

REVIEWS

CHRISTIAN SOCIOLOGY

LE BOMBARDEMENT DES VILLES OUVERTES. Par Un Chrétien.
(Collection "Qu'en pensez-vous?") (Editions du Cerf; frs.
3.75.)

One still finds articles on the ethics of war (the recent crisis produced a number of them) which conclude with the cry "There are still things worth fighting for"; as if this truism were the end of all discussion and difficulty, instead of being precisely the point at which discussion and difficulties begin. The French Dominican editors of this series, realist and timely as ever, throw light in this number on a central problem. Traditional Catholic theology teaches that *all* the conditions for a just war must be present together before a war can be justified. One of these conditions concerns the question of means. A war, no matter how justifiable on other grounds, will be illicit if illicit means are used. And there are certain means which traditional theology has been constant in condemning. This pamphlet deals with one of them.

The author begins by quoting French, German, English and American military authority to show that war to-day is essentially "total" war, aiming *directa intentione* at peoples rather than at armies. He proceeds to give examples, with statistics, of the facts of aerial bombardment to-day, and of the Catholic attitude towards them, the protests of the Pope in particular. The second part of the pamphlet deals with the ethical principles: Vittoria on the one hand, international conferences of jurists on the other, are quoted. A third part deals with the "revolt of the Christian conscience." The author quotes letters to the *Catholic Herald* from Fr. Vincent McNabb and Mr. Donald Attwater, the former asking for a legal or military definition of an open town as necessary preliminary to a moral judgement, the latter arguing that legal niceties may be in fact a subterfuge, and that the realities themselves are clear enough. Here the author rightly finds that while it is indeed difficult to set precise limits as long as an accepted code is lacking, on the other hand it is possible to regard international law in too formalist a fashion: "for the moralist, a murder is a murder even though the murderer has not previously signed a declaration solemnly promising not to commit the crime." It may be difficult to anticipate, and legislate for, every borderline case in a legal document; the Christian conscience has shown that it can be clear about the main lines, can recognize infamy.

But the consciences of Christians, alas, are not unanimous. "If reasons of simple humanity are sufficient to condemn such massacres of non-combatants, the massacres become if possible

yet more revolting when those responsible for them invoke the cause of Christian civilization." And when, in spite of the protests of the Holy See, this coupling of Christianity and murder is boosted by Catholics, clergy, publicists, apologists, then indeed the Church is faced with a scandal, the effect of which may have to be measured in decades or centuries, a scandal of the twentieth century comparable with the loss of the masses in the nineteenth.

Is this scandal to cease? It is this question which provides the answer to a *prima facie* criticism of the present pamphlet: that it was a tactical error to discuss actual raids, since argument as to whether this or that raid really occurred may obscure the real issue. (The author incidentally tells a sad and interesting story. An English Catholic lady, known both to him and to the present writer, visited a town immediately after a raid in order to see for herself exactly what had taken place. While she was there the bombers unexpectedly returned, and she was therefore an eye-witness of the whole affair. On her return to England she was considerably surprised to find it said in "*certaines journaux bien pensants*" that the bombardment was an invention of the other side, and that the town had in reality been fired by them.)

Is this scandal to cease? It would be well if this pamphlet or its equivalent could be spread about this country to show non-Catholics that the Christian conscience is not wholly dormant, and perhaps, who knows, to help towards the clarification of Catholic thought itself. But the weight of opposite propaganda is heavy. Just as *Rerum Novarum* remained a dead letter for want of Catholic support, so the voice of the present Pope has been drowned by the din of propaganda irreconcilable with it. If A is fighting B, and A is for some reason in the wrong, then whatever is done by B must be right: that is the argument implicit in the current point of view. It is tragic that this slipshod travesty of ethical argument should be propounded over and over again to the Catholic public of this country. It is yet more tragic that to the non-Catholic this appears to be the accepted Catholic view. Anyone who will buy and distribute copies of this pamphlet will be doing a Christian work.

GERALD VANN, O.P.

DIE SOZIALE FRAGE. By Johannes Messner. (Innsbruck: Verlagsanstalt Tyrolia. xii + 772 pp. n.p.)

This is a comprehensive and profound study of the religious, philosophical, economic and political causes of present-day social problems.

As between the contending philosophies, capitalism and socialism, Professor Messner leans towards the former, but he is not blind to its defects. He sees little that is commendable in the