

## DISARMAMENT AND REPARATIONS

ONE of the great questions of the day is disarmament, linked almost involuntarily though not of necessity with war debts and reparations. Appeals have been made for the nation to have the will to peace, and thus save the world from disaster. The ten years long discussions on disarmament have produced so far no very definite results. Nations still believe that without security no disarmament is possible. A pact to renounce war as a means of settling international disputes has been signed by all the leading nations of the world, and yet armaments increase, and preparations for a fresh war are being made, until to-day more money is being expended upon such preparations, and upon armaments, than was expended before 1914, when the storm broke over Europe and the world. Nations cry peace, when there is no peace in their hearts, as was frankly stated by the present Pope in his Encyclical of 1922.

Why is there no peace? Because jealousies, greed, fear and hatred are still in men's minds, says the Pope. They have forgotten the moral laws that guide individuals and are equally applicable to nations. All the more need is there for a reaffirmation of the Law of Nations. Up to the Middle Ages men respected the Canon Law of the Church: they looked to the See of Peter as the exponent of the Moral Law, codified as it is on the Canon Law of the Church. That Law of Nations, which is, in itself, the embodiment of the Natural Law, implanted in men's minds by the Creator, is a guide to men's lives in their private dealings. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. Do not to others what ye would not that they should do unto you. All these are the commonplaces of our daily life, and are the guid-

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ing principles on which we act, and if we depart from them we receive just punishment at the hand of our neighbours. It is these laws which form the basis of the Canon Law of the Christian Church. Mankind has turned away from the Canon Law, and looks to International Law as a guide. International Law is too often but a collection of treaties, secret agreements, and requires much time to define: one treaty depending on another, many of them ephemeral, all made for *ad hoc* purposes with no relation to the Moral Law. True it is that we have the Hague Tribunal, to which the interpretation of National Treaties and Agreements can be referred; but though the rules of the Hague Tribunal contain many of the principles laid down by the great Dutchman Grotius, the last codifier of *Lex Naturalis* and *Jus Gentium*, it is, nevertheless, a judicial body pronouncing judgments and interpreting specific acts irrespective of the justice of such acts. The need for a spiritual and moral force to help mankind in its international relations was expressed by Sir Thomas Barclay, an eminent international lawyer, in 1915:

The world needs some great spiritual force to guide and uphold it amid the ambitions of statesmen, to protect men against their own cruel and rapacious instincts, and to set a higher tone of human sympathy and fraternity among men generally.

Likewise a prominent dignitary of the Church of England expressed the same ideal when, in 1917, speaking on *The Churches and Peace*, he said:

Though the rest of Christendom may not recognize the Pope as 'Universal Head of the Church,' yet many, perhaps most Christians would be willing to see in him the most distinguished Representative of the Spiritual Forces of the World, and it may be given to the Papacy in this way to wield—even amongst those that are separated from it—a world-wide spiritual force.

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These two distinguished men were, perhaps all unknown to themselves, following in the footsteps of that forceful figure of the end of the nineteenth century—namely, David Urquhart, some while M.P. for Stafford, who, Protestant as he was, appealed to the Papacy, during the sitting of the Ecumenical Council in 1869, to reaffirm that portion of the Canon Law—the Law of Nations, the real International Law—which deals with war and the making of peace. A short life of David Urquhart, written by his son, Mr. F. F. Urquhart, now Dean of Balliol College, appeared in *The Dublin Review* (Oct., 1917), giving a full account of his father's action in 1869, when he presented his appeal to Pope Pius IX. Some of the passages in that appeal are of such poignant interest to-day that it seems necessary to make one or two quotations :

The condition of the world has become insupportable on account of the enormous standing armies. Every country is burdened by the cost of them. Thus the means of the poor are diminished, trade is paralysed, the consciences of men are perverted or outraged, and souls are lost every day.

The Church alone can find a remedy for these miseries. Even should her voice not be obeyed by all, it will always be a guide to millions of men. Above all, the assertion of eternal principles is always in itself a homage to God, and cannot be without fruit.

There are grave and serious men, versed in public affairs, who look upon the position of the world and of the Church in reference to these truths in the same light as do men devoted to religion. All these are equally convinced that it is necessary to declare that part of the Canon Law which deals with the Law of Nations, and with the character of war, and defines how it becomes either a duty or a crime. Such a restoration of conscience in men would dispel those dangers by which society is threatened, a result which can never be achieved by mere worldly prudence and political calculations.

