

Library Digest

How Shall We Fight?

By Rev. Benedict Ekwana

The casualties of human life in a war are frightful. But a worse casualty is that of the soul. What good is it to beat down oppression and slavery and then find that our own souls are brutal? Christians cannot tolerate any pleasure in the monstrous means of war.

The morality of air-raids is a new issue for the moral theologians to thresh out. As for me, though I am one of the least capable in this exact science, I have an inescapable conviction that air-raids are an immoral means of war, even in search of military objectives, as long as they result in the slaughter of civilians not engaged in war.

A heroic sermon was preached in Nazi Germany last New Year's Day by Cardinal Faulhaber, which gave ten commandments to faithful Catholics throughout the Reich in their relations to the government.

- 1. Resist evil with all your power; remain courageous, wise and confident.
2. Neither spread false rumors nor join in empty maxims of authority. On the contrary, speak the truth.
3. Do not unleash anger but conquer irritation so that neither your conscience is dulled nor your soul's power wasted in discouragement or discontent.

Please note especially number 3, number 8, and the last part of number 8. If we take these to heart, there can be no comfort for us in the bombing of enemy cities, in the conversion of God's natural gifts to the horrible engines of total war, in the bending of our best energies toward destruction, in the smearing of our brothers (for our enemies are still our brothers) with devilish names and caricatures.

What our people must do for their government in the war, whether as soldiers or civilians, must be done with a sense of contrition. "For we all have sinned and do need the glory of God." We have accepted a set-up of life which is riddled through with injustice and inhumanity. We have enjoyed the benefits of an industrial order which bled thousands of our brothers dry, which has made the white man an object of distrust throughout the world, which has made the world the white man's checkerboard, which has bought cheap and sold dear.

American Christians, or Christians of any other land, cannot go all out for war. We have our hearts to keep. It must be true of all of us that our hearts are not in war. This need not subtract from loyalty, nor from obedience to any of the legitimate demands of government. It does mean that we keep our hearts in charity.

We cannot expect that all persons, even all Catholics, will take this message to themselves, human nature being what it is. But there must be, there will be, some few here and there in every place, whose whole thought is for peace and justice and charity. Who knows but that the Holy Spirit may breathe upon these separate Christians and spread their fire abroad to catch hold of the world when it is once again sick of its banquet of Mars?

Five Years Ago--

--in the files of the CATHOLIC COURIER

From May 12, 1937, Edition

Miss Marjorie L. Anderson, Nazareth Academy senior won first prize in New York State in the Eighth Gorgas Essay Contest, it was announced at the Gorgas Memorial Institute headquarters in Washington.

Warning was sounded that the Rev. Michael O'Flanagan scheduled to speak at Convention Hall under auspices of the Rochester Committee to Aid the Spanish Loyalists was a suspended priest.

EDITORIALS

(Continued from Page 11)

commands, are our duty from the beginning of our use of reason. Later years may find us lawfully studying and striving for a better grasp of this duty, a more complete understanding of what is right and what is wrong. Right thinking will protect us from all danger of wrecking our lives by willfully turning away from the ethics and morality which are so clearly taught to us through natural revelation and divine revelation.

MORE ON THE CASE FOR THE JEWS

Some days ago we spoke on The Case for the Jews, insisting that the ordinary laws of justice, of fair play, of Christian love of our neighbor, should apply in all our dealings with our Jewish brethren. Axis propaganda has spread many errors among our people concerning the Jews and the part they have played and do play in business, in finance, in our armed forces, in patriotic attachment to our country.

"It is the purpose of this writing to give a few well authenticated facts which may help to dispel the belief that American international policies and our national economic set-up are entirely dominated by Jews: for facts prove that nothing could be farther from the truth."

The author of the article states the facts, given as needed information to correct false statements on the subject. Read of the 250,000 Jewish soldiers who fought for the United States in World War I; 5% of the armed forces, though Jews form only 3 1/2% of the population. Read of the financial support given George Washington when he needed it most by Haym Salomon, a Jewish financier: \$600,000 without interest when others were calling for 20% to 40%.

