

imaginable to which his charity could not extend itself, and which his affection would not undertake. All day and all night long he practised charity, bleeding and doctoring the sick, giving alms to Spaniards, Indians, Negroes'. He was 'barber, surgeon, custodian of the clothes, and infirmarian. Each of these duties was enough for any one person, but he alone filled all of them with great liberality, promptness and carefulness, without being weighed down by any one of them. It was a cause of wonder, which made me realize that, in as much as he clung to God in his soul, all these things were effects of divine grace'. 'While he would be performing the aforesaid duties, the Spirit would call him, and the servant of God would go to a room, close the door, and kneel down in a corner where he remained in prayer as if his previous work were merely a preparation for it'.

Martin, raised now to the altars of Church, is a reminder to us of the patience and charity that are needed to heal the world of its pain, and give it hope. 'To the sick, he seemed to be a spirit, or just hands or help from God'.

Christian Action in World Crisis

THOMAS MERTON

A death struggle can also be a struggle for life, a new birth. Perhaps the present crisis is the birth agony of a new world. Let us hope that it is. No one can dare to predict what is about to be born of our confusion, our frenzy, our apocalyptic madness. Certainly the old order is changing, but we do not know what is to come. All we know is that we see the many-crowned and many-headed monsters rising on all sides out of the deep, from the ocean of our own hidden and collective self. We do not understand them, and we cannot. We panic at the very sight of their iridescent scales, their jaws that flame with nuclear fire. But they pursue us relentlessly, even into absurd little caves fitted out with battery radios and hand-operated blowers. We find no security even in the spiritual cave of forgetfulness, the anaesthesia of the human

mind that finally shuts out an unbearable truth, and goes about the business of life in torpor and stoical indifference.

And yet the monsters do not have to come to life. They are not yet fully objective like the world around us. They do not have the substance which is given to things by the creative power of God: they are the spiritual emanations of our own sick and sinful being. They exist in and by us. They are from us. They cannot exist without us. They are our illusions. They are nightmares which our incredible technological skill can all too easily actualize. But they are also dreams from which we can awaken before it is too late. They are dreams which we can still, perhaps, choose not to dream.

The awful problem of our time is not so much the dreams, the monsters, which may take shape and consume us, but the moral paralysis in our own souls which leaves us immobile, inert, passive, tongue tied, ready and even willing to succumb. The real tragedy is in the cold, silent waters of moral death which climb imperceptibly within us, blinding conscience, drowning compassion, suffocating faith and extinguishing the Spirit. A progressive deadening of conscience, of judgment and of compassion is the inexorable work of the cold war.

One thing is getting to be more and more certain. The balance of terror, which dictates all the policies of the two great armed power blocs, cannot stay 'balanced' much longer. It will crash. It may crash very soon. Napoleon said you cannot sit on bayonets. You have to use them, if you have them. This is a thousand times more true of the monstrous weapons which offer an overwhelming advantage to the one who strikes first and who strikes hardest, who smashes everything the enemy has before the enemy can wake up to his danger.

The slightest false move, the most innocent miscalculation, an ill chosen word, a misprint, a trivial failure in the mechanism of a computer, and one hundred million people evaporate, burn to death, go up in radioactive dust, or crawl about the face of the earth waiting for death to release them from agony.

We are not good at resisting sin, even under the best conditions. But under the most violent provocation, under the most diabolical pressures, when we have abdicated from reason and morality, when we have frankly gone back to the law of the jungle, how much chance is there, humanly speaking, that we can live without disaster?

Two things are clear, First, the enemy is not just one side or the other. The enemy is not just Russia, or China, or Communism, or Castro, or Krushchev, or capitalism, or imperialism. The enemy is on both sides.

The enemy is in all of us. The enemy is war itself, and the root of war is hatred, fear, selfishness, lust. Pius XII said in 1944, 'If ever a generation has known in the depths of its being the cry of "War on war" it is our own'. As long as we arm only against Russia, we are fighting for the real enemy and against ourselves. We are fighting to release the monster in our own soul, which will destroy the world. We are fighting for the demon who strives to reassert his power over mankind. We have got to arm not against Russia but against war. Not only against war, but against hatred. Against lies. Against injustice. Against greed. Against every manifestation of these things, wherever they may be found, and above all in ourselves.

