

INTERNATIONAL ORDER AND THE NATURAL LAW¹

As Christians we believe that all the relationships binding man to man and society to society are regulated by law which is not something which changes—not something socially tolerable in one century and socially intolerable in the next—but an immutable law rooted unchangeably in the Will of God. This idea of the *law of God* is the whole basis of Christian society, national and international, and it ought to be the constant endeavour of Christian peoples to bring their own local order into harmony with the eternal and unchanging order of God. International law, however imperfect it may seem now, is just an attempt to make nations live according to the Will of God. That is why international law is so important to us and of such very deep concern to all Christians.

God did not design a lawless world; man and the sins of man made the world lawless, and it is the task of Christians to bring back society, national and international, to the rule of law in conformity with the will of God. This is the principle on which all teaching of international order is based. The teaching of Christianity on the social order is, as you know, a harmonious blending of rights and duties up from the individual citizen, through the associations needed for a full Christian life—the family, the local community, associations for work, the nation itself—right up to that community of nations, that world society which, in the last 100 years, has come into physical being for the first time. I may say in passing that I saw how completely it had come into being last year when, on my way to the United States of America, I had supper in Ireland and the next day I had tea in Baltimore.

Now the Catholic Church teaches that rights are balanced by duties, and the duty of all associations of men is to serve man's interests and to see that he can live a stable, prosperous and peaceful existence. If at any point a society is incapable of fulfilling that function, then that society is no longer fulfilling its purpose according to the Will of God. That is one of the points we have to think about carefully.

We have now reached a stage in the world's history where the rights and duties of different associations have fallen out of harmony, especially with regard to the nation state. We have to remember as Christian thinkers, that to-day the nation state claims for itself

¹ The substance of a speech given at the Rugby Christian Life Week, May 14th, 1943. Fr. Gerald Vann's speech of May 12th is included in a supplement; Mr. Richard O'Sullivan's of May 13th is held over to a future issue.

a position incompatible with the Will of God. It claims the complete submission of all its citizens. It claims that it is not bound by any law except that of plain self-interest in its dealings with neighbouring states. One of the reasons we have gone to war is that a nation state called Germany has violated the fundamental rights not only of its own citizens but also of its neighbouring communities.

There are two problems. We have to construct an order in which the rights of the individual citizen are guaranteed in some more effective way than they are guaranteed under our present system. We can no longer afford to allow a nation state to claim complete power over the lives of individual citizens. There must be some court of appeal to which man can turn when his appeal to the justice of his own country has failed. Do not think this is a very revolutionary idea, because we have tried it before. After the last war we had what were called Minority Treaties. The aim of these Minority Treaties was to give minorities the right of appeal, if their Government violated their basic rights—for example by denying them the right to use their own language or to exercise freedom of speech, education and association. Actually the court to which they could appeal was ineffective. It was the League of Nations and since we failed to put any power behind the League of Nations, the attempt to make it a genuine court failed. But from what we have seen during the last ten years in Europe we know that the need for protection is not less but more. Not only minorities need protection—it is often majorities. After all, who in pre-war Germany needed protection most—the Nazi minority or the vast blind, stumbling mass of the German people? It seems to me that in a world as inter-dependent as our own, we have to see that aggression against individual citizens can be as serious and far-reaching as aggression against other states. The crime against German Jews and the mass murder of Jews in the ghastly slaughter houses of Poland is the concern not only of a national government but of the whole human race, and we have got to find some way to create in our international order a court of appeal beyond the national government, a court to which the individual citizen whose rights have been violated, can appeal. This is easy to say, but very difficult to do. For example, although in relation with other nations, the nation state we call Great Britain has not too bad a record, if the members of our Colonial Empire had the right of appeal beyond Westminster to some form of world court, it would be asking from us a big sacrifice of our own ideas of sovereignty.

I feel this is the issue we have to face, because although we can rely to a great extent upon the justice and fair play of our Government and on its good intentions, it is not in itself a sufficient guarantee. We cannot turn to our own colonial people and say 'Rely on us ; trust us, you will be well treated' and refuse them the guarantee we wish ultimately to secure for the people of Germany, France, or Russia. It does not seem that this can be done at once ; it demands a degree of confidence and trust between nations which we certainly have not reached so far, and yet it seems to me that we cannot, as Christians, shirk the issue. The first Jew thrown into a concentration camp was the beginning of aggression against the whole world. I do not know whether peace is indivisible, but I do know that law is indivisible, and if a government begins violating its duties to its own citizens, it will not be long before it violates the rights of other States ; and then there is renewed war.