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David Urquhart, protestant as he was, turned to the Papacy as the centre of Light, of Law and of Respect. To him it was anathema that the principles of religion should have nothing to do with the State. He held that Christianity is a spiritual force which can appeal to all, and that it must penetrate the region of politics, and be introduced into the practical affairs of life.

The Ecumenical Council was, unfortunately, adjourned owing to the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, before the appeal was considered. To some extent Urquhart succeeded in that the Postulatum is on record in the Appendix to the Acts and Decrees of the Council. Urquhart was granted an audience by Pius IX, who gave him the greatest encouragement, 'God has inspired you with very great ideas on the greatest of subjects. I have read your appeal, and I approve it all. Now the first stone is laid.'

Let us hope that the building of peace on the sure foundations of the Law of Nations may yet be accomplished.

Some may ask What is this Law of Nations? What is the Canon Law so prominent in the minds of those who appealed to the Papacy. It may be advisable to give a short sketch of the origins of the Law of Nations and its development and embodiment in the Canon Law of the Church. Very briefly stated, what the ten Commandments are to the individual, the Canon Law is to the State. The laws which from time immemorial have been recognized as governing the relations of nations are in reality few and simple. They are natural laws shaped by Christian principles, are, in fact, the rules which all honourable people recognize as binding on themselves in their relations with their neighbours. The Law of Nations has grown out of men's love of justice. The Greeks recognized it,

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and we find it in the Amphictyonic Council. It, however, was only applied to Hellas.

Later on the Roman Empire recognized that its relations with other peoples must be governed by law, and Rome became the city of law, protector of peoples, nations and cities. When the Roman Empire fell, and a new world status came into being under Christian principles, the old Roman Law was taken as the basis of the New States which sprang up on the ruins of the old Empire. European Law after the fall of the Roman Empire consisted of Civil Law and the Canon Law. Civil Law being founded on the Justinian Code, the Canon Law was founded on the basis of this Code: precept by precept it grew up from the adaptation to Christian Society of Natural Law, immemorial custom, and the Roman Laws. This was used by Popes and Councils as a model upon which to formulate the rules which they laid down to regulate the relations between State and State. In the twelfth century these rules were codified into a body of Law by Gratian, a teacher of Canon Law at Bologna. It is his codification, with the decisions of various Popes, which form the *Corpus Juris Canonici*, and contained the Laws under which States maintained peace, or made wars, up to the time of the Reformation. This Law is, in fact, the only real International Law on which nations can rely.

Nowadays the study of the Law of Nations is best made from its codification by Hugo Grotius, a protestant Dutchman, who in 1625 drew up a Code of Law, collected from the Canon Law of the Church—this he presented to the Catholic King of France. Today we look to the League of Nations to settle international concerns: but, as has already been said, the League has no authority to which it can refer its difficulties except the Hague Tribunal. There is always the danger latent in all Leagues that a strong nation

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or nations might get the power into its own hands, and, leading others in their train, might become really supreme. Surely the safety lies in the public recognition of the Law of Nations which, based as it is on moral laws, should govern the relations of State to State.

So far the advice tendered by the Seat of Law of Light and Respect has met with little success. There are signs that nations are beginning to recognize that the present economic depression of the world might have been at least minimized, if not avoided, had they followed *in toto* the advice tendered them by Benedict XV in his Peace Note of August, 1917.

True it is that within a short space of time the main ideas were adopted in principle by the leading statesmen of Europe and America, but, even though so adopted, they are yet unfulfilled, while others were disregarded.

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‘The first fundamental point should be that the moral force of right should replace the material force of arms, hence a just agreement between all for the simultaneous and reciprocal diminution of armaments according to rules and guarantees to be established, to the extent necessary and sufficient for the maintenance of public order in each State: in the place of armies, the establishment of arbitration on lines to be concerted and with sanctions to be settled against any State that should refuse either to submit international questions to arbitration or to accept its awards.’—BENEDICT XV.

It is, indeed, true that there is an International Treaty which pledges nations to refer all matters in dispute to the Hague Tribunal, and that there is the Kellogg Pact renouncing war—*i.e.*, the substitution of moral right for the force of arms. Nevertheless,

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that disarmament which Benedict XV put forward as a necessity for real peace is non-existent. Discussions still go on as to how far it is safe to disarm. Security is demanded as a pledge for disarmament. All these discussions are judicial quibblings over clauses in the professed disarmament convention based on the supposition that war will some day break out, rather than on the belief that war is impossible if nations adhere to their pledges.

