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# CHRIST THE KING AND THE SOCIAL ENCYCLICALS



C. Fontanini

## THE CATHOLIC HOUR

Rev. Benjamin L. Masse, S.J.



CHRIST THE KING  
AND  
THE SOCIAL ENCYCLICALS



# Christ The King And The Social Encyclicals

Four addresses delivered in the nationwide Catholic Hour, produced by the National Council of Catholic Men, in cooperation with the National Broadcasting Company, from October 6, 1946 through October 27, 1946.

BY

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# THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST AND THE CRISIS OF OUR TIMES

Address given on October 6, 1946

Several weeks ago a widely-quoted columnist disturbed his readers by asking: "Is it possible that we may be drifting into a new Dark Ages?"

He was answered a few days later by an equally famous colleague who could not understand why anyone need have any doubts.

"We *are* in a new Dark Ages," wrote the latter. "We are in it up to the neck. The question is whether there are sufficient remnants of civilization left to recreate order and security or whether the anarchy that has swallowed most of civilization already will become universal, to the point where the whole world is given over to armed gangs, and no man's property or life is safe anywhere on the globe."\*

Although that is a very harsh indictment of our postwar world, it can scarcely be called exaggerated. Surely, it is one of the bitter ironies of the late war that there is less freedom in the world today, less respect for the

human person, more purges and arbitrary arrests and concentration camps than there were when the Hitler-Stalin pact signalled the start of hostilities in 1939. One would have to go far back into history, perhaps as far back as the fall of the Roman Empire, to find a comparable crisis in civilization. The fact is that modern society is sick unto death. It is sick unto death because it has lost its soul.

We sometimes forget that every society has a soul as well as a body; that is to say, it has a vision of the universe, a code of morals, a religion. Even more than differences of climate, or geography or natural resources, this vision sets one civilization off from another and determines the value of its culture. If the vision is lost, if the citizens forsake the faith of their fathers, the civilization dies, just as a man dies when his soul departs from his body.

This fundamental law of society was the burden of what is, in retrospect, one of the saddest documents of our age. In 1922,

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\* Dorothy Thompson, New York Post, March 20.

the late Pope Pius XI wrote an encyclical on the evils which plagued the nations after the first world war. He pointed out that, although the fighting had long since ceased and the ink had dried on the Treaty of Versailles, there still was no peace. Class was leagued against class, nation against nation, and throughout society life was dominated by a ceaseless search for pleasure, a greedy pursuit of wealth, an unbridled lust for power. Yet, he said, people hungered for peace and order and security, apparently not realizing that their way of life—their Godless education, their desecration of marriage, their bellicose nationalism, their economic systems which widened the gulf between rich and poor—that all these evils were making peace impossible. And so with a cry that came from the bottom of his fatherly heart, His Holiness spoke this message to the world of the early 1920's: "There is no peace of Christ save in the Kingdom of Christ: there is no surer way of seeking to establish peace than by inaugurating the reign of Christ."

Looking back now we can see that the real cause of the disaster which shattered the world

in 1939 was not the exaggerated nationalism of the Nazis, the plotting of the Communists, or the rapacity of the Japanese militarists. These were only the surface causes, the effects of an evil that went much deeper. The modern world failed to make peace after World War I, it failed to avoid a second and more bloody holocaust, because the modern world had lost its soul. It had denied Jesus Christ and the Kingdom He came to establish.

One day several years ago, when our armies were on the defensive and the cause of the United Nations seemed desperate, the late President of the United States repeated the thought of Pope Pius XI. "The speedy and world-wide establishment of the Kingdom of Christ among men," he told a visiting dignitary, "not only in word but in spirit and in fact, is the only aim to compensate mankind for its sorrows."

That was a beautiful expression of an ideal worthy of a Christian nation—the truest and noblest utterance by any statesman during the entire course of the late war. But what did it mean? What did it mean to the boys who endured a living hell



on Guadalcanal, who died in the air over Europe, who sank to their deaths in the South Pacific and the North Atlantic? What did it mean to the people back home who produced the food and armaments which brought us victory? What did it mean to our friends and allies, to the enemies we fought to destroy?

