Interesting Parallels Between Wilhelm II and "Uncle Ted" McCarrick

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One of the many casualties of today's culture is the total loss of a sense of history. By that, I mean not only the great facts of the past but also how they related to each other and shaped the world we have inherited today. Few facts of the past are more significant than the First World War, whose one hundredth anniversary we have essentially been ignoring for the last four years. In the summer of 2014, I wrote an article for *CFN* describing the absurdly needless events in Europe that precipitated the first global war and how it fulfilled, at least partially, the prophecy of Our Lady at La Salette some 70 years before. Since that time, I have searched almost entirely in vain for public commentary on the Great War. Other than a handful of video documentaries, the world has been silent.

Centenary of the Great War

We are now in the autumn of 2018, the hundredth anniversary of the end of the war, and should recall how the world was then in agony over self-inflicted and natural miseries of all kinds. In Russia, Lenin, Trotsky, and their Bolsheviks were brutally dismantling the old czarist order and the world began to learn for the first time of state-sponsored terror. On the western front, soldiers of both sides remained hopelessly mired in trench warfare (the "ditches of death," in the words of Catholic historian Warren Carroll). The Allies were about to mount the Meuse-Argonne offensive in late September, which would be the final campaign of the war, although they did not yet know it. American casualties alone totaled over 120,000 killed and wounded in just six weeks. In Germany and Austria, the four-year long Allied blockade and the lack of agricultural manpower were causing massive food shortages in commodities as basic as coffee, sugar, eggs, and meat. By November, the month of the armistice, Germany would be in the midst of mutiny among its military and revolution in the streets. Mother Nature appeared to add to the wretchedness with the influenza epidemic which would claim at least twenty million lives worldwide. In Philadelphia alone (home to a navy shipyard), some 12,000 deaths occurred from influenza during five weeks in the fall of 1918.

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In reading the testimonies of the two La Salette seers in 1851, the saintly Pope Pius IX observed that "France is threatened with scourges. She is not the only culpable one. Germany, Italy and the whole of Europe are culpable and deserve to be chastised." While it is true that the moral blame for the Great War can be laid at many feet, it is generally agreed that Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II was more responsible than any other person for the outbreak of war and the subsequent catastrophe. Without delving into the Kaiser's faults, and they were many, here we want to consider his fate as Germany collapsed in the autumn of 1918 and prepared for an inevitable surrender to the Allies. The popular groundswell in Germany to end the war, combined with the Allies' strict negotiating terms, forced the Kaiser to abdicate on November 9, two days before the armistice. Thus, Wilhelm, who had ruled as an autocrat for 30 years over Europe's strongest country, found himself suddenly reduced from the "all-highest" to an unemployed country gentleman as he fled to neutral Holland. In the words of the intriguing website *Dead Emperor's Society*, Wilhelm

> "spent the last 23 years of his life at a country estate in the Netherlands, Huis Doorn, now a fascinating museum. He maintained a make-believe Imperial Court, with the aid of 59 railway carriages full of Royal furniture, treasures and uniforms that the Weimar regime had allowed him to transport out of his three Berlin palaces. He spent his days chopping wood in the surrounding forest, and his evenings debating astrology and archeology with any scientist willing to come over and agree with the Kaiser's views."

To the end of his days, the Kaiser remained a double-minded man, now seeming to have learned a painful lesson, then adhering stubbornly to his class- and race-based *weltanschauung*. For example, in December 1938, Wilhelm chastised the Nazis for their crudeness and barbarity. Referring first to Hitler, he stated:

> "There's a man alone, without family, without children, without God… He builds legions, but he doesn't build a nation. A nation is created by families, a religion, traditions: it is made up out of the hearts of mothers, the wisdom of fathers, the joy and the exuberance of children… For a few months I was inclined to believe in National Socialism. I thought of it as a necessary fever. And I was gratified to see that there were, associated with it for a time, some of the wisest and most outstanding Germans. But these, one by one, he has got rid of or even killed… He has left nothing but a bunch of shirted gangsters! This man could bring home victories to our people each year, without bringing them either glory or danger. But of our Germany, which was a nation of poets and musicians, of artists and

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> soldiers, he has made a nation of hysterics and hermits, engulfed in a mob and led by a thousand liars or fanatics."

Yet when his new homeland was overrun in the Nazi blitzkrieg of May 1940, Wilhelm reached out to Hitler personally, saying, "My Fuhrer, I congratulate you and hope that under your marvelous leadership the German monarchy will be restored completely." The ex-emperor was either caught up in the enthusiasm of German victory or was fishing for an opportunity to return to power.

Wilhelm and McCarrick – Lovers of the Spotlight

Although separated by a hundred years in time and other factors, the pathetic denouement of Kaiser Wilhelm actually reminds us of former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick today. Like the Kaiser, McCarrick spent decades at the pinnacle of his social universe. Wilhelm, at least, could claim that his position was rightfully inherited, whereas McCarrick eagerly sought promotion within Church ranks. Both men were active seekers of prestige and celebrity. Wilhelm, always anxious to cultivate a strong and vigorous image, maintained a wardrobe of perhaps several hundred military uniforms. Likewise, he eagerly sought foreign decorations and was always alert for any perceived slight in protocol. McCarrick, of course, is of a different, more subdued era and in any event has been constrained by various church rules, such as on clerical dress. However, he has consistently sought – or at least not shunned – honors, esteem, and contacts with the rich and powerful. Not for nothing has McCarrick been addressed as "Your Eminence."

