

# I Have No Fears about Future of the Church

But the Pursuit of Sensual Pleasures Endangers the Life of The World

By BISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN

Contemplating the beginning of the second century of our diocese, I have been asked to write on the future of the Church. Though it would be interesting to know what the Church will be like in the future, it is still more important to sanctify the Church today.

One of the dangers in guessing about the Church in the future is that we are apt to interpret the Church in terms of our day.

Once we see the Church through our passing parade, rather than through the Spirit of Christ, then we get the usual batch of prophecies so often mouthed through history: "No more Pope"; "no more celibacy"; "no more institutional Church"; "no more Eucharist"; "no more authority"; "no more bishops"; "no more priests"; "no more theology"; no more what have you." How wrong this time-based prophesy has been in the past!

Who, after the Fall of Rome

would have predicted that the Church would become missionary and convert the barbarians? Who after the schisms and bare politics of Byzantium ever guessed that it would be the flowering of theology and the arts in Europe? Who at the time of the Religious Revolution when morals were so corrupt thought that the Spirit would initiate missions to Asia and arouse religious orders to spiritualize society?

The worst springing board for the dive into the future is the jargon of the present. The reason is:—the Church is not a continuing thing; it "dies" to an age and rises again in another age to new life.

About every five hundred years the world comes to bury it. The bells are tolled for her execution, but the execution is everlastingly postponed; epitaphs are carved on tombstones, but the tombstones are never erected. The coffin lid is closed but somehow the body is found

alive walking on the wings of morning.

If we look at the wounds inflicted on the Church today, such as the blistering kisses of Judas, the secularism of the followers of Demas who howl at the mention of "sacrifice", and the want of faith among the disciples toward the Eucharist, we would become discouraged.

But we know that while the Lord sleeps in the boat, He never oversleeps. He has founded His Church on a Rock, not on sand, and He keeps it right, not when the world is right, but when the world is wrong. When all other compasses are out of gear the Lord zeroes us into the Magisterium of His Church.

Now, as in the past, shrill voices shriek that the Magisterium belongs to the past. Napoleon thought that, so did Thotius before him. But the truth is that the Magisterium belong, just as much to the Future as to the Past. In each Present Age it is the continuing

Truth of Christ: "Any man who falls on that stone will be dashed to pieces; and if it falls on a man, he will be crushed by it."

I have no fears or doubts about the future of the Church but I do have doubts about the future of the world.

What do great historians such as Toynbee, Butterfield, Spengler and Sorokin say of our Sensate-culture? All predict the Decline of the West while admitting that there is one condition which could save it, namely, catastrophe.

Pitrim Sorokin writes that we are unteachable and live "in the current hope of extricating ourselves without any fundamental orientation of values and any thoroughgoing change of mentality and conduct. Hence the crisis itself, and hence the inevitability of a fiery ordeal as the only available means of teaching the otherwise unteachable... The less freely we choose the sole course of salvation open

to us, the more pitiless the transition, the more terrible the DIES IRAE of the transition".

I firmly believe this:— God enters history as the Scriptures reveal, but God also enters Nature or that realm we call ours and not His.

Only a catastrophe or a disaster can bring the world back to sanity so long as our present mood continues.

What will be the nature of this disaster? I would say something "natural" like the explosion of the bituminous mines around Sodom and Gomorrah or perhaps something from space. Why from Nature?

Because since we are breaking Nature's laws about Life and Love, as the Magisterium reminds us, nature will take revenge. Nature is on God's side, not ours. It has a "traitorous trueness and loyal deceit; in feckleness to me, in loyalty to Him."

It was Nature in the form of

the Aurora Borealis which Our Lady at Fatima said would announce World War II. It is Nature which rebels against me if I disobey its laws of nutrition and eat ground glass.

