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THE CATHOLIC HOUR

Universality Of Judgment

By

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National Council of Catholic Men
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UNIVERSALITY OF JUDGMENT

America today is too inclined to judge its cause by the wickedness of its enemies rather than by the Justice of God. But in comparison to what we *ought to be* as creatures of God, are we so innocent? I speak not as a politician rallying citizens to a point of view, but as a priest stirring consciences unto true peace with their God. I am not interested in showing you how wicked are the three villains, but rather *how right we ought to be* before we can call them wicked. That is why last Sunday we stressed that this war is a Judgment of God—not an arbitrary and capricious judgment, but rather the moral consequence of our acts. Today we complete that idea by saying it is a judgment of God upon the entire world—not that all nations are guilty before God in the same degree, for obviously they are not; but that apostasy from God, forgetfulness of His Law, is a world-phenomenon, not the exclusive possession of two or three peoples.

What we are now going to say will not be popular, but it will be true. Perhaps I should say, because it is true it will be unpopular. It is this. The difference between the paganism of Hitler and the paganism of much of the rest of the world, is a difference only of degree, not of kind; of quantity not of quality. Note that I am comparing paganisms, nothing else. What Hitler hands out in concentrated form, we in America sell in bulk; what Hitler sells wholesale, we sell retail. Paganism there has a social expression; here it is an individualized expression, but it is still paganism. Hitler tolerates no good thing which is opposed to the evil of his paganism; we allow the good but tolerate the evil which undermines it and call it "broadmindedness". Hitler's evil is an abscess, ours is a boil, but

the germ is the same. Because he is at war and we are at peace does not prove there is a difference in quality, for the same philosophy of life can be pursued under a false peace as well as by war. Paganism and idolatry and alienation from God have reached full bloom and blossom and fruit in Germany, but in America the seed has been planted. What Hitler has done is to push to their logical extreme the very errors that we have so far kept within the four walls of class rooms and between the covers of text books. He has, with a frightening consistency, swept away all laws, customs, politics, and economics which paid lip-service to God, but denied Him in practice.

What Dostoevsky wrote as far back as 1850 has come to pass: "I should not be surprised if there should suddenly arise from some quarter or another, some low born gentleman, or rather of retrograde and cynical demeanor, who, setting his arms akimbo should say to you all 'how now, gentlemen?' Would it not be a good thing, if, with one consent, we were to kick all this solemn wisdom to the winds, and to send those logarithms to the devil and to begin our lives again according to our own stupid whims" (*Letters of the Underworld*). That is precisely what Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini have done; they have externalized the rottenness of the world and pushed rebellion against God to its logical conclusion of rebellion against man.

Now for some evidence that the difference between the paganization of life in Nazi Germany and the paganization of life in the United States is only a difference of quantity not quality:

Firstly, consider the common philosophy of the country. There is not a single secular college or university in the United States that does not teach

in one form or another the philosophy of Pragmatism. Pragmatism is that particular philosophy which denies that there is any absolute truth, absolute goodness, or absolute justice. The most common expression of the philosophy of Pragmatism is that truth and goodness and justice are relative to the utility of the individual. As one professor at Harvard taught: If the idea of God is useful to you, God exists. If the idea is not useful to you, then God does not exist. Hitler in so many words has said to us: "You Americans are right in saying that there is no such thing as truth or goodness or justice. You are right too in saying that these things are relative to needs. But I say they are not relative to the needs of the individual as you do, but to the needs of the race. If therefore, you Americans eliminate the moral law and God from your education on the basis of utility, I can by exactly the same philosophy obliterate nations on the basis of what is useful to the German Reich. If you get rid of God on the grounds of utility, why cannot I get rid of nations?"

What is the difference between his Pragmatism and ours? There is no difference in kind, there is only a difference in degree.

Consider this second fact: There are, every year in the United States, about one and a half million couples, who, before either a representative of God or of the State, pledge themselves to love one another until death do them part. One out of every five of these marriages ends in divorce or a repudiation of contract. Hitler and his paganism say to us: "You Americans do not believe that a contract is inviolable; neither do I. You believe that treaties can be broken; so do I. There is this difference, however, between you and me. All that you do by

your infidelity is to destroy the family. I am not interested in destroying anything as small as the family, I am interested only in destroying nations. But the philosophy I invoke is no different from yours. You say a contract made at the altar can be broken even for the sake of pleasure. Why cannot I say a contract made at Geneva or Versailles can be broken? Will you who profess to believe in God hold me to a more binding morality than I who set myself up as God? Am I not doing to the international courts of justice precisely what twenty per cent of your Americans are doing to the domestic courts of justice—repudiating solemn obligations, rejecting loyalties rooted in God?" That is the difference between his Pragmatism and ours—it is a difference only in degree, not in kind. It begins to be slightly ridiculous when a divorced man, living with his third or fourth wife in conscious violation of God's law, goes into a fit of rage because Hitler broke his treaty. I am not saying that Hitler is justified in breaking his treaties because we break ours; I am saying that none of us is justified, for we are all under God and we shall suffer the penalties for the violation of His law.

Please do not misunderstand me. I am not saying we are as bad as Hitler. All I am trying to do is to bring out the absurdity of the pagan way of life which considers us just because our enemies are so wicked. We are not a Christian nation, neither are we godless. We are what might be called "neutral". We treat God as we might a President Emeritus of a University. He has survival value, but without authority. Many Americans will admit that God plays an important role in their individual lives; they will also admit that He is the Order behind the cosmos; but between those two extremes of the in-

dividual heart and the universe—in the social order of politics, economics, international relations, business, and education—the majority of Americans hardly ever advert to God. Our whole national thinking is geared to a tolerance of religion alongside the secular, but to no organic connection between the two. Religion has been treated solely as an individual concern, while national economic and political well-being are considered social. Instead of creating an *a-religious* or neutral social order as many planned, they created one where irreligion preempted the social order. When the eyes are excluded from the human organism we have not merely an eye-less man, but a blind man. Exiling religion from the social structure and from education was not a mere negation; it was a privation of due order. The body without the soul is not a living machine; it is a cadaver. A nation without God is not humanist; it is godless.

