

Sermon Cards

The Cause Behind The Cause

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

There really is such a thing as the philosophy of politics. People ignore or deny that plain proposition because they seldom meet a politician with principles. Most politicians are practical, not philosophical. They say so themselves. They look upon politics, not as a profession that must be studied like medicine or law or theology, but as a trade, a job, a means of getting a good living. The typical politician doesn't bother his head about theoretical things. His one concern is to get into office and stay in.

But since good comes out of evil it may be that the war will change all that. Out of the war we may get a few genuine statesmen. For by this time we are beginning to realize that if we are to win this war now for the second time (it's the same war that we had from 1914 to 1918) and if the second time is to be the last time, we must understand what the war is all about. The other time we didn't understand. To understand what it is all about, we must get at the cause. Not the surface cause, the proximate cause, but the cause behind the cause.

And that's where we come damn bang into philosophy. Aristotle said a philosopher is one who knows causes. A non-philosophical person sees only facts, events. He doesn't know what made these happen, he doesn't know what will prevent their happening again. That's why we need statesmen, not politicians. The politician is afraid that if he were to dive below the surface to find a cause, he would never come up again. So he stays on top. He floats with the crowd, he sees what the crowd sees, knows what the man in the street knows; his thinking is no deeper than that of the newspaper reader. He is no philosopher.

But even in the newspapers he can find a hint of something better and wiser than surface thinking. If he takes the hint and follows it, he may evolve out of a politician into a statesman.

For example in the New York Times Book Review for June 7, a staff writer, J. D. A., lifts this paragraph from The Commensal and sets it before the more numerous clientele of the Times.

"No one," says Franz Werfel, "understands this war who still believes that it is a war of nations, a war for living space, a war for the victory of certain economic or social forms. No! Not a material but a spiritual principle is at stake in this, the only genuine world war. . . . On the one side stands radical nihilism which no longer regards the human being as the image of God but as an amoral machine in a completely meaningless world. On the

other side, on our side, stands the metaphysical, the religious concept of life, the conviction that this Cosmos was created by the spirit and that a spiritual meaning lives and breathes in every atom. . . . It is indeed a war between the principles of spiritual life and spiritual death."

J. D. A. quotes the passage but he doesn't let it go without comment. He feels impelled to belittle it somewhat. He says: "Mr. Werfel is indulging in a little rhetoric." The point is that Mr. Werfel is not indulging in rhetoric. It may be that he is indulging in a little optimism. If he thinks that those who fought on the war are that most of those who are fighting the war see and understand its deeper meaning, he probably gives too much credit to their perspicacity. But he isn't stating the case too strongly. Either we must see that the war is what Werfel says it is, a battle between the religious and the non-religious concept of life, or it will be fought and won in vain.

And now turn to page 14 in the same Book Review section, and you will find a half dozen pertinent paragraphs in which the book reviewer, Frederick H. Young, compares the opinions of Franz Werfel, the author of Metropolis; Franz the Resistance to Hitler, with the contrary opinions of George Belanger who wrote in "Richard Wagner: Cradle of National Socialism."

I shall not attempt to give the argument. It is a subject on which I have done some thinking ever since Wagner's "Paradise" first appeared in New York and Chicago. That was about 1906. I used to wonder what would happen if any one were to take Richard Wagner as a philosopher and not merely a musician. Ten years ago appeared Adolf Hitler, who said that Wagner was the source of his ideas and the inspiration of Nazism. More than Nietzsche. More than Hegel. More than Fichte. Wagner is Hitler's philosopher. Mr. Viereck agrees; Mr. Belanger disagrees. Mr. Belanger says that Wagner—the later Wagner of "Paradise"—stands revealed as a creative Christian thinker and spiritual man. Mr. Viereck sees in Hitlerism a combination of Wagnerian music, political cynicism and Teutonic efficiency, and he thinks that "Wagnerian romanticism is the most important single fountainhead of Nazi ideas and ideals." In other words Mr. Viereck admits that Hitler derives from Wagner.

Now, to those on the note with which we commenced: have you ever come across any American politician who even so much as knows what all this debate is about? Or any one of the commentators and writers in books and magazines who are telling us what kind of world we must make after the war? If they don't know the ideas behind Hitler they may get rid of Hitler, but the ideas will pop up again after Hitler. What we need is a statesman who knows the ideas that made Hitler; knows how to deal with those ideas and how, therefore, to prevent Hitler II after Hitler I is killed. Who and where is that statesman?

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Library Signpost

The Ladies Of The Grail

By Rev. Benedict Ehmans

Every Catholic should know about the groups that are working, might and main, to "bring all things to a head in Christ." These groups have a vision of that day after tomorrow when the world will begin to awaken from the deep exhaustion of the war and to look for a new centre of unity. They are preparing now for that day after tomorrow. From a spiritual point of view, they are key workers in our defense program. Their consuming ambition is to work that Christ may win the peace after the war.