The establishment of the Kingdom of Christ—what does that mean? It is an appealing phrase, no doubt, one of those romantic phrases which express an idea too good to be true; the sort of idea which poets invent but which has little meaning for the tough world of reality where men and women, with bended back and tired heart, must earn their daily bread.

Ah, but that is the paradox of Christianity: it is a fairy tale too good to be true, but it is true. The Kingdom of Christ is not just poetry. It is no more poetry than the astonishing reality of the coming of the Son of God to earth, than His dwelling amongst us, flesh of our flesh and blood of our blood, for three and thirty years, than His cruel yet inspiring death on the cross.

No, the Kingdom of Christ is a reality that we can recognize, and more than recognize: it is

a reality that we can live, just as truly as we live the reality of our everyday lives. All of us, no matter how little we are, or how unimportant we feel, can help to inaugurate, as Pope Pius XI said, the reign of Jesus Christ; we can yet save our tottering civilization by making the Kingdom of Christ the most vivid reality in the modern world.

What does it mean, then, to make Christ rule?

It does not mean what the enemies of Christ say that it means, that religion craves political power and seeks to dominate the State.

When the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, asked Our Lord during the course of His trial whether or not He was a king, He replied: "Thou sayest it: but My kingdom is not of this world. . . My kingdom is not from hence" (*John* 18: 37-36). And on another occasion, when the Pharisees sought to trap Him, asking, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar?" He took a coin, showed them imprinted thereon the image of Caesar and announced: "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" (*Mark* 12: 13-17).

No, to establish the Kingdom of Christ does not mean to inject the Church into politics. It means something much purer and nobler than that. Quite simply it means to make the teaching of Christ, the commandments and example of Christ, the supreme norm of private and public life.

It means that for each one of us Christ must become the king of our hearts, His teaching the measure of our actions, His life the model and inspiration for our lives.

It means that Christ must rule over our families, His love sanctifying the love between husband and wife, the affection between parents and children; His doctrine dictating the duty of parents toward their offspring, the obedience of children toward father and mother.

It means that Christ must rule in public life: that the State respect the rights of the Church and encourage religion; that elected officials carry out their duties according to the principles of Christ and not the shifting rules of expediency; that educators and doctors and lawyers judge their professional conduct in the pure light of the Gospel; that the leaders of labor

and industry and agriculture admit that Christ reigns also in the market-place, and that economic activities are not merely profitable or unprofitable, but likewise morally good or morally bad.

This is one sense in which Christ is king of society. And in this sense every human being, unless he is ignorant through no fault of his own, and every government, are obliged to acknowledge the sovereignty of Christ and to advance His Kingdom.

But in another sense, too, Christ rules over society. By His death on the cross He redeemed all of us. When the gates of Heaven had been closed by the sin of our first parents, He it was Who opened them wide again. We are His, therefore; we belong wholly to Him. We belong to Him so completely that apart from Him there is only rebellion — life without hope or peace or joy.

We can, of course, deny the facts of life. We can refuse, as a large part of the modern world has refused, to acknowledge the Kingdom of Christ. We can depart from the way He has marked out for us and rebelliously go our own way.

For we are free agents, and

our King wants the love and allegiance of free men, not the cringing submission of slaves. We must choose once and for all; and we must choose soon. At this critical moment in history, we cannot afford to repeat the blunders which led to two world wars and have brought our civilization to the brink of destruction. Another war, an atomic, a bacteriological war, would be sheer catastrophe.

We want peace desperately, at

home and abroad. We want a real peace, not just the absence of war and another twenty-year truce. We want, that is to say, the Peace of Christ.

My dear friends, we can have the Peace of Christ, but only, as Pope Pius XI insisted, in the Kingdom of Christ. For the soul of our society, the principle by which it lives and breathes and has its being, the principle the modern world has denied, is Christ Jesus, Our Lord.

# SAFEGUARDING OUR FUTURE

Address given on October 13, 1946

If the civilization, of which the United States has now become the last great hope and defender, should fall before some new system of ancient slavery, the main reason will not be the breakdown of our economic system, or the failure of our foreign policy, or even the weakness of our armed services. All these factors are important, but if there be any lesson for the present in the record of the past, they are not as important as the home and the family. For the evidence of history is clear: the family is the basis of civilization; when family life declines, nations rot and cultures decay.

