

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

### Reflections on a Quarter-Century

*Man is born into trouble, as the sparks fly upward.*

—Job: 1:1

As a factor in establishing international peace, religion's record is an uneven one. In the upheavals of Western civilization it has been as often a contributing as an ameliorating force. Yet the conviction persists that in an appeal to transcendent notions lies the best, perhaps last, hope for limiting humankind's propensity for warfare.

So it was that on February 10, 1914, anxious about the possibility of war in Europe, Andrew Carnegie called a dinner meeting of twenty-five religious leaders—Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish—at his home in New York City with the purpose of forming "The Church Peace Union." The Scotch Presbyterian Carnegie, steel magnate and by this time philanthropist, had already founded the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He had become convinced, however, that the overlooked and truly potent force for peace was the common religious heritage of Germany, England, and the United States. To the religious leaders now assembled around his dinner table he entrusted the income from a \$2 million endowment to advance the cause of peace.

Fulfillment of The Church Peace Union's immediate hopes was soon frustrated. Ninety American and European delegates who assembled at Constance, Germany, in August, 1914, shortly were faced with the outbreak of war and given the choice of internment or leaving Germany at once. A rump session met in London and established the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship Through the Churches.

During the war The Church Peace Union and the Alliance were virtually indistinguishable. They continued in that cooperative mode through the unsuccessful fight for U.S. ratification of the League of Nations. Arthur Brown, an original CPU trustee, said upon looking back: "None of our goals were accomplished."

During two decades following World War I, however, certain organizational changes and goals were achieved. There were three new lines of activity: (a) an attempt to bring representatives of other religious faiths (Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim) into The Church Peace Union despite "irreconcilable" differences; (b) extensive work with European Protestant groups through the CPU's secretary general, Henry A. Atkinson, which was an important factor in establishing the World Council of Churches in 1948; and (c) mobilization of churches and church-affiliated groups such as the Federal Council of Churches (now the National Council of Churches) to lobby for and assist in the establishment of the United Nations in 1945. On these activities Brown looked back with pleasure.

The very success of such endeavors shifted to other institutions such tasks as organizing international religious groups or advocating various church posi-

tions, and The Church Peace Union (which in 1961 changed its name to the Council on Religion and International Affairs) moved out of the advocacy business altogether. The whole world was now more complex; the actors proliferated, were often unshaven, even unruly. CRIA opted to pursue another goal in the cause of establishing international peace with justice: that of examining the role that ethics play in international affairs, especially in the formation of U.S. foreign policy.

Regional conferences were organized to explore this aspect of foreign policy questions. Dozens of books and pamphlets were published, including *The Nature of Man*, edited by A. William Loos in 1950; and in the '60s such works as *Ethics and National Purpose*, by Kenneth W. Thompson; *Morality and Modern War*, by John Courtney Murray; and *Modern War and the Pursuit of Peace*, by Theodore R. Weber.

CRIA today pursues a four-pronged program to promote the cause of peace with justice:

1. publications, principally *Worldview* magazine
2. discussion groups
3. a variety of ongoing research projects on such subjects as U.S. church-state tensions vis-à-vis the admission of refugees; religion and nationalism; ethics and foreign policy (college-level lectures); the North-South dialogue (a program developed for minority colleges); and global economics and religion
4. international conferences on "values in conflict," using these discussions with delegates from the world's major economic and political powers to formulate a new standard of normative international relations.

The problem that continues to get in the way of advancing such a cause remains the same: war. This may well be an irreducible dilemma. Certainly there are those who hold, as did British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in addressing the United Nations in June, that "wars are caused not by armaments but the ambition of aggressors." If such a formulation of the problem is correct, any real hope of its solution ought not to be encouraged. Yet we cannot stop there but must demand further inquiry into the nature of man's ambition. Is it the same as that of the nation-state?

To speak of international aggressors is to speak of individuals who act in their political capacity through the state. The full horror of this potential was expressed by Freud in his essay "Thoughts for the Times of War and Death" (1915):

...our conscience is not the inflexible judge that ethical teachers are wont to declare it, but in its origin is *dread of the community* and nothing else. When the community has no rebuke to make, there is an end of all suppression of the baser passions, and men perpetrate deeds of cruelty, fraud, treachery, and barbarity so incompatible with their civilization that one would have held them to be impossible.

Philosophers of many persuasions have addressed the basic issue of man's aggressiveness, his will to dominate. However tenuous man's progress in the private moral sphere, the control of aggression in social

groups and finally in the nation-state is more tenuous by far.