In the United States we have the Catholic Students' Mission Crusade the Sodality, the Home Missioners the Catholic Workers; the Catholic Action Cells (in the Middle West, principally in and around Chicago a wonderful "white hope" of which I hope to say more some time in this column); the Apostolate for the Negro in such groups as Father Gildard's and Catherine de Hueck's; the Catholic Rural Life Conference, under the dynamic leadership of Monsignor Ligutti; the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine the Seminary Correspondence Courses already responsible for hundreds of conversions and restorations to the Church; and the Ladies of the Grail.

In one way or another, I have met all these groups and have found them in their various degrees, vibrant with the fire of the Holy Spirit. But it was last of all that I found the Ladies of the Grail; and what I experienced must be akin to what filled the Knights of King Arthur who found the Grail in olden times.

The Ladies of the Grail were instituted in Holland in 1921 where they were first known as the Women of Nazareth. Their purpose is to work in the lay apostolate. They are similar to a religious order in the fact that their work radiates from communal religious life that they take the evangelical vows, though not solemnly, and that their candidates progress through postulancy novitiate and profession. But they differ radically from a religious order in the fact that they are not canonically established as such that they wear secular garb (except when they are on retreat at the mother-house when they wear a religious garb of white and blue) and that they move about and do their work in the world with all the freedom necessary for this new apostolate of Catholic Action. In fact, they conform wonderfully to Pope Pius XI's concept of Catholic Actionists: they are laywomen; they are permeated with the full spirit of the meaning of the Mystical Body and of the Liturgy; they are dedicated to the apostolate, they work only by invitation and commission of the hierarchy.

At first, their work in Holland was directed among non-Catholics. But in 1929, their bishop asked that they work first and foremost to develop Catholic leadership among young Catholic girls. Ever since that time, this has been their primary work, and they have found their stride with a wisdom and a seal almost miraculous.

Very soon, they were invited to work in Germany, in England, in Scotland, in Australia. Caryl Houselander, the author of the wonderful little book This War Is the Passion, belongs to the English band of the Grail. Their success was amazing.

Around the Ladies, there grouped tens of thousands of young girls, eager to be inducted into the service of the Apostolate.

The whole life of the Grail centers around the Mass, which is the point of union between our human sacrifice and Christ's. Their whole spirit is animated by devotion to the Holy Spirit, and they live joyously according to the full meaning of the Church's lovely prayer: "Send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created, and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth." They want to be revolutionaries, renewing the face of the earth; but they are convinced that this can be achieved only through and in the Holy Spirit.

At the invitation of the late Cardinal Mundelein, the Ladies of the Grail came to the United States, in the persons of Dr. Sydney van Kersbergen and Miss Joan Overboos, and were established on a 120-acre farm in Libertyville, next door to Mundelein, about 40 miles from Chicago. Already they have done much to set hundreds of young American girls on fire with the flame of the apostolate.

At the present time, they are hosts to forty young women from cities as separate as Los Angeles and New York, Pittsburgh and St. Paul. These girls are living for two weeks in retreat, drinking in the joy and strength of Christian apostleship from the Grail. The program is a marvellous harmony of prayer and study, work and rest, aiming to build up body and soul for the arduous tasks of the Church militant. The lectures they hear, the meditation that follows, the work on the land, their joyous singing, their genial camaraderie, their festive meals in tune with the Church's calendar, their melodious, firm-cadenced prayers together, their daily co-offering of the Mass with jubilant responses and reverent procession, are all centered on, and inspired by, the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the very heart of the apostolate.

I had previously met Dr. van Kersbergen and Miss Overboos, but it was only last week that I saw them at their home base, at their dedicated task, with the forty young women being indoctrinated and strengthened for the lay apostolate. My visit was a gift of God to me, a breathing of that fresh air of the Holy Spirit which braces you as you read the Acts of the Apostles. I know nothing else in our country like it. Established firmly on the very rock and centre of the Christian Gospel, which is our incorporation into Jesus Christ, the Ladies of the Grail have the most ardent conviction and ambition of "restoring all things in Christ" that I have ever experienced. They know what they want, and they know how to get it. Our country will hear more of them in that strange world of the day after tomorrow.

FIVE and TEN Years Ago

—in the files of the CATHOLIC COURIER

From June 24, 1932, Edition

That Catholics in the Rochester Diocese, unable to attend the Eucharistic Congress in session in Dublin, could have a part in the program, His Excellency, Bishop O'Herr, directed that a Solemn Triduum be opened in all churches and chapels of the diocese.

From June 24, 1937, Edition

Elevated to the rank of Domestic Prelate in the Papal Household and given the title of monsignor by His Holiness, Pope Pius XI, were the Rev. William F. Bergan, Chancellor of the diocese, and the Rev. Joseph E. Grady, vice-rector, St. Bernard's Seminary. It was announced by Archbishop Mooney at Aquinas Institute graduation exercises.

'Do Catholic Medals Keep Off Lightning?'

'Keep off lightning? Why, medals, being made of metal, would more likely attract lightning, wouldn't they?'

"But an old Catholic woman I know, wouldn't think of leaving off her medals for fear of being struck or drowned or something."