Yet at the same time we must not ignore the spiritual border line that separates the nations of the west, with their Christian background, from the officially atheistic Communist bloc. We must avoid two extremes: seeing all good on our side and all evil on their side, or, on the contrary, dismissing both sides as totally evil. The fact remains that although the Communists have explicitly rejected the Christian ethical tradition, there may still remain in Communist dominated countries strong surviving elements of that tradition. And although we of the west appeal to the Christian tradition in favour of our own cause, and do this quite legitimately, yet nevertheless there are materialistic and atheistic elements at work among us just as powerful and just as destructive of our tradition as the materialism and atheism of the official Communist ideology.

On both sides there are powerful and fanatical pressure groups dominated by their political obsessions, who drive towards nuclear war. On both sides the vast majority desire nothing but peace. The extremists on both sides are very much alike, though they regard one another as opposites. The moderates on both sides also have very much in common. One sometimes wonders if the real dividing line is not to be drawn between the fanatics (whether Russian or American) and the moderate, ordinary people of both sides.

In any case the policy makers and propagandists are tending more and more in the direction of what they call 'realism': that is to say an all-out nuclear strike involving the mass destruction of civilians. In effect, the extreme bellicosity which leads each of the great power blocs to depend more and more on the threat of a pre-emptive attack, with no limit to the megatonic impact of the nuclear weapons and no discrimination between civil and military objectives, *is equally immoral on both sides, equally inhuman and incompatible with Christian ethics.*

In this restricted sense it may indeed be possible to find the same demonic evil at work, perhaps in different degrees, on both sides. Once one adopts the policy of nuclear 'realism' which is purely and simply a policy of annihilation, then one abandons the moral advantage of fighting for freedom, justice and democracy. None of these values is likely to survive an all-out nuclear war. Even if one nation manages to win such a war, the conditions will be such that social, moral and spiritual values with which we are familiar, and which we should certainly be prepared to defend with our lives, will no longer be recognizable in the moral debacle. Such at least is the belief of Pope Pius XII and of John XXIII.

The conclusion is, then, that we must defend freedom and sanity against the bellicose fanaticism of all warmakers, whether 'ours' or 'theirs' and that we must strive to do so not with force but with the spiritual weapons of Christian prayer and action. But this action must be at once non-violent and decisive. Good intentions and fond hopes are not enough.

The present world crisis is not merely a political and economic conflict. It goes deeper than ideologies. It is a crisis of man's spirit. It is a great religious and moral upheaval of the human race, and we do not really know half the causes of this upheaval. We cannot pretend to have a full understanding of what is going on in ourselves and in our society. That is why our desperate hunger for clear and definite solutions sometimes leads us into temptation. We oversimplify. We seek the cause of evil and find it here or there in a particular nation, class, race, ideology, system. And we discharge upon this scapegoat all the virulent force of our hatred, compounded with fear and anguish, striving to rid ourselves of our fear by destroying the object we have arbitrarily singled out as the embodiment of all evil. Far from curing us, this is only another paroxysm which aggravates our sickness.

The moral evil in the world is due to man's alienation from the deepest truth, from the springs of spiritual life within himself, to his alienation from God. Those who realize this, try desperately to persuade and enlighten their brothers. But we are in a radically different position from the first Christians, who revolutionized an essentially religious world of paganism with the message of a new religion that had never been heard of.

We on the contrary live in an irreligious world in which the Christian message has been repeated over and over until it has come to seem empty of all intelligible content to those whose ears close to the

word of God even before it is uttered. In their minds Christianity is no longer identified with newness and change, but only with the static preservation of outworn structures. Doubtless Christians themselves have helped to create this unfortunate impression.

This should teach us that though the words of the Gospel still objectively retain all the force and freshness of their original life, it is not enough now for us to make them known and clarify them. It is not enough to announce the familiar message that no longer seems to be news. Not enough to teach, to explain, convince. Now, above all, it is the time to embody Christian truth in action even more than in words. No matter how lucid, how persuasive, how logical, how profound our theological and spiritual statements may be, they are often wasted on anyone who does not already think as we do. That is why the serene and almost classic sanity of moralists exposing the traditional teaching of Christian theologians on the 'just war' is almost a total loss in the general clamour and confusion of half truths, propaganda slogans, and pernicious clichés. Who will listen and agree, except another professional theologian? What influence can such statements have in preserving sanity, clear and logical though they may be?