Even if we had no records of the past, if the civilizations which have preceded ours had disappeared as completely as the lost tribes of Israel, we would still know that the family is the rock upon which society rests. For the children of today are the citizens of tomorrow. If there are few of them, it stands to reason that the population will fall and the nation decline. If there are many of them but they are not properly raised, the population will not fall, but the nation

will decline nevertheless. Children who are disobedient and irresponsible often make lawless and irresponsible adults and citizens.

Now the fact is that the American home has lost a good deal of its original virtue and stability. The warning signs of weakness in family life, a growth in juvenile crime and delinquency, a falling birth rate, a rise in the divorce rate—are too clear to be misunderstood.

Over the growth of juvenile crime, the U. S. Department of Justice has become so worried that it has drafted a program of preventive measures on a national scale. It took this unprecedented action only after figures revealed that last year 21 per cent of all arrests were of persons under 21 years of age; that more persons aged 17 were arrested than in any other age group.

Our birth rate is another weak spot. Except for temporary fluctuations, it has been falling for the past hundred years. If it continues to decline even at a somewhat slower rate than it

has in the recent past, the population of the United States will reach its highest point in 1990, and thereafter begin to fall. If the past rate of decline is maintained, or even accelerated, the situation, of course, will be worse.

But juvenile delinquency and the falling birth rate are not the most disturbing aspects of contemporary family life. The most dangerous development of all is the sharp and scandalous rise in the divorce rate. According to a recent report of the Federal Security Agency, divorces in 1945 increased 25 per cent over the previous year and reached the frightening figure of 502,000. If the marriage rate is taken into account, this means that for every three marriages last year, there was one divorce. No doubt, the war had a good deal to do with many of these marital breakdowns, but independently of the war our divorce rate has been steadily rising for years.

As a nation, then, we are not doing a very good job of maintaining the sanctity and integrity of the home. We are not bringing sufficient children into the world to maintain our population; and too frequently, despite a lavish budget for educa-

tion, we are not raising the ones that are born to be useful, law-abiding citizens.

In the present, unsettled condition of the world, the United States has determined as a matter of national policy to maintain the strength of its armed services. But what good will it do to spend billions on armaments if at the same time we permit the nation to rot from within? Let us remain strong, by all means, militarily and industrially, until the threat of war has been banished from the modern world, but let us not neglect the very basis of our national strength—the American family.

There was a time when Jesus Christ was King in the vast majority of American homes; when family life took its inspiration from the life of the Holy Family at Nazareth. Husbands and wives looked upon their marriage contract as a sacred thing, remembering, as they pledged fidelity to one another, a marriage feast celebrated long years ago at Cana in Galilee. They looked upon Christ as a party to their marriage, and their love for one another was deeper and truer because of their love for Him.

Children meant sacrifice in

those days just as they do today, but our Christian forebears were not frightened by this. They knew that marriage is something more than a honeymoon; that it does not exist merely for the individual pleasure of husband and wife. They knew, for they were raised as Christians, that marriage involves responsibilities as well as pleasures, and that only by fulfilling their duties could they fulfil themselves. Our ancestors did not, like cowards, run away from life; they accepted it wholeheartedly because they remembered that their King before them had walked the royal road of the Cross. They took upon themselves the yoke and the burden and they discovered, as the followers of Christ always do discover, that His yoke is sweet, His burden light.

And so, by accepting marriage honestly and bravely, they made a success of it and found a happiness which their modern descendants do not know. In those days there was not a divorce, that is to say, a failure, for every three marriages.

When the majority of our families accepted the rule of Christ over family life, we spent much less per capita on education than we do now, but the juvenile delinquency and juvenile crime

figures were much lower. Children were taught then to know and love Christ; they learned their prayers at their mothers' knees; they were trained in all those virtues—honesty, loyalty, unselfishness, obedience, respect for lawful authority — which make one at the same time a good citizen of the Kingdom of Christ and a good citizen of the United States.