"Yes, and I don't doubt that that same old woman has her own ideas about Relativity, Euphemism, and the causes of the World War; but you'd hardly quote her as an authority on those subjects, would you?"

"But after all in a way she may be right about her medals. They, of course, have absolutely no power in themselves. They are lifeless matter. But, knowing the medal to be blessed to inspire trust in God's loving care, your old Catholic woman, in simple faith, (which amounts to a prayer for protection) wears the medal with a sense of security, who can say that our all-understanding God will not answer and preserve her from harm?"

"And isn't it likely, too, that the wearing of a reminder of Christ or a saint, will allay her fear and thus perhaps, as a by-product, result in better cooked dinner, despite indigestion and crasies from the skies. Who knows?"

A fear-shaken soldier, before the battle, brings forth a picture of his wife, his child or his sweetheart. He looks at it fondly. He kisses it fervently—mere paper, mounted on cardboard—yet it inspires him to go forth valiantly to victory or to death.

You, fellow citizens, who don your hats to the American flag, who stand with reverence before the picture of Washington or Lincoln, who lovingly preserve the wedding-gown of your great-great grandmother—you who have sentiment, imagination and loyalty—surely must see the Catholic viewpoint on medals, pictures, statues and relics—reminders of Christ, our God, and of the beloved heroes of Christianity.

There is a vast difference between the supernatural and the superstitious. All wisdom originates in the first. Ignorance gives birth to the second. . . . superstitious Catholics, of course, there are; but taken as a whole, Catholics are less prone to this silly weakness than any other class of people in the world. . . . Catholic Information Society of New York, N. Y.

TWO THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT!

Either you are successful or not. If you are, there is nothing to worry about; if you are not, there are two things to worry about.

Either you are in good health or in bad health. If you are in good health, there is nothing to worry about, but if you are in bad health, there are two things to worry about.

Either you will die or you will not die. If you do not die, there is nothing to worry about, but if you do die, there are two things to worry about.

Either you go to heaven or not. If you go to heaven, there is nothing to worry about.

Man doesn't see all the facts, but just the portion that comes through the filter of his perception. —Illinois "State Journal"

No one should think or say anything of another which he would not wish thought or said of himself. —St. Teresa

A "state of emergency" doesn't seem to change things much. I've got used to it after eight years. —Manchester "Union"

Stands for "HAVING BODIES." Get all that YOU can!

EDITORIALS

(Continued from Page 18)

Credit for many well-planned and socially effective ministrations to the poor, the needy, the distressed, to problem cases, is due to every official and administrator and worker, who has served during the past quarter of a century in this blessed work. Credit is due to the members of the official Board of Directors, men who have given their time and their service, and the benefit of their wise experience to the direction of the activities of the Board. Five have served from the beginning, and are still active in the work of the Society: Augustine J. Cunningham, John L. Keenan, William T. Farrell, Thomas H. Green, William F. Shafer.

Catholic Action in its very best meaning is depicted in the Jubilee of the Rochester Catholic Charities. United efforts, united thoughts, united love of the brethren, are exemplified forcefully and gracefully in the intelligent and hearty approach made to every problem of need by this organization. Close to the front line stand the names of Rev. Jacob Staub of reverend memory; of William T. Nolan, ubiquitous and tireless harbinger of good will to all in his most practical manifestations; of Katherine D'Olier, in charge of the workers over many a year; of Helen Costello, gifted clerk in the office of the Society; of Elizabeth McSweeney, the first worker in the office and still giving valued service in a most important field of its activities.

God's blessing be on all members of the Board, all workers in the various sections, who now share in the joy of the Silver Jubilee of an outstanding Catholic organization, that has meant peace and happiness and succor in need, to so many thousands of needy ones, the Rochester Catholic Charities.

OFFER THY GIFT

No gift is acceptable to God unless made in charity, in love of God and of our neighbor. Nothing can take the place of charity. That charity will involve thoughtful consideration of the needs of our neighbor, of what is requisite for his welfare. He has a right to consider himself wronged, he has a right to feel he has something against us, if we neglect his welfare. Charity is the beginning, justice carries on the program, mutual understanding completes it. If our relations with those about us can not bear the test of these three, there is something wrong with them.

This is not theory, it is a rule for practical guidance in our dealings with others. It is a tribute to the spirit of charity that dwells in man, that even in the midst of war so many are already looking to improvement in social conditions that must follow the coming of peace. In Britain and America, in Canada and Australia, things must be changed for a better approach to social justice. Thoughtful leaders in these countries are already stating their post-war programs. Social justice reigning in these countries through the free choice of the leaders and peoples, will prepare the way for its further application in those countries now deprived of every social and economic right by the will of a dictator.

In our dealings with those close to us, and in our dealings with those far removed from actual contact with us, let it be our purpose to follow the rule of charity: love for God for His own sake, love of our neighbor for God's sake. Let us bring our gift to God in the only way that will be acceptable to Him, in the consciousness that we have so acted that our neighbor can have nothing against us!