Forces that would disunite Americans are at work. Axis Anti-Semitic propaganda would divide us as a preliminary to enslaving us. It is no love of America or of American institutions that prompts the campaign of falsehood as a foundation for hatred of the Jews: true Americans will on American principles of truth and justice avoid all such hatred.

'GIVE FOR BOTH'

Truly can it be said: "I Am An American," by all who do their part in filling the 1942 Community War Chest. "The Chest appeal for 1942 is our largest and most magnificent effort, its failure would be our most serious disaster," warns His Excellency, Bishop Kearney in his vigorous appeal.

The campaign, this year, is all embracing. We are being asked not only to give for our nine participating Catholic agencies and the other worthwhile institutions for the unfortunate here at home, but to add all we can for the men in the armed forces, the "crushed and broken abroad," and the vital sustenance of the American Red Cross.

This is a year of self-sacrifice. Fortunately by means of the Community and War Chest our personal sacrifice demanded is not as great as it would be if all agencies participating were to make individual campaigns. We are called upon, however, to sacrifice in greater manner than in years past. That do, and the momentous program called for when the Chest Campaign goes over will be a decided factor in winning the victory, for which all of us must work and pray.

HE UPBRAIDED THEM

For their unbelief and hardness of heart, Jesus rebuked His Apostles. They had refused to believe the reports of those who had seen the Risen Christ, who had told of His resurrection from the dead. They had hardened their hearts against the truth. That unbelief and hardness of heart had not, indeed, been corrected; they themselves had seen the Lord, had looked with their own eyes on Him present before them in His risen body. Thomas had spoken for them His word of faith: "My Lord and My God."

Faith in Christ can never be a matter of indifference; it is and must be always a matter of personal obligation. For us today as for the Apostles of old, faith is a matter of conscientious obligation. The Son of God became man to save us. He died and arose again to save us. He lived and died to teach us the way to heaven. Only through faith in Him, only through following of His precepts, can we hope for salvation. Therefore, did Jesus in sending forth His Apostles to teach and baptize all nations, say: "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; He that believeth not, shall be condemned." "Condemned" because of unbelief: because Christ came to save him, and he refuses to be saved; God's grace and pardon awaiting him, and by unbelief and hardness of heart he refuses to accept them.

The teachings of Christ were to be taught by His Apostles and by the Holy Spirit dwelling within the Church; through these teachings they were to be His witnesses till the end of time: they were to give this testimony of Him. Herein was to be always the content of the faith they were to profess and to preach unto men.

Let us look upon our faith as our tribute to the Saviour, a tribute made invaluable by the grace of God accompanying it. Let us treasure it as our means of being saved.

'Quiz' Corner

How does the Church know that those she calls Saints are in Heaven?

With the assistance of the Holy Ghost, the Church can and does know. The Catholic Church is the Body of Christ, or His Spouse; in fact, Christ, and He knows what holiness is. The Church examines the life of the holy person, and says that such a life could not lead

a soul to hell. The Church calls those Saints only whose heroic virtue has been proved. Perfect charity before death destroys sin, and all punishment due to sin. There is no place where such a soul could go except Heaven. Miracles wrought by God in honor of such a one are God's guarantee of his/her holiness.

The Blackfriars' "Savonarola"

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

After reading the newspaper notices on "Savonarola," Father Urban Nagle's play presented by the Blackfriars' Guild, you would probably get the idea in a mood of comprehension, prepared to be patient and tolerant, but not expectant of something powerful and beautiful.

"Perhaps the tributary theater has something to contribute after all," says Leachridge of the New York Times. The play has several faults but they do not include superficiality or silliness. "The event is worthy," says Atkinson of the New York Times, but "the play is weak." ... Father Nagle's use of the Latin is only occasionally dramatic. The play is confusing. Richard Watts, Jr. of the Boston Tribune speaks of this "grave and intelligent play," but thinks that "in a certain extent its defects are negligible." It is, he says, "never foolish or tedious, which is always something of an achievement in the historical drama," and by way of bestowing another unqualified compliment, he concludes that "Father Nagle's play didn't make him think of Max Beerbohm's inimitable parody on the same subject, 'Savonarola, Junior.'"