As an example, McCarrick allowed a Catholic high school in South Amboy, New Jersey, to be named after himself (ironically, the school closed because of financial troubles in 2015). He also received honorary degrees from such prestigious Catholic institutions as Fordham University, the Catholic University of America, and Notre Dame. Mercifully, the first two schools revoked their awards this past July while Notre Dame, sensitive to McCarrick's proclaimed "innocence," has refused to reconsider. The ex-cardinal has also collected similar awards from at least six other schools of higher education. In 2000, President Clinton awarded McCarrick the Eleanor Roosevelt Human Rights Award.

Opulent Globetrotters

Further, both Wilhelm and McCarrick could be considered the globetrotters of their day. Wilhelm, who lived at the dawn of the age of the railroad and the steamship, traveled widely throughout continental Europe and beyond, such as England, Palestine, Lebanon,

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and Morocco. A picture of the Kaiser's 1898 entry into the Old City of Jerusalem mounted on his white charger remains an iconic reminder of a bygone era. Nonetheless, Wilhelm's widespread travels and the large number of international contacts which he cultivated were of no help to him when he made the fateful decisions in 1914 to declare war on Russia and France.

As for McCarrick, his international travels have dwarfed those of the Kaiser. According to the Jesuit magazine *America*, "During the years that then-Cardinal McCarrick was allegedly sanctioned by Rome, he kept up a public profile that included preaching at high-profile Masses, giving talks and accepting awards. He testified in front of a Senate subcommittee and appeared in the media." As a board member for Catholic Relief Services, McCarrick traveled on "a couple of dozen trips…including in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America" just between 2009 and 2013, according to a C.R.S. spokesman. Separately, *The Washington Post* notes that McCarrick has made "Vatican-sponsored trips to China, Vietnam and Eastern Europe, among other places, and he has been an advocate for the church on human rights, religious freedom and Third World debt relief." Over the last twenty years, he had made at least eight trips to China alone. One must wonder how all this globetrotting has benefited Holy Mother Church. In China, for example, did McCarrick's numerous trips help pave the way for the current Vatican betrayal of the Chinese Catholic Church via a secret agreement with the Communist government? For all of his exotic travels, I searched in vain on the internet for a picture of McCarrick at any of many abortion clinics in his archdioceses on the East Coast.

In fairness to McCarrick, this is not to imply that all of his travels have been boondoggles calculated to pad his frequent flyer miles. But given his zest for the limelight, one must surely wonder. Such behavior is hardly consistent with Pope Benedict's directive (according to Archbishop Viganò) in which McCarrick was "forbidden to celebrate [Mass] in public, to participate in public meetings, to give lectures, to travel, with the obligation of dedicating himself to a life of prayer and penance." In retrospect, McCarrick's embrace of the "lifestyles of the rich and famous" may have been his way of burying his conscience over his sordid homosexual activities.

In the End, Abdication and Resignation

The final stage of the lives of the two men also reveals an interesting comparison. Wilhelm, facing certain military defeat in the fall of 1918, offered to abdicate as Emperor of Germany but initially insisted on retaining his separate title as King of Prussia. By the end of November, however, the Kaiser bowed to the inevitable and formally renounced his claims to both thrones. In McCarrick's case, after the sordid details of his sexually deviant lifestyle

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were finally recognized by the press in the summer of 2018, he resigned voluntarily from the College of Cardinals, a move accepted by Pope Francis. However, McCarrick's clerical status as archbishop remains intact, at least for now. If McCarrick had even remotely acknowledged the horrific evils he had been responsible for, he would have requested his complete removal from the clerical state by the pope. At this point, it appears that both men are content with the *status quo*, meaning that despite McCarrick's decades of scandalous and abominable conduct, his clerical status as an archbishop has merited no official revocation from the Chair of Peter.

On September 28, the world learned that McCarrick had finally begun his "life of prayer and penance" at an obscure Capuchin friary, deep in the plains of central Kansas. For a man who enjoyed the spotlight as much as McCarrick, the location alone – in the middle of flyover country – must have been a severe punishment, paling in comparison to Kaiser Wilhelm's luxurious home in Holland. In a final ironic twist, as noted by curious observers, McCarrick's new home at St. Fidelis Friary is actually adjacent to a local elementary school. For all the misery and carnage that occurred under the Kaiser's rule during the Great War, there was never a concern that he was in any way a personal threat to his Dutch neighbors.

A final point of comparison involves the evil which these two men spread over society. Wilhelm, by all accounts, led a personally correct life, even if it was utterly void of Christian charity and short on prayer to the Almighty. His legacy must include the terrible physical toll of death, suffering and wretchedness inflicted during the Great War on millions of the German people and other Europeans. Even the end of the war, the November 1918 armistice, did not stay the affliction, grief, and chaos. So, as the ex-Kaiser spent his final days in Holland chopping wood and engaging in idle conversation, the world around him was "torn from its moorings" (Warren Carroll's phrase) and remains so even today. He and his generation had tolled the death knell for Christendom.

McCarrick, on the other hand, has been the source of moral abuse and spiritual trauma, both to his personal victims and in thousands of others who have been maltreated by priests and bishops of his ilk. As the Kaiser promoted a martial and chauvinistic culture, McCarrick (along with his many clerical accomplices such Bernardin, Law, Mahoney, Wuerl, etc.) cultivated a weak and effeminate Church and priesthood. In a decidedly post-Christian world, McCarrick not only failed to resurrect the Church's moral stature and influence in the American public square, he has presided over its demise. For all of his weaknesses, Kaiser Wilhelm was never a source of embarrassment to his people. McCarrick, however, has become the ultimate scandal to the Church. In the words of Our Lord, "it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt. 18:6).

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