What is needed now is the Christian who manifests the truth of the Gospel in social action, with or without explanation. The more clearly his life manifests the teaching of Christ, the more salutary will it be. Clear and decisive Christian action explains itself, and teaches in a way that words never can.

What is wanted now is therefore not simply the Christian who takes an inner complacency in the words and example of Christ, but who seeks to follow Christ perfectly, not only in his own personal life, not only in prayer and penance, but also in his political commitments and in all his social responsibilities. The Christian conscience can hardly be at peace with a minimalist ethic which justifies and permits as much as possible of force and terror, in international politics and in war, instead of struggling in every way to restrain force and bring into being a positive international authority which can effectively prevent war and promote peace.

We are at a point of momentous choice. Either our frenzy of desperation will lead to destruction, or our patient loyalty to truth, to God and to our fellow man will enable us to perform the patient, heroic task of building a world that will thrive in unity and peace. At this point, Christian action will be decisive. That is why it is supremely important for us to keep our heads and refuse to be carried away by the

wild projects of fanatics who seek an oversimplified and immediate solution by means of inhuman violence.

Christians have got to speak by their actions. Their political action must not be confined to the privacy of the polling booth. It must be clear and manifest to everybody. It must speak loudly and plainly the Christian truth, and it must be prepared to defend that truth with sacrifice, accepting misunderstanding, injustice, calumny, and even imprisonment or death. It is crucially important for Christians today to adopt a genuinely Christian position and support it with everything they have got. This means an unremitting fight for justice in every sphere—in labour, in race relations, in the 'third world' and above all in international affairs.

This means (to adopt a current military cliché) closing the gap between our interior intentions and our exterior acts. Our social actions must conform to our deepest religious principles. Beliefs and politics can no longer be kept isolated from one another. It is no longer possible for us to be content with abstract and hidden acts of 'purity of intention' which do nothing to make our outward actions different from those of atheists or agnostics.

Nor can we be content to make our highest ideal the preservation of a minimum of ethical rectitude prescribed by natural law. Too often the nobility and grandeur of natural law have been debased and deformed by the manipulations of theorists until natural law has become indistinguishable from the law of the jungle, which is no law at all. Hence those who complacently prescribe the duty of national defence on the basis of 'natural law' often forget entirely the norms of justice and humanity without which no war can be permitted. Without those norms, natural law becomes mere jungle law, that is to say crime.

The Popes have repeatedly pleaded with Christian people to show themselves in all things disciples of Christ the Prince of Peace, and to embody in their lives their faith in His teaching. 'All His teaching is an invitation to peace', says Pope John XXIII in the 1961 Christmas message. Deploring the ever increasing selfishness, hardness of heart, cynicism and callousness of mankind, as war becomes once again more and more imminent, Pope John says that Christian goodness and charity must permeate all the activity, whether personal or social of every Christian. The Pontiff quotes St Leo the Great in a passage which contrasts natural ethics with the non-violent ethic of the Gospel:

'To commit injustice and to make reparation—this is the prudence of the world. On the contrary, *not to render evil for evil, is the virtuous*

expression of Christian forgiveness'. These words, embodying the wisdom of the Church and the heart of her moral teaching, are heard without attention and complacently dismissed even by Catholics.

Too often, in practice, we tend to assume that the teaching of Christian forgiveness and meekness applies only to the individual, not to nations or collectivities. The state can go to war and exert every form of violent force, while the individual expresses his Christian meekness by shouldering his gun without resistance and obeying the command to go out and kill. This is not Pope John's idea at all. He utters a solemn warning to rulers of nations: '*With the authority we have received from Jesus Christ we say: Shun all thought of force; think of the tragedy of initiating a chain reaction of acts, decisions and resentments which could erupt into rash and irreparable deeds. You have received great powers not to destroy but to build, not to divide but to unite, not to cause tears to be shed but to provide employment and security*'.

