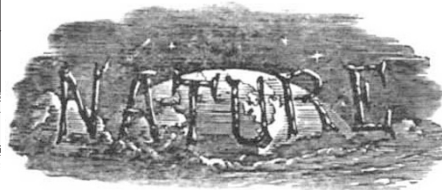


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THE REPUDIATION OF TRUTH

LEADERS of the various faiths delivered no uncertain message on May 26, the Day of National Prayer. With one voice they proclaimed the Allied cause to be the cause of freedom, truth, decency, and civilization.

"We are called," declared the Archbishop of Canterbury, "to defend our land and all that we hold dear within it, the wider Commonwealth that has so wondrously grown up around it, and our common heritage of freedom. Please God, this we shall do with all our might. But more than this—we are called to take our place in a mighty conflict of Right against Wrong. The ruthless invasions of peace-loving countries . . . have shocked the moral conscience of the world, at least where that conscience is free to act and speak. They lay bare a mere unbridled lust of power, under whose pressure all the old sanctities of truth, justice, mercy, and freedom are trampled under foot. To hesitate to brand this force which has been let loose upon the world as essentially evil would be to scorn all those moral standards which have been slowly and painfully established by mankind to give security and honour to the common life."

The Archbishop of York spoke to similar effect :

"The whole future history of Europe is at stake. Upon the issue of the conflict now joined the quality of civilization in the coming period depends. Our cause is the cause of freedom and mutual trust. With the German method of the broken promise goes contempt for the rights of the weak and the small. In such a world there can be no justice and no freedom."

Cardinal Hinsley, Archbishop of Westminster, uttered a vigorous denunciation of the Nazi regime :

"Peace has been murdered between nations because the party in power in Germany has avowedly cancelled truth from its programme, and

has declared that our traditional Christian civilization is to be shattered by the might of the 'immortal Nordic race'. This new racial idolatry justifies to its votaries everything that the party wills for its own interests.

"For years past the youth of the German nation have been trained to use the discoveries and inventions of science, the fruits of industry, all their energies and talents, for the glory of total warfare. The gospel of pride and hate has been loudly preached to a large, receptive audience, unhappily comprising the mass of the German nation.

"Now at length Christians understand. No liberty is possible, no decency in human life, if a pagan people may subdue by its fury, and scourge with scorpions, the rest of mankind."

The Rev. Leslie Weatherhead, speaking in the City Temple, said :

". . . we are placed in the dreadful dilemma of either using the awful and ghastly weapon of war—a weapon chosen by our enemies after every other means of settling differences had been tried by us ; or else enlarging—perhaps through the world—an area in which the Nazi evil is rampant ; an evil in terms of broken promises, persecution of Christian and innocent people, the torturing of Jews, the denial of freedom, the suppression of truth, the imprisonment of pastors, the idolatry and supremacy of the State over all the rights of the individual, and perhaps worst of all, the training of little children, for generations ahead, to worship the idols of war, tyranny and oppression. Whatever we may feel about our own individual attitude to war, surely we are trustees for the generations to come, and must do our utmost not to let go the liberty which is *their* birthright."

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland on May 25 affirmed that

"the present war is not merely a clash of nations, or merely a war of defence of national boundaries

and Empire interests, but a mortal combat, the outcome of which will determine for many generations whether a large part of the world is to live under conditions of increasing freedom and honesty and truth and light. . . ."

The Chief Rabbi, Dr. Hertz, added his testimony :

"Nazism is the enemy of man, and our whole spiritual heritage—human brotherhood, human freedom, human decency—is being jettisoned by the pirate captains of the Nazi ship of State."

The World Congress of Faiths invited Hindu, Moslem and Buddhist leaders in India and Burma to join in the observance of the National Day of Prayer. Christians, Jews, Mohammedans and Hindus attended churches, synagogues, mosques and temples throughout Malaya on the same day.

Such unanimity is good evidence of the feeling of moral revulsion aroused among religious leaders of all faiths by the Nazi regime. It is clear that to them the present conflict is a struggle between civilization and barbarism. The reasons for viewing it in this light are evident. In what does civilization consist? Not in material wealth or productive power, not in the amenities and comforts of life, not in an advanced scientific technique, not in organization and machinery, not even in literacy and education. It is possible to enjoy all these benefits and be civilized, but it is no less possible to enjoy them and be barbarous. All these are external matters and do not touch the spirit of a community, and it is the spirit that is civilized or barbarous; other things are external trappings only, which may be impressive or comparatively poor; they scarcely matter. The civilized tradition seems to be characterized by, and based upon, a twofold reverence, that is, reverence for the human being as such, and for truth as a supreme value.

Where these two are respected, there civilization can be said to exist, even if there be only a modest material equipment. Neither laboratories nor factories, nor of necessity educational establishments, of themselves make a State civilized. It may be said that there have existed civilizations in which respect for the individual as such, and for truth, has been absent or in abeyance; but such cultures, if they have existed, have been alien to the tradition to which European civilization belongs, which is a tradition of tolerance and respect for truth and personality. These principles may often have guided actual practice very imperfectly; but however far the majority of

people have fallen short, they have not actually turned their backs upon them. For that we have had to wait until the present generation, and now over a considerable area of Europe, traditional ideals are denied and scorned. The unique individual has now become a unit indistinguishable from other units, a cog in the military, industrial, or political machine. As a human being he has no rights as against the divine State, for the sake of which he exists, and from which he derives any trivial value that may inhere in him.

