash the face of the earth with your songs, you bathe it in your prayer till it is clean. You turn to the Lord as a new face. Then the Lord breaks from His solitude and it comes you with arms of light and the whole world awakens in His grace.

Gertrude von Le Fort

Hymns to the Church
Catholic liturgy in its proper sense is the divine service or worship which the Church celebrates as the mystical body of Christ, in union with the head, Christ, and in His name, and at His behest, and that as a continuing representation and making present of the mystery of the redemption.

Der Grosse Heister—Liturgie

This we declare as our one purpose to bring all under the headship of Christ, namely that Christ may be all things in all.

Pius X

The active participation of the faithful in the holy Mysteries and in the public and solemn prayers of the Church is the primary and indispensable source of the true Christian spirit.

Pius X. Motu Proprio

The Liturgy is truly a sacred thing for by it we are drawn to God and united to Him, profess our faith and pay the great debt we owe Him for the benefits and help we have received and of which we are always in need.

Pius XI

It is precisely through liturgical prayer and through visible cult that the soul easily rises to God and disposes itself to receive the consolation of faith, the vital impulse of grace, and the ever greater ardor of charity. It is in the holy worship of the Church that the faithful forgetting their tribulations and afflictions, truly feel themselves one heart and one soul and acquire greater strength for the daily practice of the virtues of Christianity.

Pius XII

Once the faithful have discovered that they are to go forward along the royal road of public prayer and of the other manifestations of worship, they will with far more zeal than heretofore strive to put on the mind of Christ. Inspiring their acts, thoughts and affections at this source, they will cooperate with renewed vigor to achieve that return to Him which the present lamentable state of affairs causes them to hope for with growing desire and fervent longing.

Pius XII

The annual celebrations of the holy Mysteries are of far greater efficacy than all the documents of the ecclesiastical magisterium even the gravest of them.

Pius XII

There is a Dialog Mass celebrated at 9:30 every Sunday at St. Helen's Church, Hill Avenue and Hinchey Road—Anne Dilillo, Nazareth College

Clever Youth

The resourcefulness of youngsters should be an inspiring source of wonder to all of us. I just heard of a boy who is beginning history in which he does very well. But he wrote down Japan as Columbus's birthplace.

Pius XII

"I couldn't spell Genga" he explained.

EDITORIALS

(Continued from Page 26)

HE WHO IS TO COME

John the Baptist was more than a prophet. He was the messenger of God sent to point out the Redeemer. God the Father had spoken through the Prophet, Isaiah: "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall make ready thy way before thee. On Christ's testimony we have it that John was this messenger. John's thoughts were with Him that was to come. John's preaching was an exhortation to penance as a preparation for that coming. John's fervent inquiry was made in the desire to let the people know for certain that Christ was the promised Messiah.

"He who is to come," John's followers needed no explanation of the meaning of the phrase "Who is to come." They were of the Jewish race, they were instructed by the great and sustained hope of the Jews. That hope had come down from their father, Abraham, down through the Patriarchs, through a long line of prophets. That hope looked for one who would redeem Israel, who would redeem the world, who would take away iniquity. The anointed of the Lord, the promised one, the Emmanuel, God with us, was to be a descendant of Abraham, a son of the House of the great King David. He was to be born of a virgin, was to live the world a life of sorrow, was to die for mankind.

"Art thou he that is to come?" Christ gave direct answer to the question of John placed before Him by the two messengers. He did not give them a mere "yes" as an answer, rather, he related the things that were being done by Him, things that had been foretold in the Old Testament as signs of the Messianic office and power. "Go and report to John what you have heard and seen," the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise, the poor have the gospel preached to them. "Well," said John, "I will say to the multitudes as Christ came down to the Jordan to be baptized: 'Behold the Lamb of God; behold Him Who taketh away the sins of the world.'"

"Do we look for another?" John did not need to look for another. No other could be given by whom men should be saved. So we of this day do not look for another, but gladly accept Christ as the Redeemer promised to us by the Father. Through Him we receive pardon for sin; through Him we receive grace for right living; through Him we receive the blessing of a happy death marking the close of a life, guided and directed by Him.

Library Signpost For Christmas Bookworms

By Rev. Benedict Ehmann

Take this as a list of books which I would not mind seeing under my Christmas tree. I claim for it no more value than one reader's share out of a crop as abundant as apples in a bin.

Gall and Honey—Edward Loherty. Catholic news-piperman's straight-shooting story of personal experience. Of special interest for the men of the house.

This War Is the Passion—Caryl Chessantler. A Catholic woman remembers her religion under the London blitz.

All the Day Long—Daniel Sargent. The life and work of Maryknoll's dynamic founder.

A Woman Wrapped in Silence—Rev. John Lynch. The life of the Blessed Virgin in verse of simple beauty and power.

