

True Democracy

(Alumni Prize Essay by Gavan P. Monaghan).

IN the titanic struggle just ended, the world has experienced the sorrow and misery which are the fruits of the false doctrines, spread broadcast over the earth for the past century. That great struggle resulted from the adoption of an ideal, wholly at variance with that which Christ gave to the world. It was the last stand of imperial autocracy against the rights of the people to rule themselves; a war on mankind waged by those who would dominate the world by their cold, inhuman philosophy; and it is for us who have espoused the sacred cause of freedom—the cause of Democracy—to fight against those who would oppress one class, so that the other might live in ease and comfort.

Democracy is government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Its principal slogan is equality of opportunity for all. It gives every man a chance to rise to his own proper level without hindrance; but it does not by any means promise that every man will rise to the same level. True Democracy promises not that every man will become a Caesar or an Alexander, but that he may develop the best that is in him; that his talent may have full scope for the play of its qualities. The aim of Democracy is not to do away with human inequalities, but to give them free play within their proper sphere. There are many reasons why inequalities should exist.

If none did exist, in the industrial world there would be no goal to which man might strive; there would be nothing to fire his ambition; should he work strenuously, he would gain no more than the

man who idles ; and, as laziness is inherent in human nature, all mankind would soon be idling ; progress would be but slow, and great evil and vice would permeate the hearts of the people.

Again, although without inequality there might be some science and art, there would not be enough for the development of man's faculties. The serious study of science, the development of literature, of music, painting and architecture necessarily supposes a class provided with leisure and means : therefore some classes must be subordinated to others.

If inequality did not exist, political organization might be possible on a small scale as in village communities ; but we could have no state, no nation, for the complex structure of a state requires the superiority of some men and the inferiority of others ; it implies variety as the requisite of harmony, and subordination as the requisite of order.

When we come to the realm of religion, we find the same inherent need of inequalities. True it is that with equality between men, many virtues can be practised ; but how could we expect service, reverence, and obedience, which are so necessary in religion, if all men were equal ?

It is precisely on account of human inequalities that Democracy can exist. If all men were equal in talent and virtue, there would be no superiority, no subordination, and anarchy would be rampant. In fact, this is what we are experiencing in many parts of the world to-day,—the result of the fallacy that all men are equal. Socialism teaches this nefarious doctrine which has been adopted by many countries in the world. Bolshevism, which is Socialism on the war path, is bringing Russia to the verge of the abyss ;

and Germany is in the throes of a revolution as a result of the Socialistic doctrines, which have permeated the minds of the people.

True Democracy is based upon the fundamental truth that society is a social body, all the members of which are united for the purpose of helping one another. Each member, therefore, must contribute towards the welfare of the society, and it in its turn must provide for the welfare of the individual. In every conflict between society and the individual, the latter must bow to the former since the common good is paramount.

One thing that Democracy would impress on our minds is that no social regeneration is possible in the twentieth, or in any century, without the aid of religion. We have already said that Democracy is government by the people; this implies faith in our fellow-men. Faith is the "finest flower of religion," and democracy without such faith can never be perfect or enduring. Democracy must be allied to hope. History shows that the greatest democrats were always imbued with hope, and on the other hand it shows us examples of men who have failed and failed dismally, because they had not hope. In a true democracy, charity must abound. Men, who through the ages fought for freedom, must have loved their fellow-men with an ardent love, for in imitation of their Divine Master, they laid down their lives that others might live; and this great love for man is absolutely necessary, if Democracy is ever to achieve complete success.

These are indeed lofty ideals, but genuine democrats—men of the type of Lincoln—always believed, that in God's hands were the destinies of nations, and that the aspirations of men for liberty

were, in reality, inspirations to higher and nobler things.

True it is that Democracy has, in some cases, failed. The reason is obvious. Democracy—and for that matter every form of government—will fail, and fail miserably, when it depends on man, unaided by those essential qualities of Democracy just enumerated.

Looking over past ages, we find that corruption of high ideals has always been the beginning of tyranny, which inevitably leads to the downfall of Democracy. Nor is this to be wondered at: men following the natural desire for happiness sought above all the fulfilment of their heart's desire—ease, comfort, power and esteem of their fellow-men. But they forgot that all these must be subordinated to truth, virtue and service; to service born of love, which above all can truly satisfy them.

