

Library Signpost

'The New World Of Oceania'

By Rev. Benedict Ehmann

The events in the present theater of the war are bringing home to us with urgent reality names which were remote and strange-sounding in old geography days.

Mr. McGuire, as a native of Australia, writes with authority on this Antipodean patch of the globe. If it were not for his own statement that he began the book in 1940, one would be tempted to think that the book is a potboiler job to capitalize on the current burning interest in the islands of Oceania.

But the publisher's preface states that the book was finished before the Pearl Harbor atrocity, and went to press two days after it. If ever a book filled a topical need, this is the book. It makes the places in the spot-news of the day as real as if you were there.

Mr. McGuire writes, "From New York to Sydney and from Sydney to Singapore, there is now one common character. It is in the American, the Dutch and the British, it appears in the Indian, the Chinese, the Malay. It is that which struck off the ancient shackles and gives his final dignity to man."

The book has added interest as the log of an actual voyage which started at Vancouver, moved through Hawaii, the Fiji, New Zealand, Australia, the Dutch East Indies, and ended at Singapore.

One has the feeling that McGuire's book will still be current long after Gunther's has become passe.

A copy is being placed in the Catholic Evidence Library for circulation within a short time, a second copy will be added to meet the demands of current interest.

Read: "Westward the Course," by Paul McGuire.

St. Francis Xavier was the first apostle of all this troubled region of Oceania. Devout Catholics who prefer to spend a deeper Lent by retiring from the secular news may still pay attention to the present area of the war by seeing it through the eyes of St. Francis Xavier.

These books, with the possible exception of the Maynard opus, are all in the Catholic Evidence Library. They are a good Lenten course of reading on the world of Malaya and the East Indies.

Sister M. Eunice writes to me in a letter from Maryknoll:

"With 238 of our Sisters in Hawaii, Japan, Manchukuo, Korea, China and the Philippines, these are naturally anxious days for us, though we know the Sisters are in God's keeping. By choosing to remain with their people in time of distress, as Catholic Missionaries have always done, they are doing God's work and we are confident that Our Lady will be near to guard and guide them."

The Pope not only talks about peace. He does the works of peace, while the war blazes on.

One of the Vatican's less publicized efforts is that of locating the whereabouts of prisoners and refugees for their relatives.

Time reports: "100 priests and laymen work ten hours a day as liaison between prison camps and worried relatives at home, helping locate missing soldiers; so far they've found nearly 20,000."

The Register contains this significant item: "A young Boston Jew, according to the Transcript of that city, tried for months to discover whether his parents were still alive in Poland. The U. S. State Department sought to locate them, but failed. The American Red Cross also did not succeed. He wrote a letter to the Vatican. In a few weeks, he had a reply, giving him the town and street address where his parents are now living. The grateful young man was not anxious for publicity. The Transcript had a hard time getting the story and omitted his name. 'I don't like to mention it around much,' he said. 'It might get the Pope in wrong if people found out that he had done a favor for a Jew.'"

It is up to us to uphold the arms of the Pope in his prayers and works for peace. We might use the powerful prayer of St. Catherine of Siena, that mighty champion of the Papacy:

"Turn, O turn, merciful Father, thy compassionate regard upon the Church thy Spouse and upon thy Vicar. Hide him beneath the wings of the mercy so that the evil-minded and proud cannot hurt him. Enlighten those who contend against him and the Holy Spirit and thy omnipotence. Heal by his means our infirmities, let him instruct those subject to him, and attract also the unbelieving with the Church's celestial rule. Let him offer to thy divine majesty the fruits of eternal salvation. Let him not grow weary in carrying the standard of the holy Cross, and let him draw to thy service the whole universe. Do Thou, eternal God, supreme and everlasting Godhead, in thy light let light be seen, and I humbly beg of Thee to infuse that light into every creature that possesses the gift of reason, but especially on our Holy Father, thy Vicar, that he may become at thy hands an image of thyself. Manifest the love Thou hast for thy Vicar. O God supremely good, we offer Thee our lives; render them fruitful in extending thy glory. Amen."

Plenary indulgence, once a month, if said daily. Enc. XI, Feb. 13, 1927.

