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THE CATHOLIC HOUR

The Cross And The Double Cross

By

RT. REV. MSGR. FULTON J. SHEEN

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**National Council of Catholic Men
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THE CROSS AND THE DOUBLE CROSS

This is Holy Week, when the whole Christian world enters into contemplation of the Cross and the redemption of the world by Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is not so much that the Cross is incredible to the modern mind, for nothing is more understandable than sacrificial love; but rather that the Cross is to such minds irrelevant. A person who denies there is such a thing as sickness does not consider a physician a myth; he considers him irrelevant. In like manner, if one denies he is a sinner how can he need redemption? The sense of guilt, as we have been emphasizing throughout this course, is considered today only as a vestigial remnant of primitive fears, or as a "psychopathic aspect of an adolescent mentality." If there is guilt in the world, it lies in systems, not in persons—such is the modern mentality.

In the 18th century this sort of mind attributed evil to tyrannical governments; in the 19th century to tyrannical classes; and in the 20th century to dictatorships—not all dictatorships of course, only two thirds of them; for Russia, it is said is a "friendly nation". Yes! Friendly like Judas who blistered the lips of Our Lord with a kiss.

Since nothing can disturb the modern man's good opinion of himself, the Cross with its Redemption is meaningless. But it is not as irrelevant as he thinks. The purpose of this broadcast is to indicate that by denying the Cross of Christ, modern man did not escape a cross—no one can; he got a cross—the double-cross.

What happened to the Prodigal Son in the Gospel happened to the modern man. In the first scene he threw off the yoke of the Father's house to live his own life; or, in the language of our day, to be

“self expressive” and “free”, independent of all restraints.

In the second scene, his wealth is gone, his stomach empty, his heart heavy. But do we find him free and independent? On the contrary he becomes a slave to the citizen of a foreign country feeding his swine, whose husks he would have eaten to have filled his belly—no longer his heart—but no man gave him to eat. He who wanted to be free found himself a slave.

Something like that has happened to the modern man. For the last 400 years he has been striving for total independence and absolute autonomy: First from the Church as a spiritual organism; then from the Bible as the revealed word of God; then from the authority of Christ; and finally from religion. By progressive steps he rebelled against his Divine destiny. Like the steward who pretended to be the master of the vineyard, he killed his lord's messenger, that he might possess it forever. Like the prodigal he squandered his spiritual capital until he had nothing to eat except the husks of humanism and behaviorism. He made himself a god, and, in the language of teachers of philosophy in dozens of American universities, he called himself “a creator rather than a creature”.

Because man was a god, it followed he could do no wrong. Since he could not sin, he needed no Calvary. The Cross he hated as George Bernard Shaw, spokesman for the modern man, said: “The Cross in the twilight bars the way.” So he forged an educational system without discipline; he fashioned a philosophy which denied truth, and made good and evil only relative to the individual; he labelled every attempt to restore authority as “Fascism”; every restriction on the part of the govern-

ment against economic selfishness he called "Communism"; and every arrest of racketeers and Communist labor leaders he termed "Nazi-persecution"; he formed civil liberty associations to defend every attempt to destroy civil liberty; and, as a sop to sentimentalism, he made a religion without Hell, a Christ without Justice, a Kingdom of God without God, salvation without a Crucifix, and a Church where a pulpit and an organ replaced the altar of sacrifice. In a word, he refused to see the connection between his own selfish autonomy and the chaos which that selfish autonomy produced in others, and which he hated in them. He was not as logical as Nietzsche who saw that man must either accept the Cross or go mad—and Nietzsche went mad.

Now we are at scene two. As the prodigal found there was no escaping some kind of submission, so the modern man learned that there is no such thing as escaping the Cross. Absolute independence is a myth. Man is truly free only when he acts within the law and not outside it or against it. I am free to draw a triangle only on condition that I give it three sides and not, in a stroke of progressive broad-mindedness, thirty three. I am free to fly in a plane only on condition that I submit myself to the laws of gravitation. To want to be free from the law is not to be free to fly, but to be free to fall. The penalty for the violation of law is unfreedom or slavery. Sin is the opposite of freedom. For that reason Our Lord said, "whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin" (*John 8:34*). If a man gives himself over to drink he loses his freedom; he becomes the servant or the slave of sin. He began by being free to take a drink or not to take a drink; he ended by being no longer free to do anything but take it. To be a slave of passion is the opposite of

freedom. In seeking to be absolutely independent of God and morality, man lost his freedom.

Freedom, an absolute independence, is impossible. Our liberals who wanted a freedom without authority found that out. The choice is not: Will we or will we not accept authority? It is rather: *Which* authority will we accept, the authority of Christ or the authority of public opinion? Those who rejected Divine Truth did not become free-minds; they became slave-minds. That is why so many of them cannot make a judgment about anything until they read the Gallup poll or the morning newspaper. Furthermore, there is no such thing as freedom from discipline. We may only choose between disciplines: A discipline from the inside freely administered by our own sense of righteous, self-perfection, or a discipline from the outside inspired by cruel, tyrannical forces. And that brings us to the point we want to prove: That there is no such thing as living without a cross. We are free only to choose between crosses. Will it be the Cross of Christ which redeems us from our sins, or will it be the Double Cross, the Swastika, the hammer and sickle, the fasces?