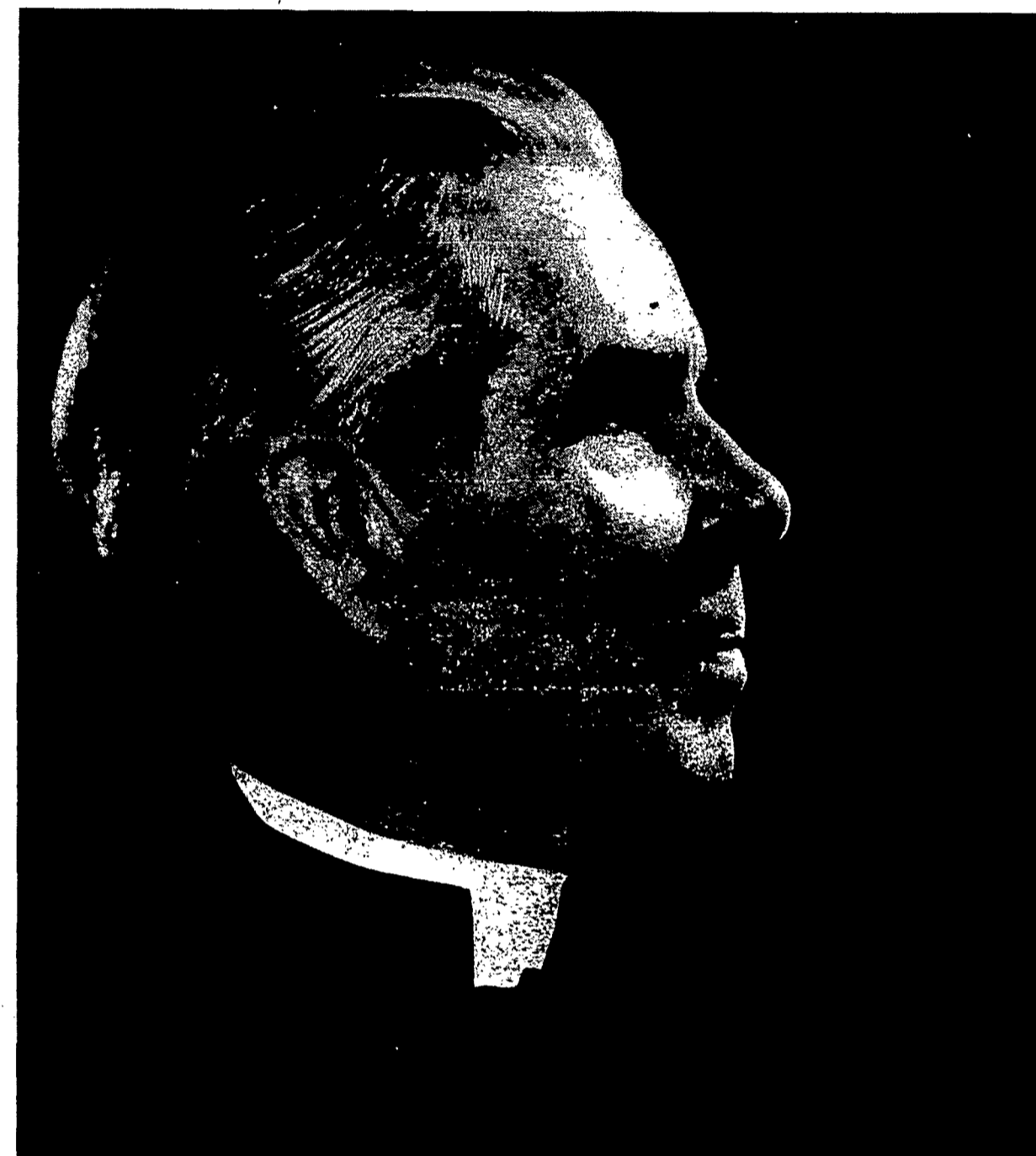
"Epitomized in Thee  
Was the mystery  
Which shakes the spheres  
conjoint —  
God focussed to a point."

Any natural event can be the one event declaring Him as the Lord of Life and Love. Let us not forget that even the merciful and healing and compassionate Christ once in the face of the self-wise and egotistic men, "Looked around at them in anger."

So I am not worried about the Church; I am worried about the world; I am worried about Nature.

Maybe we have fumbled so much with Nature's levers that Nature like a justice seated in judgment, will bring to naught our sneering at its laws. Would this mean that God is cruel? No! Rather that God is like a surgeon who cuts to heal. And more that Christ the Surgeon was Himself wounded for our sins.

As T. S. Eliot put it:  
"The wounded surgeon plies  
the steel  
That questions the distem-



Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, 1966 - ----

pered part;  
Beneath the bleeding hands  
we feel  
The sharp compassion of the  
healer's art  
Resolving the enigma of the  
fever chart."

There is always an escape from catastrophe as there was for Nineveh which did penance. And the way is ever the same: to draw near to Christ the Ultimate Fire Who burns away the cold in our poor hearts.

Our peace is not in seeking novelties nor is it even in pursuing God; rather it comes from surrender to Him by priests becoming more spiritual, religious less self-seeking and laity more loyal.

For the time being, as St. Paul wrote: "We walk by faith, not by sight", one step at a time, but if we take the right step, we will reach home safely. As Adelaide Procter wrote:

I do not ask, O Lord, that  
Thou shouldst shed  
Full radiance here:  
Give but a ray of peace, that  
I may tread  
Without a fear

I do not ask my cross to understand,  
My way to see;  
Better in darkness just to feel  
Thy Hand,  
And follow Thee."

Congratulations

from

THE LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES



NAZARETH



ST. JOHN FISHER

Congratulations!

... It's a Pleasure to Add Our Congratulations  
on This Occasion Commemorating the 100th  
Anniversary of the Founding of the Diocese  
of Rochester.

JOSEPH ENTRESS BUILDER

The monks of

THE ONLY ABBEY IN  
NEW YORK STATE

are pleased to be a part of the  
DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER  
and to offer Centenary Greetings

Our Lady of the Genesee Abbey  
Piffard, N.Y.

A Century  
of Service...

Neisner Brothers, Inc. congratulates  
the Catholic Diocese of Rochester,  
New York, for its vital contributions  
in the area of education, welfare,  
charity and community interests.

Neisner Brothers, Inc., Rochester, New York