What shall we do? Make ourselves worthy to be defenders of God's justice! That means first repentance, then action. History knows no other way by which nations escape the visitation of their iniquities save by a return to God through a rebirth of justice. That is sound Judaism! This is sound Christianity! This is sound Americanism! Did not the first President warn that, "We ought to be no less persuaded that the propitious smiles of heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards eternal rules of order and right which heaven itself has ordained?"

Would to God that all believers in religion, instead of accommodating God to the way the godless live, would preach once more repentance and guilt. Would to God another Abraham Lincoln would arise to say to the America of our day what that great

President said to the America of his day: "It is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God; to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth announced in the Holy Scripture and proven by all history, that these nations only are blessed. And inasmuch as we know that by His Divine Law nations, like individuals, are subjected to punishments and chastisements of this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war which now desolates the land may be a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole people? We have been recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown; but we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand that preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior virtue and wisdom of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us. It behooves us then to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness."

In our own times we find such affirmation of the war as the Judgment of God even in the afflicted nations. For example, Archbishop Saliege of Toulouse in a pastoral letter to his people on the occasion

of the Fall of France said: "Do not say: 'Our cause is just, God will make it triumph'. In the Gospel it is written: 'Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice'. Let us say rather: We must work, we must endure and God will come to our assistance. Have we endured enough? Have we prayed enough? Have we repaid sixty years in which the spirit of France has suffered all the sicknesses of the mind; in which the French will has become weakened; in which French morality has sunk; in which anarchy has so strangely taken strength? God have pity on us. We have driven God from the school and from the forum. We have robbed our priests and our nuns. We have stripped the Church. We have established and multiplied the palaces of evil. We have supported unhealthy and depraved literature. We have supported white slavery, the sale of human flesh. We have profaned the Sunday, forgotten Your Commandments, abused the work of women and of children. O Lord, we ask for pardon."

From England we hear the same idea, as Cardinal Hinsley tells his people: "We too have sinned." We hear it also in the voice of another clergyman: "It is the Christians who ought to see and declare that the present state of Europe is the culmination of a trial which has been proceeding over a period of centuries and the registering of a sentence which will have to be proclaimed in more and more violent terms until its justice is acknowledged by all whom it concerns, for European man has been proudly emancipating himself from the rule of God . . . These tribulations register God's judgment and condemnation, and they are His summons to repentance. We cannot receive salvation from on high until we acknowledge the doom that we deserve."

Which shall it be? Shall we concentrate on the evils of our enemies or on the Justice of God? I say: Fear Him, not as we fear evil, but fear Him as we fear losing what we love. The more we love anyone, the greater is our fear lest misfortune or death steal that person away. So with ourselves. Out of love of God, as a nation we must begin with "fear" for the "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (*Psalms* 110:9): First the fear of the sanctions of His Justice, then the fear of betraying the blessings of His Mercy. God is no tyrant waiting to catch us in our misdemeanors; if He were He would have blotted us all out of existence centuries ago. But He is Divine Justice and as such we cannot expect to rebel against His love and escape the consequences; for by whatsoever a man sinneth, so shall he be punished. The law of God is not arbitrary or external, but just and inexorable, for the wages of sin is death. Once we recognize this Justice, we prepare ourselves for that holier fear—the fear of hurting the thing we love, which makes us cry out with the publican: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner" (*Luke* 18:13). It is new hearts we need.

But what good does it do in a nationwide broadcast such as this to make an appeal for repentance? As regards many people it does absolutely no good; it only vulgarizes and cheapens the pearls. But while I am talking to everyone, I am appealing particularly to those with spiritual sensitiveness among the Jews, Protestants, and Catholics who are willing to be their brothers' keepers and their nations' saviours; the chosen few who understand repentance not as a wordy shedding of tears, but as a vocation, a call to a new way of life. There may be only one Catholic who will respond, but let that one Catholic

take upon himself the task of daily offering his Mass for the salvation of America; there may be only one Jew, but let him take upon himself the task of daily entering his synagogue, begging God to help him live up to the Law; there may be only one Protestant, but let him enter his church to pray for the full implications of the Divinity of Christ. There may be only one who before never thought of God who will respond. But these few scattered throughout the nation will do more good for America than all the financial schemes and economic theories plotted in our parliaments and our classrooms. The little book *What Can I Do?*, which I have written to accompany this series, will be sent free to anyone who wants to know what he can do to be happy on the inside and a good American on the outside.

It will not be easy. There is sacrifice involved, for there must be a cross for everyone who seeks to be what God wants him to be. As yet it is not God's will that we should be crucified. If we take up the cross of sacrifice for our fellowman, it is because there is set before us and before them the great and surpassing joy of the peace and love of God. May God bless you who accept the challenge; may He inspire you who reject it that we as Americans may meet where Lincoln would have us meet—in national reparation; and where God would have us meet—in a return like prodigal children to His loving arms.

What good will it do to defeat Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin—I am sorry to offend the Liberals by including Stalin—unless we are prepared to build a different and a better world than the one which is collapsing? Shall we build another godless world on top of this world war as we did in 1918, or shall we build on other foundations: "For other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid; which is

Jesus Christ' (I *Corinthians* 3:11)? It is not a single victory America must win, but a double one—over the enemy from without and the enemy from within. And this much is absolutely certain: America will never be defeated from without so long as we are not defeated from within. God love you!

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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454