Resignation

The struggling human will Which like a chafing steed is n'er at rest. Her tyrant is the world, Her proud caparison is interwove With mocking gems that satan hath impierced Of empty fame, false comforts, spurious love Oh, heartless, flattering world, She goads poor mortals, then mad shouts of laughter In savage cadence hurled, When they have fallen, she sends in malice after Why should men crave allegiance, Vassalage to power accursed? Why should the human will be made a slave By promise of false freedom passion nursed? We know what'er we crave Of earthly benefits, how'er extended That at the envious grave Their ministry to us must needs be ended. The human will by grace Calmly subjected to the Will divine, Is like the lightning that majestic trace The thoughts of nations o'er the subtle line. Perfected by God's grace Made strong by sweet submission, her swift pinton Empowers her to embrace The glorious sphere of charity's dominion. A Father's gentle hand, Directs, controls and animates her course, Free, because loving His benign command, There is no check to her unwaried force. A heavenly Father's hand His who gave life, augments her holy vigor. Tranquil, her powers expand, And thrive replenished, 'mid life's wasting rigor. Her treasure is above: What matter then to her the suffering Of baser elements, in cheerful love She greets afflictions keen; all griefs they bring, Because her heart above Beholds them strand by strand, bursting her fetter. His tenderness to prove, God makes Himself in some sweet sense her debtor.

EDITORIALS

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the great Encyclical that restored St. Thomas and his writings to the place they deserved in the Schools of the Church. Scholasticism under him had a religion among students and scholars.

A relatively short life in a century that gave man a religious and learned name to the Church, marked Thomas of Aquinas a Doctor of the Church for all time. His writings for seven hundred years have been a source of protection to the teachings of the Church against every enemy; no doctrine he has not explained with all the clearness a gifted mind could furnish, no attack he has not met with compelling logic. In their original form, in their original composition, his Summa Contra Gentiles and his Summa Theologica, are still in use in every Catholic Seminary.

The mental giants God has raised up in His Church, men who as masters of logic, glorious exponents of the reasoning power, are between Faith and Reason, should be kept close to us. All that they mean, all that they have done, can help us only as we know them and their works. The Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas comes in the first week of March to remind us of all we owe to this Master of the Schools. May he as Patron of Catholic Schools help us to know the importance of these institutions, help us to foster them, help us to use them for ourselves and for our children as the accepted medium for that training of the mind that shall enable us to know God's world through a thorough knowledge of God's teachings.

THE MONTH OF ST. JOSEPH

March is the Month of St. Joseph. He is the Patron of the Universal Church, the Patron of a Happy Death, the Model of Workingmen, the Saint of the Christian Home. To all, St. Joseph is dear. His humility invites us to come close to him, his holiness urges us to imitate him. Closer to Jesus than any other Saint save the Blessed Mother, St. Joseph has a wonderful power of intercession that we should make constant use of.

Where so many are working harder than at other times because of the defense needs of our country, St. Joseph should be nearer to our men as their Heavenly Patron, the Patron of Workers. During the month of March it were well to begin every task with a prayer to St. Joseph, to end every day with a word of thanksgiving to him. Keep him near you as you work, have him close to you at the mill or at the bench, give a touch of romance and religion to your labors as you picture beside you the Carpenter of Nazareth, the workingman who labored for Jesus and Mary.

HE WAS TRANSFIGURED BEFORE THEM

Peter and James and John had faith in Christ. They knew He was the Son of God. Peter had given voice to that faith for himself and for the twelve at Caesarea-Philippi: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Close to Him every day, hearing His word, beholding His works, Peter and His companions had added assurance of the Divinity of their Master. Yet to their eyes He had the appearance of an ordinary man; nothing could they see in Him that declared the majesty of His divinity.

Then Jesus took them to a high mountain, away from their fellow Apostles, to be transfigured before them. The humbleness of His human appearance was to give way to the glory of His divine presence: "His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as snow." Two great prophets of the Old Testament appeared with Him; and the voice of the Father came from a bright cloud: "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him!" The memory of that sight was to stay with them; the memory of those words was never to fade away. The days of sorrow ahead when Christ was again to be transfigured, but this time into a Man of Sorrow, would call for all the strength that the Transfiguration could give to Peter and James and John.

May the transfigured Christ be with us in these days of Lent, to encourage us to perform works of penance, to add to them works of religion, to consecrate them with acts of love and devotion, keeping the transfigured Christ close to us, we can say daily: "Lord, it is good for us to be here!"

Fight Fire With Fire

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

"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life" is the ancient Biblical expression for what the Romans called lex talionis, the law of retaliation. Our Saviour abrogated that "law," but until His time it seems to have been considered legitimate. It is a natural instinct in man. Our first impulse is to "give the other fellow as good as he sends." If he is cruel we shall be cruel; remorseless, we shall be remorseless; if he repudiates the customs and conventions of civilized society, we too, at least for the time being in dealing with him, will revert to the barbaric.