Christian action is based on the Christian conscience, and conscience has to be informed by moral truth. What are the moral options open to the Catholic in regard to nuclear war? This has seldom been made clear, and it is tragic to observe that many Catholics are in a state of ignorance and confusion on some very important points. The vague statement that 'a Catholic cannot be a pacifist' is taken in much too sweeping and absolute a sense. Actually it is true that in the Christmas Message of 1956 Pope Pius XII reminded the faithful of their duty to face the 'unpleasant reality . . . of an enemy determined to impose on all peoples, in one way or another, a special and intolerable way of life'. Referring to violent tactics used by Communism, including atomic blackmail and the ruthless suppression of resistance in weaker nations, the Pope said that these tactics would have to be resisted. Pius XII clearly had the recent Hungarian uprising in mind when he declared that Christians might have the right and the duty to resist oppression by force if no other means were available or effective.

Hence he said that in the case of extreme danger a legitimately constituted government, after every effort to avoid war has been expended in vain might lawfully wage a war of self-defence against unjust attack. The Pope laid down many clear conditions for the legitimacy of such a war. It would have to be strictly a war of defence, against evidently unjust attack. All efforts at keeping peace must have been unavailing. Legitimate means of defence must be used. There must be hope of effective self-defence and of a favourable outcome. In view of such a situation, if the nation takes defensive precautions with legit-

imate instruments of internal and external policy, then the citizen would have an obligation to serve the nation in its defence effort. He could not appeal to his conscience to refuse military service imposed by law. At the same time the Pope deplored the necessity of such laws and pointed to 'general disarmament as an effective remedy'.

Without commenting in detail on this statement of Pius XII, two things must be stressed: first that the Pope is not setting aside the Christian conscience in matters of war. The Christian remains obliged in conscience to weigh the matter seriously and to consider whether or not the conditions laid down are in fact fulfilled. In the case of all-out nuclear war, there exists a serious problem as to whether or not the 'means' may be considered legitimate, either in themselves or in the manner in which they are obviously to be used.

Far from dismissing or slighting the individual conscience in this matter, the Pope says immediately that 'there are occasions in the lives of nations *when only recourse to higher principles* can establish clearly the boundaries between right and wrong'. He adds: 'It is therefore consoling that in some countries, amid today's debates, men are talking about conscience and its demands'.

It must therefore clearly be stated that the measured and clearly qualified terms in which Pius XII admitted that there could still be a just war, at least (so the context seems to suggest) with conventional weapons, this did not mean that the government purely and simply had the last word and that Christian conscience was no longer to be consulted. He was not prescribing blind obedience to any government in any situation in which the power struggle might dictate war by any methods as the expedient thing.

Note also that the obligation is not strictly *to fight and to kill* but to *serve the country* in some capacity, according to its laws. Hence the Catholic who feels that in conscience he ought to choose the more perfect way of avoiding bloodshed and serving in the ambulance corps or in some other non-combatant capacity retains the right to follow his conscience in this matter, and indeed ought to follow it. And his requests ought to be respected.

But do these distinctions apply in an all-out nuclear war?

One other remark made by Pius XII in the same address is very important. He devotes several paragraphs to the problem of discerning accurately when peace is and is not really threatened, when there is and is not a serious emergency, and how the calculated threats and re-creminations of power politicians are really to be interpreted. This

gravely affects the whole question of that 'extreme danger' which makes defensive measures urgent and obligatory.

In conclusion, we must not forget that Pope Pius XII's affirmation that a just war could still be possible and that the Christian might be bound to serve in it, must always be seen against the background of his insistence upon general disarmament and the policy of peace. He explicitly states in this message that it is not 'abandoning that mission of peace which flows from our apostolic office,' still less 'calling Christendom to a crusade'.

Clearly we cannot assert that a Catholic is bound in conscience to accept passively every form of war and military force that his government may decide to use against an enemy. According to this view, a good Christian is one who shrinks from no work of violent destruction commanded by the state in war. How far that would be from the primitive idea that the good Christian normally refused military service and suffered violence in himself rather than inflicting it on others. Such a misconception could lead to the awful conclusion that a Catholic commanded by a new Hitler to operate the furnaces of another Dachau would be only 'doing his duty' if he obeyed. The noble Christian concept of duty and sacrifice must not be debased to the point where the Christian becomes the passive and servile instrument of inhuman governments.

In brief: A Catholic is permitted to hold the following views of nuclear war.

