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THE PART OF A PACIFIST.

THERE is one group of people who make profession of peace. Like the professional religious, the monk, the friar or the nun, they profess a particular Christian virtue, or rather, in their case, the fruit of a virtue. Peace is the one thing for which they live and work. The professed religion of S. Benedict may include this profession also under its title of Pax ; but the Pacifist takes the motto more completely to himself. He is not content to seek peace by retiring from the world into a tranquil and remote cloister ; he does not in fact seek peace for himself. Just as the professed medical man is prepared to risk his own health in order to bring health to his people, so the pacifist in resisting war involves himself in a more serious struggle, civil as well as spiritual. He may aim at mere passive resistance to war, but when the whole of society becomes organised for war he must inevitably resist actively or be carried in some way into the total war effort. The pacifist then professes peace not as an immediate life for himself, but as the way of life for those among whom he lives and with whom he finds himself at variance.

This fact should be reckoned with in reading pacifist literature. As a rule that literature is characterised by a restless, bitter spirit. Column after column and page after page, the reader is served up

with strong, often violent, criticism of everything connected with the war—and that means with almost every aspect of a society engaged in total war. A sinister light is thrown on the successes and victories of the Allies. All this springs from the social struggle in which the professed follower of peace finds himself. He believes that war is an evil, that it is morally wrong to wage war no matter how noble the aim; and he has to fight for that belief. The result is an unhappy one for himself and for others. The unhappiness is not of his seeking, but rather another of the fruits of the unhappy state of a world at war. But the pacifist runs the risk of forgetting his transcendent *Pax*, of growing into the habit of nervously carping at everything around him. Bitterness is not the fruit of the love of peace.

It is important, therefore, to see what part the pacifist can play, granting that he is acting conscientiously through a strong conviction of the meaning of *Blessed are the peacemakers*. The conscientious soldier is acting under a conviction of another meaning of the same truth. He also sacrifices his own peace, his own goods and even his own life for the peace of those around him. With the assistance of modern scientific progress he learns the art of killing; but he is equally prepared to be killed for the sake of peace. It is clear then that whether one is a pacifist or a soldier one must fight in some way while the war is on, the part of each is the part of a belligerent though in totally different ways. This is a result not only of the modern type of war which plunges the whole nation into the struggle, but also of the very nature of peace. Peace is the *opus justitiae*, the business of justice which sets in order the external relations of men. When the right order of justice is broken some sort of effort and struggle is required to restore that order. Human wills that have been bent to desire and seize other men's goods must be turned back to the straight and just line. The pacifist will say that such human failure and disorder may not be overcome by force, that the use of force is itself an infringement of justice. He struggles to restore the order of justice against those around him who are themselves trying by force to re-establish justice.

The fight for justice, however positive it may be, will, even so, fail to achieve peace on its own. The judge in the court may pass a sentence which is entirely equitable, but he has not thereby restored peace between the litigants, who may retire breathing curses at each other, fully determined to have revenge. The restoration of external order does not of itself constitute peace. Peace is the work of justice only in so far as justice is the *removens prohibens* of peace, the bulldozer that batters down the obstacles to unity among men.

Peace is indirectly the work of justice. The bulldozer is a powerful leveller, but it leaves a barren waste behind it. The countries flattened out by war may through those means have had the causes of the beginning of the strife removed, but if there is no more to it than that, the resulting peace is the peace of the dead who have fallen, sacrificed to justice.

Peace is directly the *opus caritatis*, the business of love among men. Love of its essence bears the fruit of union and peace. *Secundum propriam rationem caritas pacem causat.* Love is the *vis unitiva*. To establish true peace one must establish mutual love among men, so that their desires, their ambitions, their ways of life and thought are all harmonised and interlocked. There can be no peace, however just and orderly external adjustment may be, unless the source of enmity in the hearts of men is removed. The nations must be drawn together into some common purpose, some united desire, some general ambition, before the life of peace can spring up in their midst. From the flattened plains of war devastation the green blades of harmony begin to appear when charity has been sown. Mr. Christopher Dawson has written well of this essential reality in true peace, in the October *Sword of the Spirit* bulletin. 'A Christian peace must be the direct expression of Christian charity and no peace is worthy of the name which does not involve the restoration of good-will between men. . . .' Mr. Dawson shows how this truth is fundamental to the policy of the Holy See in regard to war.