Reinhold Niebuhr, a great Christian theologian, faced such questions in his book *Moral Man and Immoral Society* written fifty years ago. He concluded that while the difference between the moral standards of individuals and states was not absolute, there was in practice a dual standard of moral conduct. This fact is everywhere regretted. John Bennett wrote,

I am not sure which is worse: to claim that the policies and actions of one's nation have a special Christian sanction; or to affirm a double standard, which leaves all that one does on behalf of the nation outside the sphere in which Christian moral convictions are relevant. In either case, the nation in relation to other nations escapes rigorous Christian criticism.

Just such a dualistic formulation was opposed by Hans J. Morgenthau. As he stated in *Scientific Man v. Power Politics* (1946):

No civilization can be satisfied with such a dual morality; for through it the domain of politics is not only made morally inferior to the private sphere but this inferiority is recognized as legitimate and made respectable by a particular system of political ethics.

The value of Morgenthau's analysis is that it continues to keep the pressure on the personal character of the actors and not on a Leviathan or a "general will" or any other theoretical entity beyond the empirical and rational world. Yet it is a paradox that the Enlightenment's separation of reason from faith (the distinction between "knowing" something and "believing" something) has in our time placed the question of controlling man's nature and therefore the life of the planet in the realm of belief rather than reason—the opposite of what the Enlightenment had anticipated.

The Enlightenment was confident, in the early onrush of scientific discoveries and the development of scientific methods, that it was only a matter of time until science worked its wonders in the political and moral sphere: that a "science of politics" would reduce the "aberration" of international conflict altogether. President Woodrow Wilson detected in 1917 "the beginning of an age in which it will be insisted that the same standards of conduct of responsibility for wrong shall be observed among nations and governments that are observed among the individual citizens of civilized states." But the ability of human reason on its own to judge human activity in empirical terms is no longer convincing. We are left with Faith. And here we must mention three major formulas for resolving international conflict through faith: those offered by Christianity, Marxism, and world federalists.

To describe these approaches to peace as suprarational is not to denigrate their sincerity or even utility. ("Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" [Hebrews 11:1].) The need for faith has come about through the demonstrated universal failure of reason to rid man's nature

of its aggressive character. At the same time, it confirms mankind in the uncertain steps he takes toward perfection. "[W]e know it to be characteristic of the libido," said Freud, "that it refuses to subordinate itself to reality in life." In other words, against the somber analysis of reality in such works as Jonathan Schell's *The Fate of the Earth*, the possibility of a successful solution most likely resides in the realm of faith.

Christianity's answer to the problem is love and selflessness, thereby eliminating that selfishness which prevents perfect justice. Marxism lays its better future at the feet of the economic engine and the dialectic it sees producing a classless society, which will create the "new man." World federalists believe that an international administration to institutionalize procedures will bring order out of international chaos—the U.N. is the current instrument—in company with an internationally perceived and accepted normative ethical system.

What all these solutions have in common is their mystic/religious quality—that is, a sincere belief, in the absence of empirical evidence, that their philosophy will produce the world-saving results. But the evidence of history so far indicates the constancy of human nature, not signs of its changing. The danger of more and more extensive wars therefore remains—as witness some twenty wars of varying intensity, importance, and tragedy that are being waged even now.

Why should a group like CRIA keep on, if the possibility of any solution to war may well be illusory? Niebuhr called illusions dangerous because they encourage terrible fanaticisms. He believed they can be brought under the control of reason, but added: "One can only hope that reason will not destroy the illusion before its work is done." This completed his own dialectic circle.

By this same logic, idealism always rises to battle such pessimism. The human spirit longs for something better, otherwise humankind would view the world as it is and concede defeat. Freud observed that "we shall still have to struggle for an indefinite length of time with the difficulties which the intractable nature of man puts in the way of every kind of social community," yet he notes that civilization itself, glued together largely by hypocrisy, still offers "the prospect of each new generation achieving a farther-reaching transmutation of instinct, and becoming the pioneer of a higher form of civilization."

On the occasion of *Worldview's* twenty-fifth anniversary, it is appropriate that CRIA reaffirm its dedication to that greater understanding which may yet lead to a new standard of normative international relations, recognizing this as a work of hope and faith. With Kant we say: "Even if the ideal of a perpetual peace should remain only an aspiration, nevertheless we do not hesitate to adopt the plan of working for it without ceasing. For that is our duty."

Robert J. Myers  
President, CRIA