As far as the proper education of our children goes, the failure of the home would not be so dangerous today if the schools were supplying its deficiencies. But in existing circumstances, the majority of our schools cannot remedy the very weakness in the home which is causing all the trouble. They cannot give Christ to the children, to be their inspiration and model and King. They can teach morals and civic virtue, it is true, but how long will their graduates practise a virtue that is divorced from religious motives and sanctions?

In his "Farewell Address," the man whom we hail as the Father of Our Country, said in this connection:

"Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to

the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."

If the great George Washington is correct, we cannot place much reliance on a system of training in which morals are separated from religion. And that puts us back where we started—in the home. We are forced to the logical conclusion that if the future of our country is to be made secure, if we are to stop the growth of the cancer that is destroying us from within, we must restore American family life to Jesus Christ. Christ must rule again in our homes.

Now this is a kind of reform that cannot be accomplished by law. It must come from our hearts, from within, from the free determination of husbands and wives to rededicate themselves to Jesus Christ and to live their married lives as He desires and commands. What we need is a moral revolution that will overturn the modern idols of materialism and selfish individualism and restore Christ to the place of honor and power that is rightfully His. We must return, in short, to those sacred beliefs which give to marriage a

special dignity and nobility, and which make every home in the land a sanctuary and a nursery of Christian morals and civic righteousness.

Perhaps, my dear friends, as we sit thinking over these ideas together, we may be asking ourselves whether Jesus Christ is King in our home. Here is a simple test.

Imagine Our Lord knocking at the door this very afternoon and entering our home, as He entered the homes of those fortunate people who were His neighbors during His stay on earth. Would Christ feel at home in our home? Would He commend the mutual, generous, self-sacrificing love between husband and wife? Would He smile His approval when He saw the children and noted their honesty and obedience and spirit of helpfulness, their affection for one another and their loving respect for their parents? Would He like the atmosphere of our home, because it is serious without being sad, joyous and gay without being dissipated? Because in a word it is Christian?

Would we be ashamed to receive Christ as our guest now, this afternoon?

If the thought of Christ entering our family circle disturbs

our conscience, then He is not King of our home—at least not fully. We have not denied Him perhaps, but we have not given Him either the complete loyalty which we owe Him. Maybe that is why our burdens press so heavily, so that we are tempted at times to throw off the yoke of marriage which we freely and gladly assumed in the days of our young manhood and womanhood. Maybe our love for one

another has grown stale because our love for Christ has first grown cold? Maybe our home is unhappy because Christ no longer rules there as King?

These are questions we must answer for ourselves. No one else can answer them for us. Before we answer them, let us remember that we hold in our hands not only the happiness of our homes, but the whole future of our country, and even of the world.



# WAR IN THE MARKETPLACE

Address given on October 20, 1946

During the past year the country has suffered a series of shocks which have left many of our people groggy and fearful of the future. Having united long enough to bring a foreign war to a victorious conclusion, our major economic groups scarcely waited the firing of the last shot before dissolving their alliance and beginning a kind of civil war at home. As a result, the country is poorer, its prestige abroad is lower and the rival economic groups—industry, labor and agriculture—are worse off than they would have been had they settled their conflicting claims in a reasonable and peaceful way.

At the present time small advantage can be gained by attempting to place the blame for the strikes, and hoarding, and black marketeering of the past twelve months. No doubt the war itself was the chief culprit, the war and original sin. After every major conflict the shift back to a peacetime economy is bound to be difficult, and the people must be given a chance to relax and blow off steam. But this process can go

too far; the return to stability can be too long delayed. Events are moving these days with breath-taking speed, and if the United States is to shape the future according to a democratic pattern, if the four Freedoms are to prevail, we must put our economic house in order and do it fast.

While the more thoughtful of our citizens, including leaders of labor and industry and agriculture, realize all this, no one seems to have an acceptable plan for restoring peace in the marketplace. If anything, the hatreds and suspicions and rivalries are more intense now than they have ever been. Indications are that rural America will continue to fight with urban America over the division of the national income; that different groups in industry will struggle among themselves over the same issue; that labor and management will repeat their tragic battle of last year; and that the warfare between rival labor groups will go on undiminished.