As for truth, both in the sphere of scientific theory, and in that of public and private behaviour, it has been cynically repudiated. Science, whether in biology, anthropology, psychology, or history has been subordinated to the needs of propaganda and imposed dogma. It is inspired no longer by the love of truth but by the interests and policy of a party. As for truth in action and behaviour, it has been displaced by the most cynical lying and treachery.

The present conflict, then, is one of civilization against its negation, and is a struggle for the preservation of individual freedom of speech and thought, as well as for the preservation of the sanctity of international and other agreements. There have been many suggestions that this is a war of Christianity against Paganism, but the fact would seem to be that the principles above described as being integral to civilization, namely, respect for the individual human being and for truth, are fundamental to all spiritual and moral religions—Christian and otherwise. Spiritual religion as an activity, not only of the group but also of the individual moral personality, involves the belief in freedom, and through its claim to establish contact between the devotee and the highest reality, involves the belief in the supreme value of truth. History shows how closely ideals of freedom and truth are bound up with spiritual and moral religion, and how prominent has been the part played by religion in the development of the civilized tradition—the tradition which is now under threat of demolition.

"The essence of all great religious systems," writes Sir Richard Gregory in his recently published "*Religion in Science and Civilization*"*, "is belief in the attainment of high ideals by devotion of service to them. Different individuals and communities require different doctrines and rituals to bind them together in worship of any kind, but

* *Religion in Science and Civilization*. By Sir Richard Gregory. Pp. xiii + 366 + 16 plates. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1940.) 12s. 6d. net.

all such formularies are only ancillary aids to a universal faith in the possibility of ascending towards the highest good by human endeavour."

But not only is the present a struggle of true religion against idolatry (idolatry being the worship of the creature, for example, the State, and not of the Creator), but also it is a struggle of science against superstition. Not only is the Nazi doctrine of racialism, the *völkisch* philosophy of life, a pseudo-scientific dogma, but also the interpretation of evolutionary theory which the Nazis borrowed from Nietzsche, is crude and barbarous in the extreme, being what T. H. Huxley characterized and repudiated as "the gladiatorial theory of existence". Sir Richard Gregory, in the work above mentioned, quotes the noble and well-known passage from the Romanes Lecture in which those words occur, and adds, "This is the religious message of science; and all the evils of civilized life arise from the neglect of it by individuals and communities". Huxley's words have a singular relevance to-day:

"The practice of that which is ethically best involves a course of conduct which, in all respects, is opposed to that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence. In place of ruthless self-assertion it demands self-restraint; in place of thrusting aside, or treading down, all competition, it requires that the individual shall not merely respect but shall help his fellows."

On the human level, the further advance of the creative process demands co-operation rather than strife; thus the Nazi doctrine is reactionary as well as puerile. As for the glorification of war, popular in Nazi and some other circles, history and anthropology give little justification for it.

"War represents only one phase in the development of civilization," writes Sir Richard Gregory, in a fine chapter on "The Cultural Aspects of War". "The contribution to advancement by peoples has not been through their warlike qualities, but by other thoughts and actions. The spiritual evolution of man, as represented by all that is best in civilization throughout the ages, and as inspired by the most exalted and ethical teachers, has not proceeded in its upward course through war but in spite of it."

But it is indeed in no spirit of glorification of war or race that the present struggle against the enemies of the European cultural tradition is being waged. The same writer makes this clear:

"When the deliberate policy of a State is to impose its system by force upon people who wish to be free and have entirely different ideals, all believers in liberty of conscience and in the principles of natural cultural development should range themselves against such aggression."

It is a bitter tragedy; but yet more calamitous would be the tragedy if the cause of civilization were allowed to go by default.

PROGRESS OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY

The Record of the Royal Society of London for the Promotion of Natural Knowledge

Fourth edition. Pp. viii + 578 + 19 plates. (London: Royal Society, 1940.) 21s. net.

IT is twenty-eight years since, at the 250th anniversary of its incorporation, the Royal Society last issued an edition of its "Record". A possessor of the volume of 1912 will find, on studying that of 1940, that, although the two are almost uniform in outward and inward physique and necessarily have various parts of the text in common, there is so much that is new and valuable in the present edition that ownership of the earlier volume does not exempt him from having this also. Nor should its use be limited to scientific persons: any student of the general history of our time who ignores it, or treats cursorily what it can show him, would miss something that is vital to his theme.

Those topics which are common to both editions have evidently been examined *de novo*; and no sentence, passage, or section has been reprinted unless its facts, its phrasing, and its place in the newly told story have stood against the keen scrutiny which time and the recorder have exercised. The account of the foundation and early history, which occupied 47 pages in 1912, is matched now by 85 pages—Chapter i—on the rise and growth of the Society, in which new matter of the seventeenth century is introduced in a rearranged story, and wholly new sections describe the Society in the eighteenth century (10 pp.), the nineteenth (21 pp.), and the twentieth up to the recent breakdown of that remarkable period (12 pp.). The texts and translations of charters, and the statutes, formerly in the main text, are now transferred to appendixes, as are the lists of patrons, officers, medallists and lecturers, with the complete chronological and alphabetical lists