

THE FUTURE OF FAITH

A diversity of Views

Edited by

PERCY COLSON

Preface by

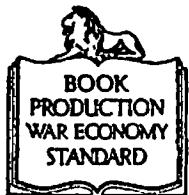
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TO
MY FRIEND
E. H. BLAKENEY



THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN COMPLETE CONFORMITY WITH THE AUTHORIZED ECONOMY STANDARDS

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to the Christian doctrine of the dignity and decency of family life : away with the invasion of the sacred hearths by the cranks and officialdom that would spoil our homes and rob them of their chief purpose and supreme joy !

Away with totalitarianism—away with all those ideologies which swamp individual initiative and freedom or place a party in command of the machinery of the State. Away also with the ruinous individualism which has led to so much social injustice in the *laissez-faire* industrialism of the past.

The true individualism which can help to save mankind will be the resolute effort of each person of the human family to live according to right reason and faith. "It is not from outward pressure," wrote Pius XII, "it is not from the sword that deliverance comes to nations : the sword cannot breed peace, it can only impose terms of peace. The forces, the influences, that are to renew the face of the earth must spring from men's hearts."

SPIRITUAL RECONSTRUCTION

The Roman Catholic View

by CHRISTOPHER DAWSON

AS THE WAR GOES ON AND THE WORLD'S BURDEN OF RUIN AND SUFFERING and oppression and hatred grows heavier and heavier, the problems of post-war reconstruction become increasingly complex and harder to solve. Nevertheless it is essential that we should face them, for a purely negative or opportunist attitude means that a ruined world will be left to flounder in a morass of apathy and despair. As a world-wide society—the largest organized international society that has ever existed—the Catholic Church is especially concerned with this question in its widest aspects, and ever since the war began the Vatican has been warning the nations of the tremendous dangers that threatened the world and urging them in the midst of war to face the problems that must come after the war and which may be even more serious than those of the war itself. "As the war monster progressively acquires, swallows, and demands more and more of the materials available, all of which are inexorably put at the disposal of its ever-increasing requirements, the greater becomes the danger that the nations directly or indirectly affected by the conflict will become victims of a sort of pernicious anaemia and the inevitable question arises—How will an exhausted or attenuated economy contrive to find the means necessary for

economic and social reconstruction at a time when difficulties of every kind will be multiplied. . . ."

These were the words of Pius XII in the first winter of the war, and last winter—on Christmas Eve, 1941—he developed the same theme much more fully, dealing particularly with the need for moral reconstruction and with the moral conditions which are essential for peace and for a new social and international order. The Pope points out that the great opportunity for reconstruction which will arise after the war will be inevitably frustrated unless the political wisdom of the statesmen is inspired by a spiritual purpose and based on moral principles. All social planning which is inspired by purely secular ideals is bound to go wrong, whatever its technical efficiency. As St. Augustine says : "They run well, but they have left the track. The farther they run the greater is their error, for they are going ever farther off their course."

"And it will not be the first time," says the Pope, "that men expecting to be crowned at the end of the war with the laurel of victory have dreamt of giving the world a New Order by new ways which in their opinion lead to well-being, prosperity, and progress. Yet when they have yielded to the temptation of imposing their own interpretation contrary to the dictates of reason, moderation, justice, and human dignity they found themselves disheartened and stupefied at the sight of the ruins of deluded hopes and miscarried plans."

"Now the destruction brought about by the present war is on so vast a scale that it is imperative that there be not added to it also the further ruins of a frustrated and deluded peace. To avoid so great a calamity it is fitting that in the formulation of that peace there should be assured co-operation with sincerity of will and energy, with a purpose of a generous participation not only of this or that people, but of all peoples—yea, rather, of all humanity. It is a universal undertaking for the common good which requires the collaboration of all Christendom in the religious and moral aspects of the new edifice which is to be constructed."