If a gangster, for example, having a gun in his hand is merciless to the unarmed, threatening those who have no means of self-defense, prolonging their agony and finally shooting them down in cold blood, by the instinct of our nature we feel that when the police catch up with him, they should deal with him in the same way he has dealt with others. Hanging, we say, is too good for him, too quick, too easy, too painless. He must be tortured because he tortured others. So we say, and so we would act if we had no guide for natural feeling.

The same instinct rises from the dark, terrible depths of our nature to the surface when we read of the treachery and savagery of the Nazis of the Japanese. If they chuck the rules, we will chuck the rules; if they go in for Schrecklichkeit, we will be more Schrecklich than they; if they take over Nietzsche's idea of the "Blond Beast" and the "Superman," we will show them that we are the super-superman.

Obviously there is no end to this sort of thing. We would go on and on until we, as well as they, would once again rival the original Sioux or even the beasts of the jungle. Whether or not the hypothesis of evolution of man from the animal is true, we recognize that we can be as cruel as tigers if we let ourselves go.

In a motion picture Frank Buck's, I think, there is a terrifying incident of the fight between a tiger and a black panther. Terrifying but fascinating. Looking at it once realizes that in men as in the big cats of the jungle there is a source of terrific ferocity. The fascination that we feel, the fact that we cannot turn our eyes away or shut them, but keep them glued to the picture is evidence that somewhere in the depths of our nature is a kind of joy and satisfaction in cruelty. I say we have to recognize that this ferocity exists in human nature just as we have to recognize, though it shames us, that there are other beastly passions within us constantly seeking an outlet.

That scientific psychological fact explains, I think, why the populations of London and Liverpool and Coventry felt like demanding that the R. A. F. should not confine itself to the bombing of docks and railroads, munition factories and aviation fields, but would wreak indiscriminate vengeance on the people of Germany. The argument was, "They violate international law, why shouldn't we; they murder non-combatants, women, children, why shouldn't we; they bombard our hospitals filled with the helpless, the sick and the dying; why shouldn't we bombard their hospitals? If it comes to Schrecklichkeit we will out-Schrecklichkeit them!"

I have so often, in this column and elsewhere, taken up the argument against retaliation and in favor of the Gospel teaching, that I am happy to step aside in this instance and permit two other clergymen to have their say.

The Rev. John Haynes Holmes of the Community Church, New York City, said recently that the United States must resist the temptation "to descend to the level of the Nazis and the Japanese and fight it out on their own savage terms. . . . By thus fighting as our enemies fight, we are making ourselves over into their likeness. If this is done, then whatever our military victories the enemy will have won the war. . . . Unless we guard our souls as though from death itself, we shall be scorning the Japanese as yellow bellies, yellow devils, members of some despised, inferior and contemptible race. . . . The unhappy people of Japan have been misled, betrayed, impoverished and enslaved by their military masters. They deserve our pity, not our hate. Whatever the color of their skins, they are our brothers."

Another clergyman who has kept his head and remembered his Gospel in spite of all provocation to revenge and retaliation is the Rev. William C. Kernan of Scarsdale, New York. He wrote recently to the papers an eloquent letter from which I quote a couple of sentences: "The country will be showing wisdom and a commendable charity if it turns a deaf ear to those who are now clamoring for retaliation against Japanese in Hawaii and California for the mistreatment of white people by the occupying Japanese forces in Manila. . . . History and the moral law teach us that vengeance is an insatiable vice. It cannot be indulged except at the expense of the very people who employ it. It serves no good cause. It adorns no honorable State. It cannot add in the slightest degree to America's length in the successful prosecution of the war, while it can add materially to the already heavy burden of bitterness of which the nations must be relieved. The spirit of vengeance has to be broken at some point by people who are morally great enough to be capable of sustaining a victorious effort against evil without becoming infamous themselves. This is exaltation. Indeed, it is that righteousness which exalteth a nation."

Five Years Ago--

—in the files of the CATHOLIC COURIER

From Feb. 25, 1937, Edition "Civilization is coming to a most precarious crisis, one of the gravest in history, and men under 40 will have to see a revolutionary clash on a large scale." Hilaire Belloc, noted English writer and historian, as a member of the faculty, told a class at Fordham University Graduate School.

Communism was labeled as a destroyer by the Rev. Michael B. Croden, pastor of St. Vincent's Church, Corning, in opening the Crusade against it by Corning Council, Knights of Columbus.