A Companion to the Summa—Rev. Walter Farrell. So far there are three volumes of this modern paraphrase of St. Thomas Aquinas' masterpiece, with one more volume to come. Any one of the three could turn your more thoughtful friends or even yourself, into Ph. D.'s or (better) into masters of the science of God.

Royal Road—Arthur Kuhl. Fast moving and gripping story about a Christian Negro.

The Living Thoughts of St. Paul—Edward by Jacques Maritain. The best introduction I know in the work and words of one of the world's giants, excellent for daily spiritual reading, for it contains the very pith and heart of what it means to be a Christian.

A Declaration of Dependence—Rev. Fulton J. Sheen. Some left-in-the-corner truths dusted off and put in the center with the author's typical deftness.

The Grace of Guadalupe—Frances Packerson Keyes. The story of America's most ancient and still most famous shrine of Mary, especially interesting to the Latin-American-minded.

Their Name Is Pius—Lillian Broome-Giff. A popular account of all the Popes with that venerable name, from 1000 until today, with a good bird's-eye view of some very significant history from Napoleon to Hitler.

Cautionary Verses—Hilare Bellor. First rate light verse for those who like humor in poetry. But don't give it to someone in your house if you don't want to have it quoted out loud and in a roaring voice all day Christmas.

More next week, for I want to get on to children's books.

Extra Special: Four Star **** is The Long Christmas, by Ruth Sawyer, with stories to be told on each day from Christmas to Epiphany, and each one introduced by a carol. Here are their titles: The Shepherds, Fiddler, Play Fast, Play Fatter, Wen Christmas Cabin of Carna ween, Good Night, Schmitzle, Schnotzle and Schnootzle, Gold of Bernardino, Washing Well, Voyage of the Wee Red Cap, Holy Lake, Crib of Bo-Bassu, Three Kings Ride, Candle for Saint Bridget, Feast of Fools.

The Lake of Gold, by John Bohann. Adventurers with Indian guides, Oblate missionaries and Eskimos make this the perfect book for boys of 12 and up.

For these same juniors is a fine mystery story of Peru, The Citadel of a Hundred Stairways, by Aida S. Malkus. Also The Man Who Dared a King, the story of Bishop Fisher and Henry VIII by our own Father Gerald Brennan, and The Matchlock Gun, by Walter D. Edmonds, a story of American pioneers, and The Mysterious Valley, by Amy Hogeboom, an exciting yarn about La Salle and Father Hennepin and their explorations in the Mississippi country, and Young Northwest, by Richard G. Montgomery, which tells of the turbulent days that helped to make our Pacific Northwest and Weezer's Reef, by Rupert Sargent Holliday, which is about the days of Stephen Decatur and the Barbary Pirates. There are others, but it is time to give the girls a few titles.

Sing for Your Supper, by Lenora Weber. A story of a theatrical troupe touring Colorado in the stage-coach days. Also Isabella, Young Queen of Spain, by Mildred Criss, which one critical reviewer says is "magnificently" told, and The Best One, by Ruth Sawyer, whose chief characters are a Mexican boy and his little burro, and Haven for the Brave, by Elizabeth Yates, which tells of adventures near Quebec, and Crimson Shawl, by Florence Chyatte, which tells the story of the Acadians, those refugees of an older day, and Smokey, by Alma Savage, a story something like Bambi, about a reindeer fawn in one of the Catholic Missions of Alaska, and Pagan, by Hilda Van Stockum, thoroughly delightful in its Irish setting and humor, and The Two Bridles, by Cynthia Handlaway, which tells how a little girl learned not to be ashamed of her name.

And now, at the end of the list a book for adults who yet have their child's enthusiasm for beauty in pictures. It is When Painting Was in Glory, by Padraic Gregory. Generously illustrated with over half a hundred reproductions, it tells the story of the heyday of Medieval and Renaissance painting. At only \$3.75, it ought to make an attractive buy for an ideal Christmas gift.

Any good book-store will know where to get these books. I suggest patronizing our Catholic book dealers in town: Trant's, Predmore's, and Tucker's are those that I know. As for the children's books, make these dealers your agents to write to the Parvulus Book Club in New York City for them, the location is the Empire State Building. Miss Monahan of South Book Store, on East Ave. near Alexander, also makes a specialty of children's books.

Quote--End Quote

"The goods which a man has in superfluity are due by the natural law to the sustenance of the poor." St. Thomas Aquinas.

Show yourself very faithful to grace and work with all the ardor of your soul at the continual immolation of self under all its forms. Fr. Cline, S.J.

Confession is for the Catholic for the preparation for Holy Communion. Hence his earnestness in striving to make as sincere, humble and contrite confession, as possible. Cardinal O'Connell.