Why are we a troubled nation today? Why do we live in fear—we who defined freedom as the right to do whatever we pleased; we who have no altars in our churches, no discipline in our schools, and no sacrifices in our lives? We fear because our false freedom and license and apostasy from God has caught up with us, as it did with the Prodigal. We would not accept the yoke of Christ; so now we must tremble at the yoke of Caesar. We willed to be free from God; now we must face the danger of being enslaved to a citizen of the foreign country. In seeking to live without the Cross, we got a cross

—not one of Christ's making or our own, but the devil's!

The basic spirit of the modern world for the last century has been a determination to escape the Cross. But has the world escaped Calvary? What did Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, China, Czechoslovakia, Albania, Austria, France and other nations get within the past two years but a cross? What is England fearing today but a cross? What do we fear today, but a cross? What does the world fear, but a diabolically cruel, tortured cross made of guns, hammers, sickles, and bombs—the thing that started out to be a cross and then double-crossed itself because it has double-crossed the world.

And that threat throws us into a terrific dilemma. Can we meet that double cross without the Cross? Can a democracy of ease and comfort overcome a system built on sacrifices? Can a nation which permits the break-up of the family by divorce, defeat a nation which forcefully bends the family to the nation? Can they, who for seven years tightened their belts, gave up butter for guns, endured every conceivable limitation, be conquered by ease and comfort? Dr. Alexis Carrel was right in saying that in America: "A good time has been our national cry. The perfect life as viewed by the average youth or adult is a round of ease or entertainment; of motion pictures, radio programs, parties, alcohol, and sexual excesses. This indolent and undisciplined way of life has sapped our individual vigor and imperilled our democratic form of government. Our race pitifully needs new supplies of discipline, morality and intelligence."

The rise of Militarism and the Gospel of Force in the modern world is a result of the vacuum cre-

ated by the abandonment of the Cross. Europe was nourished on Christian virtues; it knew obedience to authority, self-discipline, penance, and the need of redemption. But when it began to starve through the abandonment of the Bread of the Father's House, it seized, like the Prodigal, on the fodder of militarism and the glorification of fame. Like the empty house of the Gospel, the modern world swept itself clean of the Cross of Christ, but only to be possessed by the devils of the double cross. As Voltaire said: "If man had no God, he would make himself one!" So too, we might add, if man had no Cross, he would make himself one. And he has. Apostate from Calvary, the glorification of military virtues in these states is the feeble compensation for a yoke that is sweet and a burden that is light. As Mussolini said on August 24, 1934, "We are becoming a warlike nation—that is to say, one endowed to a higher degree with virtues of obedience, sacrifice, and dedication to country." This so-called heroic attitude toward life is being invoked in deadly earnest by millions in Germany and Russia, and by all who espouse their cause in other nations. In the days when the Cross lived in the hearts of men, war was considered a calamity, a scourge sent by God; but now in the days of the double cross, it is justified as the noblest of virtues for the sake of the nation as in Italy, the race as in Germany, and the class as in Russia. They believe what Van Moltke wrote in 1880: "Without War the world would become swamped in materialism." Imagine! To save us from materialism, we must have war! He is right in saying that to save us from materialism we must have sacrifice. He is wrong in saying it must come from war. But if there is no Cross to inspire it, whence shall it come but from the double cross?

We in America are now faced with the threat of that double cross. To revert to our theme. Our choice is not: Will we or will we not have more discipline, more respect for law, more order, more sacrifice; but, where will we get it? Will we get it from without, or from within, Will it be inspired by Sparta or Calvary? By Valhalla or Gethsemane? By Militarism or Religion? By the double cross or the Cross? By Caesar or by God?

That is the choice facing America today. The hour of false freedom is past. No longer can we have education without discipline, family life without sacrifice, individual existence without moral responsibility, economics and politics without subservience to the common good. We are now only free to say whence it shall come? We will have a sword. Shall it be only the sword that thrusts outward to cut off the ears of our enemies, or the sword that pierces inward to cut out our own selfish pride? May heaven grant that, unlike the centurion, we pierce not the heart of Christ before we discover His Divinity and Salvation.

Away with those educators and propagandists who, by telling us we need no Cross, make possible having one forged for us abroad. Away with those who, as we gird ourselves for sacrifice based on love of God and Calvary, sneer: "Come down from the Cross" (*Matthew 27:40*). That cry has been uttered before on Calvary, as His enemies shouted: "He saved others, himself he cannot save" (*Mark 15:31*). They were now willing to admit he had saved others; they could well afford to do it for now He apparently could not save Himself.

