

MUST NATIONALISM PASS?

A. O. MACRAE

Principal of Upper Canada College, Calgary.

FEW would question the importance of Nationalism in history. This has not been a utopian conception, a pleasing theory, or a mere ideal. It has been a fact in the actual course of development of all civilized peoples. Social evolution shows humanity to have passed from Individualism to Tribalism, from Tribalism to Feudalism, from Feudalism to Nationalism. Monarchy in its various phases has been the expression of this national spirit in the past. Modern Democracy—be it a success, a failure, or just a splendid experiment—has not ventured beyond the pale of Nationalism.

But, has the time come when this too—like Tribalism before it—must pass? Has it finished its work, and is the stage now clear for the *debut* of a new movement, a movement that for lack of a better name we may call "Humanism?" By Humanism, to put it shortly as a working definition, is meant the Brotherhood and Enthusiasm of Humanity. It is the broadening of that spirit which is now exercised and exhausted by each individual nation towards its own members. But, before bowing Nationalism out, and to escape the charge of dismissing it cavalierly, we must make both a positive and a negative analysis of it, view it in its strength and in its weakness, determine its value and its faults.

Paraphrasing some recent definitions of Nationalism, one may describe it as passionate love and enthusiasm for what is best in the history, the literature, the traditions of any people who belong to a single stock. Such a conception calls before the mind's eye the thought, the conduct, the life of the noblest figures, the expression of a people's literary genius, its political progress, and —above all— the sacrifice and service of its patriots and philanthropists. The golden age of a Greece or Rome, a Spain or England, is coeval with the spontaneous outburst of the highest national spirit. The period of Pericles, of Caesar Augustus, of Charles V, of Elizabeth, was marked by an energy and activity of mind and body, of heart and hand, that was in truth amazing. During no similar stretch of years before or after in the history of these peoples has there been such a wealth of the greatest writing in prose and poetry, such productive industrial power, such large development in arts and crafts, such discovery and such conquest. In each case the impetus came

from a sense of Nationhood extraordinarily quickened. This quickening power, this driving dynamic seems however always to have accompanied victory in arms over other races and peoples. This leads naturally and immediately to those baser elements which appear always to have belonged to the content of Nationalism. What was in the first instance self-preservation has developed into self-aggrandizement.

The nations of the world before 1914 cultivated patriotism, but without any clear understanding that patriotism had become thus selfish, that its concomitants were narrowness and prejudice, pride of race, supreme self-interest. When Daniel Webster said "I too am an American, and thank God for it," he was virtually thanking God (like a Pharisee) that in being an American he was something superior to men of other breeds and other lands. But, after all, what constituted Webster an American? In the first place, accident of birth; then the pride and prejudice of patriotism as a result of education and environment; finally, a sense of superiority to men accounted of lesser breed. This does not mean that Nationalism and Patriotism are exhausted in racial self-seeking and exclusiveness. There is an ideal character in the American or French lover of his country, but neither can appreciate—much less assimilate—Humanism, while the baser elements continue to play so large a part consciously or subconsciously, in his national spirit.

Within recent years Oriental thinkers and leaders have startled many by the lurid light they have flashed on the life and civilization of modern Occidental nations. Gandhi, the famous champion of "India for the Indians," may be quoted as representing this eastern attitude. He complains that for selfish gain and selfish indulgence the men of Europe and America submit to the curse of industrialism, to the hurry and drive of a merciless mercantile competition, to the limitless multiplying of luxuries. These gross material pursuits are fatal to simplicity and kill ideals. In such scathing language Gandhi is ever painting a poignant picture of the expression of national life to-day among the western Aryan peoples. For him and his race Occidental civilization spells progress in economic terms that involve self-interest on the part of individual countries. In no less bitter words has the Hindu poet, Rabindranath Tagore, contrasted the Nationhood of the west with the racial consciousness of the east. Consider such a passage as this:—