Amidst all these discussions the moral law has been absolutely forgotten—namely, the pledge given to the vanquished that armaments will be reduced to the basis suggested by Benedict XV—*i.e.*, ‘to the extent necessary and sufficient for the maintenance of public order in each State.’ Such an obligation was imposed on the vanquished, and surely, with the pledge given, it is the first duty of the Allies to carry that pledge into effect. The failure to do so is at bottom the cause of the present unrest in Germany: and at the same time part of the cause of the present economic depression in Europe, for are we not told that more money is being spent on armaments now than was spent previous to 1914. It appears astonishing that those who speak in favour of disarmament, and deny the possibility of uni-lateral disarmament, do not sufficiently stress the fact that the pledge to disarm was given and has not been fulfilled.

How can any nation talk of ‘security’ when their own action in dishonouring their pledges is a sign of insecurity. Surely this is a matter which if referred to the decision of a moral authority would be at once decided in favour of our ex-enemies. The keeping of pledges is an integral part of the Law of Nations; we adhere to a pledge in our private lives, and so, too, must we adhere to pledges which our nation has given in our name.

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‘ If a nation is guilty of an act of injustice towards another it is not only the governments and rulers who are involved in the guilt; it is each one of us who is as guilty as the King and the Governments.’

Our first duty, then, is to make it abundantly clear to the statesmen of the world that we as a nation intend to keep our pledge given at Versailles. The present Foreign Secretary, Mr. A. Henderson, has repeatedly stated, ‘ If you want peace, you can have it to-morrow.’ We all need peace in our hearts, and that peace can only be obtained by relieving our consciences of the feeling of guilt that there is an unfulfilled pledge awaiting redemption. We of the Household of the Faith, knowing the Truth, and acknowledging the Papacy as the true guide for mankind, have a double duty of upholding moral justice. We know the Law, whilst others either do not, or are, unfortunately, unwilling to obey it when it is made known to them.

Many other recommendations of Benedict XV have been adopted. There is, however, one important one which it is of far-reaching importance to repeat, since it is the subject of discussion in all countries to-day.

### WAR DEBTS AND REPARATIONS.

‘As to the reparation of damage, and to the costs of war, We see no way to solve the question, save by laying down as a general principle complete and reciprocal condonation which would, moreover, be justified by the immense benefits that would accrue from disarmament . . . .’

If in certain cases there exist special reasons, let them be weighed with justice and equity?

Many leading economists in this country as well as elsewhere foresaw the consequences of the economic clauses of the so-called Peace Treaty. Their advice met with the same fate as did that of Benedict XV.

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Ten years elapsed until after much wrangling the total amount of the soi-disant spoils of victory was determined together with the allocation of those spoils. Meanwhile our Government took the first step towards the cancellation of inter-allied debts, for it wrote off 42 per cent. and 18 per cent. respectively of the war debts owed by France and Italy : this cancellation, however, still leaves the interest on the capital cancelled to be paid by the taxpayer of this country, an annual burden of £60,000,000. President Hoover with great generosity has offered a year's suspension of the debts due to the U.S.A. conditional on the ' mutual and reciprocal condonation ' of Reparations and War Debts. It is now generally recognised by statesmen, bankers, and by thinking men that a great wrong was done, and that it would have been wiser and better to have followed the advice tendered by Benedict XV. The injustice of the economic clauses was due to the action of the Allies alone, and not to the Associated Powers as President Hoover has recently reminded us.

It is for us to use the year's moratorium to good purpose, and to make it clear to our allies that the injustices must be rectified. Moral justice cannot be dissociated from public political life, whether national or international, and it is clearly our duty not only to inform ourselves of events that are happening, but to study the precepts of the Law of Nations, so that we may have a standard whereby to test the moral issues involved in political actions which are taken in our name and for which we, as parts of the nation, are directly responsible.

In moments of depression, when we fail to see any solution to the disarmament and reparations and war debts questions, or any possibility of the ' Peace of Christ in the Kingdom of Christ,' let us take comfort in the knowledge that it takes long to build up even

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a Cathedral, still more so the acceptance of a great moral principle. 'The first stone is laid,' said Pius IX. Each one of us can add bit by bit to the building, until we have built "a golden house serene and vast", wherein all nations will find themselves united in a common bond of peace and goodwill. Then indeed will they sing with all their hearts

*Laudate Dominum omnes gentes;  
Laudate eum omnes populi;  
Quoniam confirmata est super nos misericordia  
ejus,  
Et veritas Domini manet in aeternum.*

M. SIDNEY PARRY.