

had had before in the life of the Roman: namely a work at which every refined gentleman must have a try. It becomes the hobby of a refined generation—the distinction of the elite. Seneca and Pliny are the outstanding figures in this branch of letters, and they show how people then thought, and on what intellectual basis they acted.

But already signs of decay are manifest—decay in the systems whereby religion is maintained; decay in the administration of government; decay in the morals of the people—Luxury, corruption, and the unfettering of family life, have intertwined themselves into the very marrow of the bones of this worthless generation which has succeeded those which had set up the empire. The Golden Period in Literature has long ago passed away; and the Silver Age is coming to a close with the *Cena Trimalchionis* of Petronius which sickens one with the waste, corruption and lust that it revives to the mind's eye. Truly the Roman Era has passed and these people of whom we read in Petronius are no more the Romans who built the City, and gave it its laws; who defeated Hannibal; who wrote the *Aeneid*; who delivered the *Catilinarians*. They speak the Latin language, but are not Latins, and hence they are unable to produce any other literary works to rank with those which have gone before; and they give up their heritage to be downtrodden by their enemies in their cowardice and fear—they have gathered themselves into oblivion. But the true Romans will never pass away: They have told us who they were in the poetry and prose that they have left us, and we can see them, and feel their power and love their nobleness, and flutter at their passions, that are ours all over again: Yes, they will live in the literature that has reflected the political and social conditions of Rome.

*Ne immemores simus*

Alberti Eduardi Augusti Principi

Jam ter venisti Melitam: Laetissima, Princeps,  
Te exceptit, quamquam pauper inopsque gemit.  
Attulit hic tuus adventus dispendia nobis,  
Nunc magis est populus, quam fuit ante, miser.  
Ah! redeas numquam amplius. I quocumque libebit:  
Si NIHIL attuleris, littora nostra fuge.

JOSEPH ZAMMIT  
(BRIGHELLA)

## The Crisis of Western Civilization

by

FRANCIS MONTANARO MIFSUD

It is not my intention here this afternoon to put forward any practical programme of world reform or to expound any twentieth-century Utopian scheme by which all differences may be smoothed. I propose merely to discuss very briefly what is this thing called Western Civilization, its origin and basis, and the peril it stands in to-day; and to bring before you certain questions which must be reconsidered, certain problems which must be solved, certain facts which have to be remembered, if the way of life we have been accustomed to call our own is not to be blotted out of the face of earth.

The idea of Western civilisation is unthinkable apart from Christian ethics. The fundamental principles of Christian ethics appear to be these: God created the world for his greater honour and glory; Man has a supernatural destiny as is evidenced, apart from Revelation, by his supernatural aspirations; God became Man and died to atone for the sins of men so as to make salvation possible; and all men must answer for their actions at the last judgement. Therefore, let us view human affairs with a sense of proportion born of the conviction that life on earth is a time of trial and by no means the end of the soul's adventure, and let us too, sometimes at least, watch and pray lest we fall into temptation. According to the materialist, it is irrelevant how the universe came into existence; the notion of an after-life is a superstition illogical and unwarranted; Jesus was a clever, although perhaps well-meaning, imposter, who succeeded in impressing on the minds of a few simple Galilean fishermen a belief in his divinity; the Resurrection was a hoax. Therefore, let us make the best of this life: let us not exchange the chances of temporal happiness for the shadow of a dream. But materialistic philosophy has even failed to produce material comfort (an eloquent witness to its insufficiency): in fact, it has increased the sense of uncertainty and unrest. It is only to be expected that a feeling of frustration and despair should have followed, for, if life on earth has been a failure and no notion of an after-life can be entertained, what is there to look forward to?

The other main constituent element of Western civilization, besides the Christian Faith, is, of course, the Classical Culture. It would be idle to deny that Christianity can survive the loss of the Classical Culture however, this loss undoubtedly would entail the loss also of the Christian European cultural achievement. These would constitute serious blows to Christianity itself; but, apart from them, it is evident that the forces which are bent on the destruction of classical culture are no less antagonistic to Christianity, so that the fight for classical culture is inextricably bound up with the fight for Christianity. The classical tradition is, moreover, the basis of