Already two years earlier the Pope had made an impressive appeal to all men of good will to unite in a new spiritual crusade "to lead the nations back from the broken cisterns of selfish material interests to the living fountain of divine justice." In both these appeals, and, in fact, in everything that the Pope has written about the war, there is the same pre-occupation with the question of moral reconstruction, without which all the ambitious programmes of economic and social reconstruction are condemned to sterility or worse. But how is it possible to bring about the moral reconstruction of a civilization which has not only lost its religious unity but which is also suffering from moral disintegration ? As the

Pope wrote in his Encyclical, "Darkness over the Earth": "In our day discords arise not merely from the violent impulses of an ungoverned temperament, but more commonly from a confusion and revolt in the depth of the human conscience." "When faith in God and our divine Redeemer grows weak and slack, when the light that comes from the universal norms of uprightness and honour is clouded in men's minds, then the one and only foundation of stability and peace has been undermined—the foundation upon which the inward order of thought and the outward order of things alike depend, which alone can create and maintain the prosperity of states."

In order to have moral reconstruction we must have a foundation on which to build, and it is the loss of this common foundation which is the fundamental weakness of modern civilization. For the whole tradition of Western civilization from its beginnings in ancient Greece down to the nineteenth century is based on the recognition of this common norm which is the source alike of the moral and the social order, and the rejection of it involves a change far more profound than any social or political revolution that the world has known.

Pius XII and his predecessors are never tired of insisting that the denial or setting aside of this principle of Natural Law is "the fountainhead from which the evils of the modern state derive their origin."

Everything in fact depends on whether the world runs blind, driven by irrational forces to which man is a slave, or whether we believe in the existence of a spiritual order of which man is naturally conscious and with which he can co-operate as a free and rational being. It is true that the Law of Nature is no longer a familiar conception to modern man. As the Pope says it is "buried away under a mass of destructive criticism and neglect." Yet it is far from being confined to Catholics or to theologians. It has guided the mind of civilized humanity for thousands of years, and even in modern times on the threshold of a new age it was still regarded as the ultimate foundation and source of social order by the founders of modern democracy in England, America, and France.

It is true that during this period the conception of Natural Law became increasingly secularized by the rationalism of the Enlightenment until in the French Revolution it was used as a weapon against the political and social tradition of Christendom, in just the same way as the Reformers used the appeal to the Gospel and the New Testament against the theological and ecclesiastical tradition of Catholicism. The ultimate result of this change was to discredit the conception of Natural Law itself by depriving it of its religious and metaphysical sanctions,

or even as no more than a legal fiction, with the result that the new historical science of the nineteenth century set it on one side and put in its place the idealization of the state and social process, which finds expression alike in the nationalism of the German philosophers and the economic materialism of the Marxists. In order to restore the idea of Natural Law it is therefore necessary to bring it down from the dusty shelf where the works of Puffendorf and Nettelbladt sleep and bring it back to its original foundations in religion and in human nature. From the beginning Natural Law has had this double reference. Viewed *ex parte Dei* it is the eternal law which governs the universe, "The one thought by which all things are steered through all things." The recognition of this principle lies at the heart of all the world religions. It is Tao, the way of Heaven; Ritu, the sacred order; Dharma, the norm; Dike, divine justice; the same idea which finds its classical English expression as late as the nineteenth century in Wordsworth's Ode to Duty:

Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong
And the most ancient heavens through Thee are fresh and strong.

This aspect of Natural Law has to-day become strange to us. Modern science which has mechanized human life has also secularized the cosmic order, and the starry heavens which from the time of the Sumerians to Kant were regarded with awe as the visible manifestation of a divine order in things, have become no more "luminous" than an electric advertisement in Piccadilly Circus. And therefore the humbler and more familiar side of Natural Law in human life and conduct is the only aspect of it which is still readily comprehensible to modern man. Viewed *ex parte hominis* Natural Law is seen in man's natural recognition of right and wrong, it is nothing else but the moral law which has played such a great part in Western thought during the last two centuries and which was, above all in England, the foundation of whatever religion the average man still preserved. Today it has lost much of its prestige and its spiritual significance, but it still retains its reality in the life of the average Englishman, even if it is disguised under some popular vernacular expression like "Fair Play" or "Decency" or "Playing the Game." Not to act dishonestly, not to hit a man when he is down, to hate cruelty and treachery, to help your neighbour when he is down on his luck, to face danger and hardship as part of the day's work without regarding yourself as a victim or a hero—all these things are still deeply rooted in the common life of the people, and so long as they remain the principle of Natural Law still remains alive in men's hearts and conscience, even if it has dis-

appeared from their ideology and their rationalized theory of human life.