Of course, He could not save Himself. No man can save himself who saves another. The rain cannot save itself, if it is to bud the greenery; the sun

cannot save itself if it is to light the world; the seed cannot save itself if it is to make the harvest; a mother cannot save herself if she is to save her child; a soldier cannot save himself if he is to save his country. It was not weakness which made Christ hang on the Cross; it was obedience to the law of sacrifice, of love. For how could He save us if He ever saved Himself? Peace He craved; but as St. Paul says, there is no peace but through the blood of the Cross. Peace we want; but there is none apart from sacrifice. Peace is not a passive, but an active virtue. Our Lord never said: "Blessed are the peaceful", but "Blessed are the Peacemakers." The Beatitude rests only on those who *make it* out of trial, out of suffering, out of cruelty, even out of sin. God hates peace in those who are destined for war. And we are destined for war—a war against a false freedom which endangered our freedom; a war for the Cross against the double cross; a war to make America once more what it was intended to be from the beginning—a country dedicated to liberty under God; a war of the *militia Christi*: "Having our loins girt about with truth and having on the breastplate of justice . . . the shield of faith . . . the helmet of salvation (*Ephesians* 6:10-17). For only those who carry the Sword of the Spirit have the right and have the power to say to the enemies of the Cross, "Put thy sword back into its scabbard."

The great tragedy is that the torch of sacrifice and truth has been snatched from the hands of those who should hold it, and is borne aloft by the enemies of the Cross. The Pentecostal fires have been stolen from the altar of God and now burn as tongues of fire in those who grind the altars into dust. The fearlessness born of love of God which once challeng-

ed the armies of Caesar is now espoused to Caesar. We live in an age of saints in reverse, when apostles who are breathed on by the evil spirit outdare those animated by the Holy Spirit of God. The fires for causes like Communism, Nazism, and Fascism, that burn downwards, are more intense than the fires that burn upwards in the hearts of those who pay only lip service to God. But this passion by which men deliver themselves over to half-truths and idiocies should make us realize what a force would enter history again if there were but a few saints in every nation who could help the world, because they were not enmeshed in it; who would, like their Master on the Cross, not seek to save the world as it is, but to be saved from it; who would demonstrate to those who still have decent hearts, as we believe we have in America, that it is possible to practice sacrifice without turning the world into a vast slaughter-house. There is no escaping the Cross!

That is why the hope, the real hope of the world, is not in those politicians who, indifferent to Divinity, offer Christ and Barabbas to the mob to save their tumbling suffrage. It is not in those economists who would drive Christ from their shores like the Gerasenes, because they feared loss of profit on their swine. It is not in those educators who, like other Pilates, sneer: "What is Truth"—then Crucify it. The hope of the world is in the crucified in every land; in those bearing the Cross of Christ; in the mothers of Poland who, like other Rachels, mourn for their children; in the wives weeping for their husbands stolen into the servitude of war; in the sons and daughters kissing the cold earth of Siberia as the only one of the things God made that they are left to see; in bleeding feet and toil-worn

hands; in persecuted Jews, blood-brothers of Christ, of whom God said: "He who curses you, I shall curse"; in the priests in concentration camps who, like Christ, in other Gethsemenes, find a way to offer their own blood in the chalice of their own body.

The hope of the world is in the Cross of Christ borne down the ages in the hearts of suffering men, women, and children, who, if we only knew it are saving us from the double-cross more than our guns and ships.

We in America are now brought face to face with the heritage of a freedom derived from God. The hour has struck when we have to take up a Cross. There is no escaping the Cross. Who shall give it to us? Shall it be imposed by chastisement, or shall it be freely accepted by penance? I believe in America's power of regeneration. I believe we can remake ourselves from within in order that we be not remade from without. I believe in the future of America; but I believe in it only as I believe in Easter—after it has passed through Good Friday.

THE CATHOLIC HOUR

1930—Eleventh Year—1941

The nationwide Catholic Hour was inaugurated on March 2, 1930, by the National Council of Catholic Men in cooperation with the National Broadcasting Company and its associated stations. Radio facilities are provided gratuitously by NBC and the stations associated with it; the program is arranged and produced by NCCM.

The Catholic Hour was begun on a network of 22 stations, and now carries its message of Catholic truth on each Sunday of the year (and Good Friday) through a number of stations varying from 90 to 107, situated in 40 states, the District of Columbia, and Hawaii, including one short-wave station broadcasting to the entire western world. Consisting of an address mainly expository, by one or another of America's leading Catholic preachers, and of sacred music provided usually by one of Father Finn's musical units, the Catholic Hour has distinguished itself as one of the most popular and extensive religious broadcasts in the world. A current average of 40,000 audience letters a month, about twenty per cent of which come from listeners of other faiths, gives some indication of its popularity and influence.

The program's production costs now run to more than \$45,000 a year—less than eight dollars per station per Sunday—which must be raised entirely by voluntary subscription. The National Council of Catholic Men invites all those who are interested in the maintenance of this far-reaching and effective work of religion to contribute to its support.

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