(a) Many sound theologians have taught that the traditional conditions of a just war cannot be fully realized today and that, as Pope Pius XII himself said 'the theory of war as an apt and proportionate means of solving international conflicts is now out of date'. In practice, what has been called 'relative pacifism' can very certainly be held and is held by many Catholics. Without rejecting the traditional teaching that a 'just war' can theoretically be possible under certain well-defined conditions, this view holds that nuclear war is by its very nature beyond the limits of the traditional doctrine. This is supported by very clear statements of Cardinal Ottaviani and Pope Pius XII. Hence, though it is not the definitive 'teaching of the Church' it is certainly not only a tenable doctrine but seems to be the soundest and most traditional opinion.

(b) Though absolute pacifism in a completely unqualified form has been reprov'd, nevertheless today the pacifist standpoint pure and simple tends in practice to rejoin the above view, since a Catholic can

be a pacifist in a particular case when there are very serious reasons for believing that even a limited war may be unjust, or may 'escalate' to proportions which violate justice. It is to be noted that *when a war is evidently unjust* a Catholic not only *may* refuse to serve but he is *morally obliged to refuse to participate* in it.

(c) Catholic tradition has always admitted the legality of a defensive war where there is a just cause, right intention and use of the right means. It is argued that a limited nuclear war for defensive purposes can fulfill the requirements of a just war, and that therefore it is right and just to possess stockpiles of nuclear weapons and to threaten retaliation for a nuclear attack. This may be and is held by many Catholics, and it is probably the majority opinion among Catholics in the United States. But it can be said that this position, while specious and reasonable in theory, becomes very dangerous when we consider the actual facts. All theologians agree that the unrestricted use of nuclear weapons for the simple purpose of annihilation of civilian centres is completely immoral. It is nothing but murder and is never permitted, any more than a nuclear pre-emptive strike on civilian centres would be permitted by Christian ethics.

Could a pre-emptive attack on the military installations of the enemy be admitted as a 'just' defensive measure? To do so would seem very rash in view of the disastrous consequences of the retaliatory war that would inevitably be unleashed, and would inevitably entail the total mass-destruction of great centres of population. The statement quoted above from Pope John XXIII, while not formally declaring such an action intrinsically evil, is a solemn warning not to initiate, by any form of aggression, a chain of acts of war and violence. While it may be all very well for theologians to theorize about a limited nuclear war, it is all too clear that the game of nuclear deterrence uses the cities of the enemy as hostages, and that the policies of the two great power blocs are frankly built on the threat of an all-out war of annihilation.

In such a situation our Christian duty is clear. Though no Catholic is formally obliged to adhere to a policy of immediate nuclear disarmament, whether multi-lateral or unilateral, he is certainly obliged to do everything he can, in his own situation, to work for peace. It is difficult to see how one can work for peace without ultimately seeking disarmament. If he holds one of the above opinions which are tenable he becomes obliged to a course of action which promotes peace according to his view.

It would, however, be a serious mistake to limit Christian obligations in the present crisis to a course of action that does not conflict with sound moral principles. The problem is deeper. What is needed is a deeply Christian social action that will have the power to renew society because it springs from the *inner renewal of the Christian and of his Church*.

The real problem of our time is basically spiritual. One important aspect of this problem is the fact that in so many Christians, the Christian conscience seems to function only as a rudimentary vestigial faculty, robbed of its vigour and incapable of attaining its full purpose: a life transformed in the charity of Christ.

The mature moral conscience is one that derives its strength and its light not from external directives alone but above all from an inner spiritual connaturality with the deepest values of nature and of grace. Such a conscience is rooted and grounded in human compassion and in the charity of Christ. The most important thing for us all to do (and this is a spiritual task which is essential to Christian renewals) is to recover this hidden 'ground' in which sound spiritual judgment and fruitful action can grow abundantly.

But the great danger of our cold war obsessions is their dreadful capacity to sterilize that inner 'ground' and make it utterly fruitless. When this happens we tend to judge by a connaturality with violence, and not with love. Constantly exposed to dread, to anguish, to a strange force which menaces our security and our attachment to an affluent society with its privileges and all its soothing irresponsibilities and comforts, we come to feel that menace as a *spiritual* fact. In so far as our existence is at stake, and the structure of our religious beliefs and practices is at stake along with it, we experience the threat of Communism and of war as a kind of ultimate spiritual test. We have to face it with a radical decision, with a self-commitment analogous in some respects to martyrdom. Indeed there is no question that we may have to be, in actual fact, martyrs.