To all those engaged in this struggle it must be obvious that what is needed is a fresh ap-

proach to the problems of the marketplace, a new formula that can resolve the strains and stresses in our economic life and provide a basis for friendly cooperation. The question is: can we find such a formula? After all the suggestions made during the past year by experts and scholars, is it possible that any new and constructive approach could have been overlooked?

I believe that such an approach has been overlooked, although the one I have in mind, while constructive, cannot really be called new. It is rather a very old approach which seems new only because we have ignored it for so long a time. It is this: the leaders of labor and management and agriculture must agree on one simple, fundamental fact—they must agree that the same Jesus Christ who is King of their hearts and their homes is King of the marketplace, too. They must agree that their actions of buying and selling, of producing and distributing are just as rigidly subject to the moral law as any of their other activities. They must acknowledge that, in the final analysis, the last judgment on their policies will be passed not by their dues-paying members, or their customers or stockholders, but

by Jesus Christ, Who will one day come to judge the living and the dead.

This approach may seem strange and unrealistic, and even embarrassing, to some of my listeners, but if it does, that only goes to show how far we have drifted from the religious principles upon which our civilization rests. Granted one or two facts, upon which we would all agree, the proposal to restore Christ to the marketplace is as natural and inevitable as the rising and the setting of the sun.

Consider the logic of the situation. As Christians we are bound to obey the moral law of God as taught by Jesus Christ. But the moral law of God extends to all human actions. It extends, therefore, to all those activities by which in our modern, complex society we produce and distribute wealth. It binds the miner who digs the coal we use in our furnaces; it binds the union to which he belongs; it binds the corporation which employs him; it binds the railroad which carries the coal to market; it binds the dealer who sells it and the consumer who buys it. Every single step in this complicated process, and every single step in all the other complicated processes which go

to make up our economic system, together with all the individuals and organizations engaged therein, are subject to the rule of Jesus Christ.

It is simply not true to say that whatever is good business is also good morals; or, as some put it, that religion should stay within the four walls of the church and refrain from interfering in the marketplace. If a farmer or businessman holds scarce goods off the market, goods which people need badly, because he hopes thereby to realize a bigger profit when the shortage will have become more acute and the suffering more intense, he may be performing an economically shrewd action, but he is also committing a sin. He is violating that law of Christ which tells him to love his brother as he loves himself, and he is violating social justice as well. The same is true of a labor leader who would use his economic power to force an employer to accept an unfair contract. In some quarters such an action might be approved as an example of strong leadership. It would not be approved by Jesus Christ.

If we deny the rule of moral law over economic life, we are placing ourselves in a very difficult position. However embar-

rassing it may be to admit that Christ rules over the marketplace, it is more embarrassing to deny it. For if Christ is not King of the marketplace, if the moral law has no authority there, then it follows that, as far as economics goes, might alone makes right. It follows also that warfare is the natural condition of economic life and that the best that can be hoped for is an armed truce, and some police rules, perhaps, to lessen the bitterness of the struggle when the armed truce becomes open warfare.

This is jungle law. This is the application to business life of the pagan doctrine of the survival of the fittest. To such a brutal depth does economic life degenerate when men deny that right makes might in the marketplace, as it does everywhere else. Those who reject the primacy of Christ over economic life should not be scandalized if employers attempt to exploit their employees, if farmers try to gouge consumers, if to impose unjust demands unions go on strike and disrupt the whole economy. If might makes right in the marketplace, if competition is the only law that rules there and may the devil take the hindmost, then all these actions,

which cause such harm to the general welfare, are above criticism. They are good business. They are profitable.

This is not to say that all competition in the marketplace is bad and all struggle immoral. Within proper bounds competition can be productive of much good; and just as nations are morally justified in defending themselves against an aggressor, so, too, are private groups who use their economic power, within reason, to safeguard their rights. But in such cases power is not substituted for justice; rather it is used to secure or defend it.

Once we understand that the alternative to the rule of Christ over the marketplace is the pagan doctrine of the survival of the fittest, we naturally ask, what in practice does the Kingdom of Christ in the marketplace mean?