"There is a good deal to be said on both sides," says Richard Leachridge, speaking of the case of Savonarola versus Pope Alexander VI; and from his review one concludes that the same sentiment could be applied to the play and the playwright. Father Nagle is eloquent, he "rubs ideas together well," and is respectful and the interest of the audience pleased, but he has evident faults. And so on. Yes, and say, the play is good, yet not so good.

In consequence one who takes his estimate of the drama from the intimation given would certainly not climb the stairs to the second story of the N. Y. M. C. A. building on West 57th Street expecting to be dazzled and delighted.

Well, there was at least one in the audience of the first performance, the critic had intended to drop rehearsal, who was much more enthusiastic when he came down than when he went up. Not being a regular playgoer, still less a professional critic, I don't claim to know what they expect or what they like on Broadway. But I suspect that the commercial theater could learn a lot from the tributary theater. ... From such a play as "Savonarola" presented by such a tributary as Blackfriars!

Here is theater without an excess of theatricality. There is only one scene, the common room of the Friary of San Marco. In the prologue, which is a fragment of one of the sermons of the great saint, the subject is discussed except for a hint of the fact of the prologue and for a moment on that of Lorenzo de Medici, when the preacher is denouncing Lorenzo's equities in his next talk, is restricted by his companion, Fra Felice Mirandola, and leaves.

In the three acts and seven scenes of the play there is little "action," in the theatrical sense. The big episodes take place off stage. The "revelation" that Mr. Leachridge misses is suggested but not acted. The preparation for attack by fire and the violent action with which it ended would doubtless be magnificently done on a huge stage by some Max Reinhardt, or still more lavishly by any one of a dozen producers at Hollywood. But it can only be suggested by lights and sounds of fire (not very convincing lights and sounds), and these necessary limitations only make more conspicuous the power of Father Nagle's dialogue to evoke a vivid and full imagination and to suggest tragedy.

To produce a sense of action in the mind of the audience without elaborate theatrical machinery, to interest and fascinate the spectator, and to lead him to thrill him, to hold his eye for a couple of hours with one might say, he does not do the whole and the thought, with eloquence and wit, to make him feel the mystery and the pathos of conflict between inquiry in high places, secure, abundant, triumphant against a lone rebel, doomed from the start not so much by his impetuosity and blustering boldness as by the fact that his opponents could not be harder and longer more already and less scrupulously than he, to make a few hundred persons experience all this down in the depths of their being, with scarcely any instrumentalities, but the spoken word is, at least in my judgment, a distinct triumph.

This is eloquence, in the strict sense of the word. This, I think, is pure drama. And this, also, I imagine, one of the things that the Broadway theater could learn from the Little Theater or what is called, or patronized by, the tributary theater.

I have in mind a passion play which commenced years ago very simply, with no elaborate stage setting and which succeeded because of the sheer beauty and power of the Gospel story. Unfortunately the producers accumulated considerable financial resources and then spoiled their production by cluttering up the stage with a lot of "essentials," scenery and a lot of costumes, and a lot of many Broadway productions would not be more effective if whatever dramatic intensity they possess were not smothered by a "Savonarola" presentation. ... got along for a couple of centuries with stage settings so crude as to seem ridiculous. But the drama was there, the poetry and the eloquence. And nowadays, after various experiments in presenting Shakespeare as in Bolinas or Chest de Mife, we have come back to such a degree of simplicity as does not get in the way of the beauty of the thought and the power of its expression.

This is not to say Father Nagle is a budding bard of Aeschylus or that some of the weakness in his "Savonarola" as listed or hinted at by the critics are really not there. But I do insist that the proudest praise handed out by the critics, analyzed, combined with the intention of being kind, would mean more the intelligent if not theatrically sophisticated spectator like you and me to appreciate the drama and the deep satisfaction that are to be had in attending the performances of "Savonarola."

(Copyright, 1942, N. C. W. C.)

When he buys an electric wire, that is faith. When he buys all the others, that is hope. When he gives them all away, that is charity. Archbishop Democrat.