How is it possible to make this innate moral sense a power in the public affairs of men and nations so that it becomes the basis of a moral reconstruction of society? The great danger at the present moment is that the political ideologies and the scientific techniques for the manufacture and control of public opinion are being used by the state (above all the totalitarian state) to undermine or destroy this natural moral foundation. As Pius XII has said—a moral vacuum has been created which no artificial substitute for religion, no national and no international myth is able to fill. In this vacuum, “in this atmosphere of alienation from God and de-Christianization, the thinking and planning, judgment and actions of men were bound to become materialistic and one-sided, to strive for mere greatness and expansion of space, a boundless demand for increased possession of goods or power, a race for a quicker, richer, and better production of all things which appeared to be conducive to material evolution and progress. These very symptoms appear in politics as an unlimited demand for expansion and political influence without regard to moral standards: in economic life they are represented by the predominance of mammoth concerns and trusts, in the social sphere it is the agglomeration of huge populations in cities and in the districts dominated by industry and trade, an agglomeration that is accompanied by the complete uprooting of the masses who have lost their standards of life, home, work, love, and hatred. By this new conception of thought and life, all ideas of social life have been impregnated with a purely mechanistic character.

“With the increasing lack of restraint, outward compulsion and domination purely founded on power seemed to prevail upon the forces of order, which established the relations of law and charity in their natural and supernatural foundations as they had been laid down by God. To the detriment of human dignity and personality, as well as society, the conception makes headway that it is might which creates right. Thus private property is being abused on the one hand as a means of exploitation, on the other hand as a reason for envy, revolt, and hatred. The organization ensuing therefrom is being exploited in a struggle of interests which is being waged without any restraint.

“In some countries a political conception which is godless and hostile to Christ has, with many tentacles, achieved a complete absorption of the individual so that it can hardly be said that there is any longer any independence, either in private or political life. Can anyone be surprised if this far-reaching negation of all Christian principles leads to a clash of the inward and outward tensions arising

from that way of thinking, if it leads to a catastrophic annihilation of human lives and goods as we are witnessing to-day with horror? The war which is the sad result of the circumstances described will never be able to stop this evil development. On the contrary, the war accelerates and accentuates this evolution the longer it lasts, and increases the greatness and incurability of the general collapse.

“Nobody should think that by indicating the materialism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries we intend to blame technical progress. No, we do not indict what fundamentally is a gift of God; for, as the Lord God makes the bread growing from earth and soil, so, when He created the world He hid for us in the depth of the Earth treasures, metals, and precious stones, so that they may be mined by men to tend for his needs, for his works, and for his progress . . . but the spirit and the direction in which technical progress has been used has now resulted in science having to expiate its own errors. Science has been misused for destruction, and, in fact, it destroys today the very buildings that it yesterday proudly erected.”

The present world crisis and catastrophe is the inevitable result of the progressive undermining of the spiritual foundation of our civilization which has gone on for the last one hundred and fifty years. During the nineteenth century, in the heyday of economic expansion and bourgeois prosperity, it seemed as though the world could get along very well if everybody looked after their own interests and agreed to differ on everything else. Men did not realize that they were living on the moral capital accumulated by a thousand years of Christian civilization and which would inevitably disappear as soon as a single generation had become completely secularized. The real progress that was being achieved in science and economics and the conquest of time and space blinded men's eyes to the loss of spiritual values and the lowering of spiritual vitality. It is true that everyone was not satisfied. There were the poor and there were the prophets—men like Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, Dostoevsky and Leontiev, Ruskin and Bloy, all of whom in their fashion bore witness in the streets of the new Babylon of the approaching judgment. For behind the superficial prosperity and the petty individualism of the new civilization, its more sensitive mind already perceived the nature of the new forces that were to dominate the world: Not the social millennium, not the greatest happiness of the greatest number, not even the Kingdom of Mammon, but the return of the dragon, the power from the abyss. “This is no irony,” writes Ruskin, “the fact is verily so, the greatest man of our England, in the first half of the nineteenth century, in the strength and hope of his youth, perceives this to be the thing he has to tell us of utmost moment, connected with the spiritual

world. In each city and country of past time the master minds had to declare the chief worship that lay at the nation's heart ; to define it, adorn it, show the range and authority of it. Thus in Athens we have the triumph of Pallas ; and in Venice the Assumption of the Virgin ; here in England is our great spiritual fact for ever interpreted to us—the Assumption of the Dragon. . . . The time has at last come. Another nation has arisen in the strength of its Black anger ; and another hand has portrayed the spirit of its toil, crowned with fire and with the wings of the bat.”¹

This god whom the last age ignorantly worshipped has not been openly declared to us, and we all live under the shadow of his wings.