It means first of all that those engaged in the production and distribution of wealth, regardless of their function, recognize that all their actions must conform to the moral law. This means, for example, that the terms of a contract between labor and management ought to reflect not the economic strength or weakness of the respective

parties or their shrewdness in negotiations, but the demands of justice and charity. There may not always be agreement on what justice and charity require, but they are the yardsticks, nevertheless, which both parties must always keep in mind, the goal towards which their efforts must be directed.

In the second place, the Kingdom of Christ in the marketplace means that all those engaged in economic life should perform their activities and fulfill their respective duties according to the mind and will of Christ. Just as they feel obliged out of loyalty to Christ to be faithful husbands and good fathers, so they must feel bound to advance the legitimate interests of stockholders, to be honest with consumers, to pay a just wage, to do an honest day's work, as the case may be. They must look upon their vocations as farmers, or workers, or employers, as so many opportunities to grow in holiness, to approach more closely to Christ, to save their immortal souls.

Finally, the rule of Christ over the marketplace means that economic life must be organized in accord with the spirit and teaching of the Gospels. If individuals—workers, employers, farm-

ers—were to resolve to be loyal to Jesus Christ in their economic lives, a great and blessed change would come over the marketplace. But personal devotion to Christ, while fundamental and necessary, is not of itself sufficient to bring about the reforms that are necessary. There must be institutional changes also, which will make it reasonably easy for men of good will to live up to their Christian ideals in the marketplace. The whole framework of economic life ought to be remodeled so that it will conform to the spirit of Christ and to the human needs of His followers.

This will not be an easy task. It can only be accomplished by men who are thoroughly familiar both with Christian doctrine and with economic science and business realities. But it is a task that cannot be postponed merely because it is difficult. The world is being asked today to choose between two rival systems of economics. In the one system the individual is forced to sur-

render both his personal freedom and his freedom of association and to become a cog in a sprawling, dictatorial machine. In the other he retains his individual liberty and his right of free association as well as the chance to assume the responsibility that goes with ownership. In the struggle between these two systems, we cannot afford to fail, because the hopes of free men all over the world depend on us. We must make our system work, but in order to make it work we must go for inspiration to those sacred teachings which are the soul of our democratic civilization. Just as the totalitarian system of economics depends on the false dogma of atheistic materialism, so our system depends on the true dogma of the Kingship of Christ. By restoring economic life to Christ, we can restore peace to the marketplace; we can remedy the weaknesses in our system; we can make it function for our material welfare here and our eternal salvation hereafter.

# THE CHALLENGE TO DEMOCRACY

Address given on October 27, 1946

Throughout the world the Catholic Church celebrates today the feast of the Kingship of Christ.

Beneath that simple statement, which will mean very little to many of our people, there lies the whole tragic story of the past quarter century—the story of a man who was ahead of his time.

By 1925, it had become clear to the late Pope Pius XI that the whole civilized world lay in mortal danger. With a wisdom born of the church's long experience—an experience that stretched back twenty centuries—he saw rising on the horizon a cloud no bigger than a man's hand. And in the cloud he beheld the threat of a second and more terrible war: a vision of cities bombed to rubble, and millions dying, and civilization smashed to pieces. He saw even more: he saw the frail flower of human freedom bend and break before the blast. He saw the return of slavery and the tyranny of the absolute state.

In December of that year the Pope began his great campaign

to save the modern world from the consequences of its folly. He established the Feast of Christ the King. During the next fourteen weary years, with superb courage and astonishing insight, he carried on the good fight for peace and human liberty. The climax came in the dangerous spring of 1937. Within five days, five days that will live forever in history, His Holiness condemned by name the two sources of infection that were poisoning the world and leading it to war and slavery: he condemned atheistic communism and the nazi tyranny of Hitler.

As we celebrate for the twentieth time the Feast of the Kingship of Christ, we know, of course, that Pope Pius XI lost the great battle of his pontificate. For an answer to its agonizing problems, the modern world refused to turn to Christ. It turned instead to dictatorship and war. But the truth which His Holiness spoke was not interred with his bones. It lives on still, as pertinent and challenging as when he first spoke it to a skeptical world. It has

been taken up by his successor, Pope Pius XII, and trumpeted to the four corners of the earth. As the days go by a constantly increasing number of earnest and thoughtful men find it an answer to their doubts and questions.