We come now to another most important question about the nation state. Is it, as an institution, capable of fulfilling its primary purpose in relation to its citizens. Can it single-handed provide for their security and prosperity? The answer is: No. To-day the case for a system of collective defence is unanswerable. Through the enormous concentration of industrial power built up in the last 50 or 60 years, it is completely impossible for the small nation to provide an adequate system of defence for itself. None of the small nations could have stood up to Hitler, and if the whole world had not stood together, it could not have defeated his concentrated power. So if a recognition of the right of nations to survive, whether they are great or small, is a cardinal principle of international law—a principle for which we first took up arms in this war—we have to achieve some collective form of defence. Otherwise, the small nations will quite simply not survive. This is just part of the general principle of Christian social teaching. I mentioned at the beginning that if a community is inadequate to its task of securing security and well-being it should transfer its power to something which is adequate ; none of the States, even Russia, even the U.S.A., is any longer capable of standing alone to secure the security of the individual citizen. Therefore Christian social teaching tells us that the defence of the individual citizen should be transferred to another body which is strong enough. That need is not going to grow less but more and more vital as the means of power and technical development continue to grow. We have, therefore, to envisage a system of defence, collective and super-national ; that is a consequence of the conditions created in the modern world.

Then there is the problem of the economic well-being of the people. It is no longer possible in a world as united and inter-dependent as ours for a single nation to provide completely for the prosperity of its own people out of its own resources. It depends upon the prosperity and economic activity of other nations. The slump of 1929 showed that no nation, not even a nation as powerful as the United States, can be unaffected by the impoverishment of others. Our economic system, therefore, has to be directed towards international as well as towards national needs. We have to remember that our well-being depends on the well-being of other nations, and apart from sound Christian principles, it is sound common sense to see that a world in which our neighbours starve, in which races suffer from malnutrition, low physical standards and poor consuming power, is a world which must repeat the economic chaos in which we lived between the wars. We must look forward to a co-operative economic system. A nation state standing alone is not capable either of satisfying its own prosperity or providing the stability needed for its material development.

We, in this country, are far and away ahead of other races of mankind in prosperity and stability, but we have dependent on us a Colonial Empire in which dwell 60,000,000 souls. In some cases, their standard of living, ignorance, and disease are a disgrace to us. It is no good saying we have done well. Certainly we can find examples of people whom we have enriched in every way, but we have to understand that our colonial dependencies are a direct responsibility which none can shirk. We have shirked it. In the past 20 years how many of us have given a thought to our Colonial Empire as representing a responsibility, or have thought of the economic problems of that Empire? Probably not one of us. And yet these people are dependent upon us. In a democracy the Government takes an interest in the things we, the people, are interested in and the fact that we were not interested in the Colonial Empire means that the Government was not interested in the Colonial Empire. The aim of Empire is not exploitation. It is trusteeship. We have to develop our subject peoples and fit them for self-government. This will entail a great deal of investment in our Colonial Empire without any particular thought of return; when we find a man weakened by bad feeding, disease, and under-nourishment, we cannot expect him to become a paying proposition. We have got to realise that in our Colonial Empire are nations which are sub-standard in every way. It is our job to give them the moral and physical means of standing on their own feet. We

have to see that our Colonial Empire is merely a trusteeship in a genuine sense, and to bring these people up to a standard, physical and mental, fit for self-government. We must not be satisfied till this is so.

What we want is something like a ten year plan of colonial development. We, a nation which has had a long start in economic prosperity and development, have a responsibility to our less highly developed brothers. After the war we have to direct our economy at home and abroad according to one main principle: we must ensure that a decent living standard is the first charge on our economy. This is a fundamental principle for our dealing with our own people at home. It should be equally binding in our dealings with other peoples, particularly our colonial dependents.

If, on the other hand, we are content to go abroad as exploiters of the people with whom we have to trade, on an economic principle of smash and grab, we shall lay the economic foundations for another war. I am against reinforcing a moral argument—our direct responsibility to other less fortunate peoples—by an argument drawn from self-interest, even though it is not unreasonable to suppose that God's Laws would be not only good and wise, but also in perfect conformity with common sense. But I would like to point out that if we adopt the principle of raising living standards in other countries and in our Colonial Empire, we are in fact assisting our own position economically. By raising their standards, we are raising the whole level of economic interchange between the nations. Therefore it is not only decency and Christian principle that ought to make us do these things, but it is also to our interest to do so. The principle of raising living standards at home and abroad is not only in harmony with the Will of God, but results in a system more entirely conducive to good living for all of us.

In this problem of the Christian idea of the nation state we must not think in terms of Russia and Germany, but in terms of our own country. Are we prepared for a world police force, some form of government or international court, and are we prepared to make the sacrifice of sovereignty to make them come into being? We must ask ourselves: 'Am I prepared to back an economic system based on the interest of other people, which aims at raising living standards abroad as well as at home? Am I prepared to be responsible as a trustee for our subject peoples? Am I prepared to give them a fuller life and to fit them to govern themselves?'—'Am I my brother's keeper?' 'Yes, most decidedly.'

BARBARA WARD.