How can we be delivered from this kingdom of darkness ? No material reconstruction can do it, nor any scientific re-planning of our social and political mechanism. Still less the auto-intoxication of a revolutionary movement inspired by blind exasperation and hatred. For it is precisely such revolutions of despair which are the destructive climax of the movement to the abyss. There must be a return to the foundations—to the Law of Nature and to the grace of God. Our situation is, after all, not altogether dissimilar from that of the world in which the Gospel was first preached. It came as the day-spring from on high, to give light to them who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. Christianity is essentially a message of salvation, and if man did not need salvation there would be no need of Christianity. Where our situation differs from theirs is that in the ancient world the power of man was still subject to the laws of nature. Even though Cæsar seemed omnipotent he could not change human nature or alter the natural order which ruled men's lives.

But today the limits have been removed. The new powers seem to have conquered nature and aim at the transformation of humanity, so that man will be made in the image of the party or the state instead of the image of God. It is therefore necessary to restore the foundations that have been shaken, a return to the sources of life. It is necessary to return to nature, not as the French philosophers of the eighteenth century understood it, but in a deeper and more Christian sense. There is, as the Pope has said, on more than one occasion, an inherent “nobility” in human nature that rebels against all those systems and powers, however strong and well organized they may be, which ignore or outrage its spiritual dignity. “Although material progress which brings greater conveniences into human life is not to be depreciated, it can by no means suffice for man who was born for higher and better things. Created in the image and likeness of God, he longs for God with an ineradicable impulse of his soul. He is always

¹ *Modern Painters*, V, pp. 317-318.

dissatisfied and sad, if he fixes his affections, where the highest truth and the infinite good are not to be found. To depart from God is to perish, to be converted to God is to live, to be established in God is to receive the light.”¹

Modern civilization has ignored this fundamental truth and consequently it has twisted and warped human nature. Men were able to shut their eyes to this, in the nineteenth century, because the ideal of individual freedom made it hard for them to realize that the human person was threatened. But the rise of the totalitarian state has changed all that. Their new order is not confined to economic organization and political regimentation, they claim to control the whole life of man and they treat human nature as a reservoir of power which can be canalized and utilized by the State, in the same way as other natural resources are exploited by the industrialist and the engineer. Thus the order that they create is a sub-human order, which degrades human nature and the human spirit to serve lower ends.

THE JEWISH PROBLEM

THE CHIEF RABBI, THE VERY REV. DR. HERTZ

“One lesson, and only one, history may be said to repeat with distinctness, that the world is built somehow on moral foundations ; that in the long run it is ill with the wicked. But this is no science ; it is no more than the old doctrine taught long ago by the Hebrew Prophets.”—J. A. FROUDE.

THERE IS LITTLE OF THE ACCEPTED TYPE OF ECCLESIASTICAL DIGNITARY about the Dean of St. Paul's ; there is none at all about the Chief Rabbi, at least so it seemed to me. He suggested rather a successful man of affairs, and I felt that he had an appointment every five minutes ; indeed, he told me that he worked twenty-five hours a day. But he was very interested in what I had to say and wholly in sympathy with the aims of this book. “You and I,” he said, “are on the same mental plane. I will give you a hundred and fifty per cent of what you require of me.”

Dr. Hertz has had a most interesting life. He was born seventy

¹ Encyclical on True and False Prosperity. Leo XIII on The Duties of Christians as Citizens. “There has been considerable material progress ; but nothing that the senses can perceive, no accumulation of wealth and power and plenty, however much they increase the conveniences and comforts of life, can fully satisfy the soul, born to greater and more magnificent things. The supreme law of man's life is to fix one's eyes on God and to make Him one's goal. For men, created to the image and likeness of God, are strongly urged by their very nature to the possession of God.”