Pope Pius XI lost a battle to restore all things to Christ. He may yet win the war.

For the war rages still, and will continue to rage until the great issue of our day has been decided one way or the other. Hitler has gone and with him the tyranny he spawned, but the final choice has not yet been made. The modern world must still choose between liberty and human dignity on the one hand, and coercion and collectivism on the other; between freedom and slavery; between democracy and the totalitarian state.

For many of us the grim reality of this choice is not easy to appreciate. Here in the United States we live in a kind of fool's paradise. We have become so accustomed to the exercise of our civic rights and democratic freedoms that we take them for granted, like the air we breathe, and the water we drink. Who among us can even imagine life in any other way?

Too easily we overlook the

gloomy records of the past. We forget that before the coming of Christianity the usual form of government was dictatorship, and slavery was the normal condition of the vast majority of the human race. That the pre-Christian era reached its highest development in the ancient empires of Greece and Rome, we remember well enough; but we do not sufficiently recall that "the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome" were built on the ugly foundation of human slavery.

If we remembered the past, we would understand more clearly the great problem of the present. We might still be shocked, and perhaps discouraged, by the reappearance of slavery and the return of the totalitarian state, but we would not be surprised. Indeed the history of western civilization would lead us to expect exactly what is happening today.

The institution of slavery and the absolute state were destroyed in the western world by one force and one force alone; and that force was Christianity. These ancient evils did not disappear overnight, for they were deeply entrenched, but once western society accepted Jesus Christ, it was only a question of

time before they would disappear. How could men believe that every human being had a personal dignity which stemmed from his creation by God and his redemption by Christ, and at the same time defend a political order which subordinated the individual to an absolute state?

The birth of Christianity was the death of ancient tyranny, for from the natural law as understood by Christian tradition, there grew the precious doctrine of inalienable rights. Now men knew that they possessed rights which came from God, and that since the state had not given them, the state could not take them away. The Founding Fathers of this country learned the lesson well. On the doctrine of God-given, inalienable rights, they reared the structure of American democracy.

How strange, you may hear people say, that after all these years of progress, the modern world should be challenged by the blackest kind of reaction! We have discovered the most hidden secrets of nature; we have conquered space and annihilated time; we have routed illiteracy and taught the masses to read and write. How surprising, then, that after all these tri-

umphs we should find ourselves locked in mortal struggle with the reviving institution of the slave state. How odd that in the full light of the twentieth Century we should have to wage once more the age-old fight for human liberty—for the right to live our lives as free men.

But there is nothing strange or surprising about this. That democracy should be dead these days in large parts of the western world and under severe attack in others, is no more surprising than it is that a tree should die when its roots have been destroyed. For democracy arose in the fertile soil of Christian culture, and now that this culture has become cold with the chill of paganism, now that Christ is so widely ignored and denied, it is the most natural thing in the world that democracy should be tottering.

There is, then, nothing wrong with democracy that Christianity cannot cure. We are where we are, not because the totalitarian state is particularly strong or attractive to people, but because we have sold our glorious heritage of human dignity and freedom for a mess of sensual potage. Whatever we may believe in our hearts, we have said in



practice that we will not have This Man to rule over us. As a result, instead of the Kingdom of Christ, with its respect for right and justice, and its spirit of brotherly charity, the modern world has its Neroes and Diocletians trampling on our historic freedoms and bathing the globe in blood. For the gentle rule of Jesus Christ, the modern world has made the terrible exchange of gangster rule and concentration camps.

In this dark moment of history, does not our course lie straight and clear before us? If we are to save the ideals of democracy, we must bend our knees and pledge again whole-souled allegiance to Jesus Christ: "for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). The sweep of the barbarian, which has now reached the heart of Europe, can be stopped in no other way.

In a notable address last summer, in which he voiced the sentiments of all God-fearing men, Pope Pius XII said bluntly that the choice today lies between "the champions or the wreckers of Christian civilization" (Allocution to the College of Cardinals, June 1, 1946). Why

is it that the wreckers of our civilization seem to realize this so much better than its champions? They are going about their destructive work with an energy, an enthusiasm and clarity of purpose which all of us might well envy and imitate. In the face of our common danger the champions of Christian civilization appear, alas, fearful and uncertain of their course. On one thing only do they seem united: that the new barbarism is the worst form of slavery the world has ever seen, and that people must be steadily warned against it.

