

of ethics can only serve as a record of what is, rather than as a formulation of what should be imposed by a majority. There have probably been no greater disasters in the course of civilization than those which have arisen from the attempts of well-intentioned people to enforce ethical codes upon societies which had no common acceptance of the base of the codes. Athenian democracy could not even be forced upon the Spartans, a day's walk away. The attempt to do this sort of thing has always resulted in strife and conflict, as those who felt that their way of life was being coerced by an alien have rightly resisted in mind and spirit, as well as with the body.

An Ancient Error

THIS attempt through the United Nations Covenant on Human Rights repeats the ancient error of seeking to impose a code upon peoples before the common values and principles exist which make voluntary acceptance possible. The inevitable result can only be greater disunity, resentment, and violence — until the yoke of such a superstate is thrown off and the freedom to unite voluntarily with those of a common mind and spirit is restored.

The Covenant offers no clear meaning of

these human rights of which it speaks. There is no unequivocal definition of these rights which would protect their value; nor is there a recognition of the moral aspects of rights that inhere in the nature of man.

Society can — and in some instances should — restrict the freedom of action of the individual. But when the rules of society conform to the laws of nature or to the moral order of the universe — that is, when the government of man is in harmony with higher laws which no man can change — then the individual is essentially free. Any loss of that freedom is in reality the consequence of his failure to understand and abide by the higher law. This higher law insists that each one of us shall exercise his freedom in such a way that he will have no occasion to interfere with the equal freedom of others. In such a society, only the illiberal person who attempts to restrict the liberty of another would be punished.

But society can, and often does, impose rules which are not in harmony with the laws of nature — man-made rules that are designed to benefit some persons at the expense of others. These rules do not change the laws of nature; and they do not abolish the status of the rights of man to life and physical liberty, and to that freedom of mind and spirit which even shackles cannot deny.