All this may seem platitudinous. Yet it is easily forgotten by those who are engaged in the struggle of the *opus justitiae*. The conscientious soldier, fighting for peace, has little opportunity to reflect on this necessity. He is concerned immediately with the destructive side of the struggle. He is ploughing rather than sowing, and we ought not seriously to blame him for the almost exclusive predominance of justice in his plans. But surely it should be otherwise with those who make profession of peace. The pacifist is unavoidably drawn into strife with his fellows, but he should be principally devoted to the essential nature of peace. The soldier fights indirectly for peace through justice; the pacifist struggles for justice by resisting the use of force. But the first has organised his life for that end, the second only incidentally and in a sense against his will. The pacifist should therefore be more concerned with the exercise and propagation of love, love overcoming the civil strife in which he finds himself, love among the warring nations.

This is where the pacifist might play an important part during a war. He has the opportunity of concentrating his whole strength

and zeal on the problem of charity among men. He should be ready with balm to heal the internal wounds of hatred and envy. While the rest of the world is ploughing with the sharp ploughshare of war, he may be sowing the seed of charity. It is disappointing to find him almost entirely devoted to criticism and verbal attack on his fellows. He should be rising above that level and seeking a more essential way of peace. He should be playing a very positive part, ready with the fruits of loving contemplation to heal the spiritual wounds of war.

A recent booklet written by a well-known Quaker conscientious objector, Stephen Hobhouse, with an introduction by the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is not a pacifist, (*Christ and our Enemies: S.P.C.K.* 9d.) shows how Christians should unite on the basic principles of love and forgiveness. In it the spirit of bitterness to which we have referred is quite absent. The author's recognition of the practical difficulties involved in forgiving one's enemies while they are behaving with fanatical cruelty and diabolical terrorism, brings the whole subject down to the hard reality in which we are asked to love when no love can be expected in return. There could not be a more striking example of the great part a conscientious pacifist can play if he withholds himself from bitterness and sets out to restore all things in the love of Christ. If the newly-formed Pacifist Council of the Christian Church, in which almost every Christian community is represented, will follow this lead we may look for some solid help from them in the future.

The love of charity of course is supernatural love. Those Christians who concern themselves with a vague humanitarian neighbourliness can offer little constructive help to the victims of war. They centre the whole problem in man instead of in God, and their endeavour becomes mere sentimentalism, a faint-hearted horror of suffering. In the supernatural order the zealous Christian is called to be a *soldier* whether he be pacifist or militarist. The call to be a soldier of Christ brings with it supernatural strength, the virtue and gift of fortitude, and offers a new realm for the fighting instincts of men. If the pacifist can realise that the battle with evil, with falsehood, with the devil, is permanent and inevitable he will not easily accuse the Church either of being militaristic or of failing to put Christ's maxims of mutual love into practice. But more than that, the struggle in which he finds himself immersed can be brought entirely into the supernatural order. He can become the chivalrous knight fighting in the tournament for love. The supernatural love of charity will cast out all bitterness. The fact that he cannot go the same way as the rest of society will not make him arrogant and

critical. He will remain submissive to God's will, but courageously fighting with the weapons of divine love. The sublimation through grace of all his fighting instincts gives him the opportunity to struggle with all his might for the heavenly kingdom in a direct and positive spirit. He will retain a vivid hatred for sin and error; that is only the reverse side of a true and supernatural love and compassion for the sinner and for those misled by the father of lies.

The pacifist will be able to play his part only if he understands what is meant by the sacrament of Confirmation and lives according to the power of that sacrament which makes him a soldier of Christ. Thus it is an unhappy misunderstanding of the pacifist's part if he should say: 'While he is not anti-patriotic nor anti-fraternal it does remain that the one thing that matters to the Christian Pacifist when his countrymen declare war—offensive or defensive, justified or not—is not to win the war but rather to have nothing to do with it'¹. The one thing that matters is not a negative and miserable reaction to his surroundings, but a courageous love of his warring brethren and of the enemies of his brethren. If the pacifist would undertake the *opus caritatis* while recognising that the consciences of the majority allowed them to go to war in the *opus justitiae*, he would contribute greatly to achieving a real, living peace.

THE EDITOR.

¹ 'Blessed are the Peacemakers' (page 13) published by the Catholic Pacifists' Association of Canada. This booklet otherwise has much to commend it as a documentation of Catholic Pacifists' aims and achievements. But the restless change of type to emphasise every other word or sentence is characteristic of a great deal of hysterical shouting in those circles.