You must have detected a strong accent of fear whenever the West has discussed the possibility of the rise of an Eastern race. The reason of it is this, that the power by whose help she thrives is an evil power; so long as it is held on her own side she

can be safe, while the rest of the world trembles. The vital ambition of the present civilization of Europe is to have the exclusive possession of the devil. Japan had all her wealth of humanity, her harmony of heroism and beauty, her depth of self-control and richness of self-expression; yet the Western nations felt no respect for her, till she proved that the bloodhounds of Satan are not only bred in the kennels of Europe, but can also be domesticated in Japan and fed with man's miseries. They admitted Japan's equality with themselves only when they knew that Japan also possesses the key to open the floodgate of hell-fire upon the fair earth whenever she chooses.

But a Nationalism that sees its horizon in self-seeking is adrift. It is in peril every hour. It is like a steamer leaving port without rudder, and with no end or aim, but racing at full speed and burning fuel. That this is not extravagant language is evidenced by what can be seen anywhere.

For there is no aim, end, or ideal in all the present day industrial activity, in all business and commerce. Nothing seems objective except making goods and gaining money, followed by still greater production and still more wealth. Our education does not appear to be any better directed. Our philanthropy and benevolence confuse the salvation of an individual with washing and clothing and feeding him. But neither nations nor persons can escape from their past or evolve into the larger possibilities without vision of a calling higher than Self. In self-preservation, self-satisfaction, or self-glorification, there can be no great adventure.

If Nationalism and Patriotism were enlightened, unbiased, rid of the self-centred content, would not Enthusiasm for Humanity emerge? Daniel Webster in his expression of pride in being an American simply demonstrated that his national spirit was inseparable from elements that made it *mere* Patriotism, not Universal Brotherhood. And just because Patriotism in its very essence precludes passage into something higher, does it not reveal itself as already judged? In the light of Nationalism's failure and inability to rise to the new challenge presented by ex-President Wilson after the war, did it not confess itself outworn, unfit for a new era? More than this—it forced men to revise their views about man-made organizations and institutions. Nationalism had degenerated into a highly organized machine. It achieved success in the Empire of Things, but death in the Realm of the Spirit. The dynamic, that made possible a reception of new content coming from the Realm of the Spirit as Humanism or Internationalism, had departed under the pressure of States organized for safety, self-interest, self-aggrandizement.

The impossibility of continuing Nationalism may be made

apparent if we present in another way the situation of the western world Powers previous to 1914. Prussianized Germany or passionate Pan-Germanism was but the logical conclusion of modern National ideals. One has but to press the Americanism of a typical Fourth of July orator or a British Jingo to arrive at the place and attitude of the average pre-war Prussian. *Deutschland, Deutschland uber alles* is exactly descriptive of any intense Nationalist in any country. And it means, when logically pressed, far more than "My country right or wrong." It means my country above all and over all, with the only Gospel and the only Kultur for all other nations. If Nationalism were devoid of its many prejudices, steadily inspired by the ideal of every nation's finest manhood and the glory of their achievements, would it not necessarily tend to pass on into Humanism?

It is plain that what stands in the way is the barrier of racial egoism, with all that this implies. The spirit of the patriot may be fairly interpreted as pride of life, pride—that is—of a particular kind of life, the kind led by the American, or the Briton, or the Frenchman. The Tower of Babel marked the inception of dislike and distrust that afterwards developed into national superiority and contempt. Humanism, or the Federation of the World, will thus not be possible until the obstacles of Nation and Race are swept away. It was because in the great Galilean there was neither Jew nor Greek, that He was done to death. His universality of the Fatherhood and Brotherhood struck at the very root of the Messianic hope, with its promise of a chosen race to become the ruling and directing nation of the world. Socrates in like manner was doomed to drink the hemlock because his philosophy threatened the very foundations of the Greek State and the Greek nation.