That is well and good as far as it goes. But it does not go nearly far enough. If the champions of Christian civilization are going to save freedom in the modern world, they must do more than criticize and raise alarms. They must offer a positive program of their own, a program of social and political reform that will cut to the heart of the evil and lay it bare. Against the threat of slavery, the best defense is to make freedom work.

Right in the beginning we must frankly recognize and boldly proclaim the rule of Christ over public life. Let there be an end once and for all to the

shameful fiction that we can observe the Christian code in our private lives and disregard it in our public lives. In the Christian tradition there is no room for a double standard of morality.

The individual citizen who believes in the Kingship of Christ will accept wholeheartedly all the duties of democratic citizenship. It will not be a matter of indifference to him what laws are passed or what men are elected to office. He will be interested in public affairs and strive to the best of his ability to understand the issues of the day. Before taking his stand on any question, he will weigh the arguments carefully and judge them in the double light of human wisdom and Christian truth.

The office-holder who admits that Christ rules over public life will strive to see that the laws of the land promote the general welfare and not merely the economic interest of clamorous pressure groups. He will be at all times scrupulously honest, as becomes a servant of the people, and on a matter of principle he will stoutly refuse to compromise. Speaking the truth as he

sees it, he will make it clear that, concerned as he is with election to office, he is more concerned with doing his duty to God and country.

The years that lie ahead are certain to be dangerous and difficult, but we can make them glorious years as well. At the present moment, the forces of slavery are on the march and they seem very powerful indeed. But the forces of freedom are more powerful still, if only the champions of freedom will realize it. The same Jesus Christ Who died for us on the Cross, and dying doubly dignified our human nature, remains with us still. By turning to Him who first taught us the freedom of the children of God, we can find the strength and inspiration to make our democracy work.

The answer to dictatorship, and secret police, and concentration camps is very simple and overwhelmingly convincing. It is the loyal acceptance of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ—"a kingdom of truth and life; a kingdom of holiness and grace; a kingdom of justice, peace and love" (Preface of the Feast of the Kingship of Christ).

## THE PURPOSE OF THE CATHOLIC HOUR

(Extract from the address of the late Patrick Cardinal Hayes at the inaugural program of the Catholic Hour in the studio of the National Broadcasting Company, New York City, March 2, 1930.)

Our congratulations and our gratitude are extended to the National Council of Catholic Men and its officials, and to all who, by their financial support, have made it possible to use this offer of the National Broadcasting Company. The heavy expense of managing and financing a weekly program, its musical numbers, its speakers, the subsequent answering of inquiries, must be met. . . .

This radio hour is for all the people of the United States. To our fellow-citizens, in this word of dedication, we wish to express a cordial greeting and, indeed, congratulations. For this radio hour is one of service to America, which certainly will listen in interestedly, and even sympathetically, I am sure, to the voice of the ancient Church with its historic background of all the centuries of the Christian era, and with its own notable contribution to the discovery, exploration, foundation and growth of our glorious country. . . .

Thus to voice before a vast public the Catholic Church is no light task. Our prayers will be with those who have that task in hand. We feel certain that it will have both the good will and the good wishes of the great majority of our countrymen. Surely, there is no true lover of our Country who does not eagerly hope for a less worldly, a less material, and a more spiritual standard among our people.

With good will, with kindness and with Christ-like sympathy for all, this work is inaugurated. So may it continue. So may it be fulfilled. This word of dedication voices, therefore, the hope that this radio hour may serve to make known, to explain with the charity of Christ, our faith, which we love even as we love Christ Himself. May it serve to make better understood that faith as it really is—a light revealing the pathway to heaven: a strength, and a power divine through Christ; pardoning our sins, elevating, consecrating our common every-day duties and joys, bringing not only justice but gladness and peace to our searching and questioning hearts.

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Maryland	Baltimore	WBAL	1090 kc
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