If, therefore, faith, hope and charity be the great securities of true democracy, then in a Democracy, religion must have the most important place; for only in religion can men learn these great and saving truths; only religion makes men adopt these high standards; only religion can implant in the heart of man that virtue, which makes him give up the thing his heart craves, that Truth and Justice may triumph.

It often happens that, where liberty abounds, many believe they can do as they please: they confound liberty with license. But the wise and prudent man knows that freedom can be enjoyed only where law and order exist: in fact, the liberty loving man has often been termed "the slave of the law." It is true that in a Democracy the law represents the good-will and pleasure of the people; nevertheless we cannot leave it to the fancy of each individual as

to what shall be his rule of life. When one man considers only pleasure, enjoyment and a life of ease, will he still follow the straight and narrow path? No! unless he recognizes the hand of God in all things; unless he realizes that all authority comes from God.

Although true Democracy is concerned for the welfare of all alike, its special care is the uplift of the poor, since they above others need special assistance. It is not satisfied with a national prosperity, which may be (and sometimes is) based upon the excessive wealth of the privileged class; but seeks to bring about a public prosperity in which all alike can share. One must not suppose from this, however, that it is socialistic in its tendencies. On the contrary it is bitterly opposed to Socialism, and will in no way interfere with the individual rights of citizens, for it teaches that "every man has an inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

True Democracy is a crying need to oppose Socialism on the one hand, and Capitalism on the other. Its method of action is distinguished from Socialism by the fact that it preserves inviolate all the rights of property. It is opposed to Capitalism by its demand for a restriction of the power of private capital, whenever it is detrimental to the common good. In opposition to Socialism it would "preserve industrial freedom and economic initiative as the mainsprings of national prosperity;" and in opposition to Capitalism would set for it, bounds defined by the greater good of the community at large.

True Democracy is a happy medium between Socialistic and Capitalistic excess. It encourages free co-operation, and, although it does not boost government ownership of property, (since this tends to take from citizens their private rights), it favors as great a

measure of it, as is conducive to the general advantage of all. Unlike Socialism, it opposes the doctrine, that all property should be made public, as this is totally at variance with the teachings of Christ, and would be ruinous to labor as well as capital; while Democracy opposes the oppression of the poor, it also demands just treatment for the rich, and seeks to protect them as well as the laboring man. It is not like its two opponents—Socialism and Capitalism—a mere class system; but, like the Church and the Gospel it teaches, is intended for all alike.

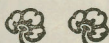
The prime motive of true Democracy is Christian Service. This was characteristic of our Divine Lord and His disciples. Such service does not diminish authority, but rather increases it, its purpose is to join all—the pauper and the millionaire—Labor and Capital—into one common society for the promotion of the common good.

Service is the duty of all alike. It was because the world too often forgot this truth, that Socialism got a foothold in society; and, according as men wandered away from God and religion, the common people were regarded as creatures, destined only to labor for the wealth, luxury and power of the rich. And thus the masses, so divested of their dignity as Christians, soon lost the right idea of Service; and, as a result, high-handed oppression on the one side, and discontent—the seed of revolution—on the other, took the place of Charity and Obedience, which are so necessary to true Democracy. It is by true Christian service—the essence of Democracy—that we become saviors of men, in the true sense of the word, under the hand of God.

To accomplish this we have great need of social education. Literature and lectures are invaluable.

Schools of the right kind are necessary. More efficient than the greatest soldier is the Christian teacher from whom we can learn the cause of the desolation which has come upon us, and the solutions of the problems that trouble our age. More efficacious than the greatest army and navy is the Christian school, wherein the children may learn that there is a God in Heaven, before whose Judgment-seat they will one day stand ; wherein they may learn that man who is God's image must be loved by them ; wherein they will be taught to make sacrifice of desires and inclinations for the common good, and for the good of their immortal souls.

Thus shall we fulfil our mission, and through education's elevating influence make Democracy a veritable "barque of safety" on which we may sail peacefully through life to the shores of Eternity. Thus shall we make the world safe for Democracy, and Democracy safe for the world.



Attempt the end and never stand to doubt ;
Nothing's so hard, but search will find it out.

—Pope.

Press bravely onward !—not in vain
Your generous trust in human kind ;
The peace which bloodshed could not gain
Your peaceful zeal shall find.

—Whittier.

Where lives the man that has not tried,
How mirth can into folly glide,
And folly into sin.

—Scott.