

DISARMAMENT*

WE take our stand on the phrase of Pope Benedict XV in his letter to the belligerent powers on August 1st, 1917, that what is needed is 'a simultaneous and reciprocal diminution of armaments' and it is needed precisely in order to help the nations to an era of peace. No one doubts but that these enormous armaments are themselves a cause of unrest in Europe, of themselves they suggest menace and a doom.

But again it is undoubted that armaments are themselves not so much a cause of evil as a result of evil; they testify to an evil beneath the surface of which they are the outward and visible sign. That deeper evil is the one which is in most need of cure. It would be as unwise to attempt to cure our troubles by mere disarmament as it would be to cure a fever by putting ointment on the resulting rash, for everyone knows that armaments are a symptom and are not the disease.

That disease is selfishness, unrestrained desire to possess. It runs through national as well as international politics, it is to be found not merely in nations but in persons; not just at Geneva or Shanghai but in each of us. A gathering of Christians to protest against excessive armaments is in the nature of a confession. There would be no need to-day to have this meeting if we ministers of Christ had properly done our work. We meet here therefore not first to protest against others but to confess our own failure. The present world crisis is not more due to the world as such than it is due to us. The Church does not fail, as Christ does not fail: it is we who have failed Him and it.

The evil then is deeper than merely national selfishness; nations are selfish only because men are selfish.

*The substance of an address given at the Albert Hall on February 2nd, 1932.

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Men are selfish because they do not follow Christ. In our time it is taken for granted that men cannot restrain themselves. Christians sometimes aid and abet this doctrine. If we oppose it, we are accused of being harsh and inhuman, of asking impossible things. We are not inhuman but we are not merely human, for we do believe that man can do more than the things of a man, by the power of the grace of God. We believe the Cross and the Crucified to be not merely an example and an inspiration but a cause whence comes to us, if we dare it, a power to do more than as men we could. Yet if restraint be not taught in the name of a love seen and human, how shall it be taught in the name of love divine?

But we are here to do more than examine our folly: we are here to build a new world. In this hall the Prince of Wales last week urged on youth the need of a constructive policy: disarmament then is not enough. It is not of itself constructive. Moreover, if we would construct so as to bring about disarmament, we must begin much further back. We must begin with God. We must see the world as He sees it, beautiful in its variety—varied and rich in variety because it is beautiful, because it is the handiwork of infinite beauty. We must train ourselves to see beauty in every variety of thing, we must avoid narrowness, we must welcome difference. Only the revelation of God is steadfast, one, enduring. Every human thing is incomplete, faltering, ephemeral. Because man is imperfect he mirrors only some of God's beauty. Thus all mankind mirrors God better than one mere man can, though all mankind still inadequately mirrors God.

We must see then in the width of God's gifts to man the beauty of the world we live in. We must see God's beauty in the variety of the world and in the unity in which all this variety is gathered up. We must put in front of people, if we are to reach peace,

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a noble ideal. War has a nobility about it because it does call for sacrifice. If we wish to lead people away from war, we must also appeal to a high act of sacrifice. If we appeal to mean motives we shall but have encouraged selfishness: not with such aid should we defend peace. We would rather say to them that God made all mankind to be one in the world, and that thus each nation has something to give others; that each must not only tolerate others but welcome them into a common unity, that to establish this common unity or commonwealth of all peoples should be the object of politics and statesmanship. We must realise that this will be costly to our human greed and selfishness, but that by the grace of God it can be done.

If you think of nations it is hard to love them, unless you be one of those pacifists who always love the country they do not know. What shall a man find perhaps to love in the foreign policy of Germany or France or Russia or Japan or the United States of America? Can we hope that these will love us for our foreign policy? It will seem as selfish to them in history as theirs in history seems selfish to us.

But we are not asked to love foreign peoples for their own sakes but for His sake who made and redeemed and loves and keeps them as He made and redeemed and loves us. We must aim at making ourselves wide-hearted enough to embrace in our ideals a world of peoples working together, pooling their national resources, material and immaterial, their wealth, their genius, their art, ideals, character, their many differences, as provinces of a divine empire, the Kingdom of the Son of His love—a mystic body of nations to whose mutual behoof are put French lucidity and German depth, the enduring patience of Russia, the quick inventiveness of Ireland, the ordered liberty of England, the flaming heart of Spain.

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Here then let us dedicate ourselves to the high cause of peace, mindful of that lost generation which gave itself at the call of those it trusted, to fight a war to end all war, to ransom a world in bondage, and in our green and pleasant land to build the City of God. We that are older shall not live to see it, but you that are younger may live to see peace as a queen in majesty summoning the peoples of the world to the common service of the world's work, summoning them and being obeyed. And in that day shall our dead be remembered, who died not having seen the fulfilment of the promise but, who beheld it afar off and for it gave all the living that they had : so that God was not ashamed to be called their God and called them too His children. Blessed too all you here to-night, blessed you peace-makers (if you strive first to make yourselves unselfish), for you shall be called the children of God.

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