True, there is a fateful element of ambiguity even in the promise that our death at the hands of a persecutor can rate as martyrdom. Are we to die because we are Christians or because we are bourgeois? It does make a difference. But at any rate, the possibility of destruction or at least of persecution by a ruthless and clever enemy, whose power and success we are never allowed to forget, begets intolerable anguish. This anguish, shared with others like ourselves, mounting into indignation and resentment produces a kind of spurious exaltation. The will

to resist by any available means, and without concern even for the most disastrous possible miscarriage of our hopes, then appears to us as bravery. We allow our desperation and our hatred to swallow up our moral judgment, because we feel like crusaders. The enthusiasm we are able to feel, from time to time, when we reflect on the frightful power of our weapons, may also assume a decidedly noxious pseudo-religious quality.

Yet all this proceeds from an inner ground of false spirituality, of debased and brain-washed enthusiasm. Like the disciples who wanted to call down fire upon the city of the Samaritans, we do not realize by what spirit we are inspired. Unfortunately this cold war mentality not only blinds us to true Christian values but makes all our judgments spring from this ground of sterility and frustration in which the best seed can only die and in which the weeds of hatred and incipient fascism (or Communism for that matter) very easily flourish.

It is therefore above all vitally necessary to cultivate an inner ground of deep faith and purity of conscience, which cannot exist without true sacrifice. Genuine Christian action has, in fact, to be based on a complete sacrificial offering of our self and our life, in the service of truth. Short of this, we cannot attain sufficient detachment from our own selfish interests and from the peripheral concerns of a wealthy, spiritually indolent society. Without this detachment we cannot possibly see nuclear war as it really is, and we will consequently betray Christ and his Church, in the mistaken conviction that in defending our wealth we are defending Christian truth.

The Catholic, who believes, as the Popes themselves seem quite clearly to believe, that a nuclear war will most probably be a completely unjust war because its destructive effects cannot be controlled, and that it is in any case unreasonable and totally undesirable, will be obliged to base his political activity on the conviction that war must be prevented here and now, and that we must try as best we can to work for its eventual abolition. This does not mean necessarily an all out campaign to 'ban the bomb' immediately. But it certainly does mean an insistence on peaceful means of settling international disputes. If a Catholic feels himself obliged in conscience to oppose all nuclear armaments and to demand even immediate unilateral disarmament as the best way to peace, though his director of conscience may not agree with his politics he cannot forbid him to hold this view.

There are many reasons to believe that the social action of someone like Dorothy Day, who is willing to refuse co-operation even in civil

defence drills and ready to go to jail for her belief in peace, is far more significantly Christian than the rather subtle and comfy positions of certain casuists. When I consider that Dorothy Day was confined to a jail cell in nothing but a light wrap (her clothes having been taken from her) and that she could only get to Mass and Communion in the prison by dressing in clothes borrowed from prostitutes and thieves in the neighbouring cells, then I lose all inclination to take seriously the self-complacent nonsense of those who consider her kind of pacifism sentimental.

Priest and People in South Africa

GUY BRAITHWAITE, O.P.

In this article I want to examine some of the obstacles which stand in the way of mutual understanding between white priests and black people in Southern Africa today. Initially I had intended to discuss the African and the Gospel preached to him in a more impersonal way, in terms of contrasted cultural backgrounds. As will appear, this has not proved possible, for, at least in the Republic of South Africa, the giving and receiving of Christian truth is complicated at every turn less by the cultural inheritance of the giver or the receiver than by the colour of his skin.

Perhaps the chief obstacle to the missionary's fulfilling his task is his own ignorance. This ignorance may be of the customs and languages of his people: a deficiency which missionaries throughout the world learn to contend with by imaginative hard work. At the same time Southern Africa does present particular difficulties in this matter because the African people themselves, unlike, say, the Chinese in the time of Fr Ricci, do not have a clear cut idea of what their culture is. Under the influence of European civilization the old tribal customs are dissolving or else mixing uneasily with what Europe has brought to Africa, some of it good, some of it very bad. With the best will in the world the missionary will often be perplexed. For instance, his experience