In this present age the same crucible cannot contain Nationalism and Humanism, any more than Palestine of old could suffer side by side the separateness and superiority of Judaism and the genial universalism of Christianity. The Emperor Julian, the famous Apostate, turned against Christianity after assuming the purple, for he saw in it the solvent of his empire. There could be no distinction of persons where "all have sinned and have come short," when there is none that doeth good as he should. There could be no pride of place or people, no religious or racial rallying-cry, where they that worship are worshipping neither in Jerusalem nor in Samaria. It was just because Christianity could not permit the pride of Roman citizenship—or indeed any superiority of citizenship except in the Kingdom of God—that it was feared and hated in the ancient world. Any ideal Nationalism and all exalted Patriotism must be synonymous with true Humanism, for otherwise these would not be ideal.

If the spirit of America and the spirit of France are compared ideally, the content in each should be identical. If this is not so, it is needful to enquire what constitutes one an American. This or that man is an American primarily because he was born so or was brought up so. That in itself makes his Americanism mere prejudice. And if such an one feels or says he is superior to a Briton or a Frenchman, the natural explanation is narrowness or ignorance. In passing into a larger sphere, a wider Union, an American would not lose the ideal content or back-ground of his Americanism. But he would unquestionably shed Americanism in its separateness,—the very element, by the way, that is keeping the United States out of the League of Nations.

If the peoples and nations of to-day had the tongues of flame that characterized the early Christians, for example, they should be primal and elemental in their loyalty and zeal for Humanism and for the larger arena that Internationalism in all its potentialities would offer. The new psychology, with its emphasis on such instinctive—more or less subconscious—powers and emotions as the driving force in man, opens the door to extraordinary possibilities of a dynamic that rather courses through human personality than derives from it. Patriotism and Nationalism, cultivated on the lines of a splendid sentiment such as universal brotherhood, would be revealed in a rising generation as Enthusiasm for Humanity. The plain path, therefore, for those who can and do rise above Nationalism, leads into all the world, preaching and teaching the gospel of Humanism as the great hope. Even as the Christian missionaries of old time saw what weights had to be laid aside, what clear distinctions had to be drawn as between works of the Flesh and fruits of the Spirit, so must the advocates of Humanism break down the middle wall of partition between this and the narrower creed. It will be effected most rapidly by the education of youth. That such a change is neither utopian nor chimerical is evidenced by the success attending the inculcation of Prussianism in Germany and Prohibition in America. In both cases the result was attained by careful, constant and consistent training of youth, and that within little more than a single generation.

Yet there is a final barrier, a last redoubt. It is found in the maxim that there is nothing else so deep as race except religion, and that both these are indissolubly bound up with Nationalism. It is not by denial, but by a larger interpretation, that such a position may be turned. Race must be taught to mean the *human* race, not the white race, or the yellow race. The war and its many critical consequences still to be met with and solved should suffice

to remind nations that they are not things apart, but in the most intimate sense members one of another. Religion must be neither of Samaria nor of Jerusalem, neither of Mecca nor of Benares; its altars must have their abodes in human hearts worshipping in Spirit and in Truth. This course will prepare the way for the passage of Nationalism into Humanism, even as Feudalism proved itself a necessary propaedeutic to Christianity.

There is another dictum which lends itself readily to the preparing for this consummation so devoutly to be wished. It is that of the French scholar who writes: "We are naturally religious, but only supernaturally virtuous." If we paraphrase this, the reading will be "We are naturally Nationalistic, but only supernaturally Humanistic." And that is the crux of the whole matter. If in the coming education men and women will but proceed from "the acceptance of common spiritual values, based on a common vision of the one living and true God," if all who teach and all who learn will but permit themselves to be supernaturally directed so that they will separate and keep separated Nationalism from its works of the Flesh—its selfishness, its supercilious superiority, its aggressive and irritating aggrandizement—and if they will but follow after Nationalism's fruits of the Spirit, its love and devotion to the best in the lives, the literature, the history and the traditions of each civilized people, then there is a larger hope of a unity and an alliance of mankind. The time will then surely come when

the war drum throbs no longer and the battle flag is furled,
In the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World.