

## "CHRISTIAN PACIFISM"

Washington, D. C.

Sir: Mr. Frederick D. Wilhelmsen should share his oddly-titled piece ("Christian Pacifism: An Orthodox View") in the April issue with some of the moralists who are losing both sleep and hair these days because they are too responsible to deal with contemporary warfare in so cavalier a fashion or to make such an easy translation from principle to program. And what a program! The massacre of the innocent, to put it simply. Though he terms it the "twilight of civilization" and strongly suspects that God has his plan in mind.

I assume that he is writing particularly about Catholic pacifists and that he intends to use the term broadly, since some of his statements refer to those who reject all violence and others to those who reject warfare with contemporary means as a legitimate coercive instrument.

His caricature of the views of the enemy is a familiar weapon but not an honorable one. If the pacifist maintains that love is not a tool but an attitude, Mr. Wilhelmsen simply replies that it is "implicit" in the non-violent conviction that love will conquer here and now. This is obviously no more implicit in the pacifist position that the certainty of the victory of justice here and now is implicit in the militarist's theory. The militarist must have a reasonable hope of victory. The pacifist, should the movement ever grow beyond the notion of individual witness against bad means and to the extent of mobilizing a state, must have a reasonable hope of defending the good and the true.

But effective non-violent resistance is not at all a matter of simply "turning on" an energy called "love." It requires tremendous organization, unity, discipline, as well as the employment of means all the way from strikes to sit-downs. Its only advantage is that it does not require a schizophrenic dismissal of the moral law from certain areas. I know of no one who holds that, beyond this, it offers an inevitable victory.

Nor is there any evidence in my experience for Mr. Wilhelmsen's charge that the non-violent Catholic's love is "essentially egocentric," in contrast to the other-centered love of Pentagon and Company, and that his "customary social irresponsibility"

follows from this. I was in a Catholic conscientious objectors' unity during part of World War II and I know quite a few of this small band. Without making a survey, I have no doubt that these men have exhibited at least as great and very often a greater sense of social responsibility than have my other friends, in terms of vocation, of civil and political and ecclesial activity.

If sometimes the traditional moralist's reiteration of the criteria for just warfare has seemed irrelevant, it is only because I had not yet read Mr. Wilhelmsen. The moralist is content with thirteenth century principles, but Mr. Wilhelmsen even revives the thirteenth century soldier.

If you will forgive a brief word for thirteenth century principles: they are sound, after all, as a minimal statement of the Christian ethic, but they are not exhaustive nor do they preclude a higher aim. They made an exception (that's what it was) to the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" in the case of a soldier or other military personnel on the opposing (clearly unjust) side in a war. The basis for this exception has been the fact that such a one is cooperating directly in the unjust action of his government and that he is therefore materially if not formally "guilty." Generally, moralists extended this exception to include other citizens who are cooperating *directly* in the war effort.

Until recent times, this distinction between innocent and guilty, between combatant and noncombatant was, at least in public utterances, maintained no less by the military than by the moralists. World War II marked a decisive turning-point. Reasons had to be given for this departure from traditional norms, and the most plausible of these was the insistence of many that modern war must of its nature be "total"—i.e., that the total organization of the modern state for a war effort involves even the school-child to such an extent that all must be considered conspirators.

If what is called "total war" requires the assertion that women, children, old people, to say nothing of the hundreds of peace-time occupations and vocations which must be carried on in time of war as well, are all to be classed as "guilty" and subject to death, then it must be the reality of total war

which stands indicted. Moral theologians may not agree on precisely the point at which the line must be drawn, but all agree that the validity of the distinction remains.

Father John Ford, S.J., (not a pacifist) writes: "As far as I know, this distinction between the innocent and guilty has never been abandoned by Catholic theologians." In the same *Theological Studies* article, written about obliteration bombing in World War II, he details reasons for maintaining the distinction and concludes that the "innocent," or those who must be regarded as noncombatants, would number about three-quarters of the population of an industrial country like ours.

Pius XII touched an extremely important aspect of the contemporary problem, an aspect illustrated by the claims and contradictions of the experts concerning possible and probable effects of the use of H-bombs: "When employment of this means entails such an extension of the evil that it entirely escapes from the control of man, its use ought to be rejected as immoral. Here it is no longer a question of defense against injustice and of the necessary safeguard of legitimate possessions, but of the annihilation, pure and simple, of all human life within its radius of action. This is not permitted on any account."

I have no objection to Mr. Wilhelmsen's desire to go from the moral principles to a deeper theological level. But one must meet the principles first. His April effort was simply too pat and too superficial.

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## ELEMENTS OF UNREASON

New York, N.Y.

Sir: In reading over past issues of *Worldview*, it occurred to me that there are certain areas, up to now largely disregarded, that might be the legitimate concern of a journal working for peace through the spiritual resources of man. *Worldview* seems mainly devoted to developing an awareness and understanding of the underlying realities of international affairs so that reasonable principles of morality and prudence can be applied in resolving them. Most of the articles seem to assume, at least tacitly, that man is a reasonable being, able to order his own affairs by the kind of approach that is the American heritage from the eighteenth century Enlightenment. Unfortunately, the appeal to reason

has not been successful in preventing two world wars, nor does it seem to be having much effect in the headlong rush to new international violences.

I suggest that there is another important approach to peace based on quite a different assumption—namely, that the factors of greatest weight in questions of war and peace are of a psychological and spiritual nature, rarely subject to reason, although often rationalized. Wars, in this view, are not primarily the result of political or economic pressures, but they are even more the result of unknown psychical causes, fraught with uncontrolled emotions. It is as if demonic powers swept through the nations involved, urging them to war, in spite of the fact that the individual citizens with very few exceptions sincerely desire peace. In this atmosphere, reason goes by the board and societies become dominated by irrational tendencies, take ill-considered and stupid actions, and indulge in extreme prejudices and chauvinism which they really would not ordinarily approve.

We have, I think, seen some evidence of this in the recent past and we will see more. War in this view is due more to the dominance of unconscious negative spiritual influence than it is the result of improper rational understanding or the insufficient application of moral principles, although both factors are important. Fascism, Pan-Arabism, Communism and many of the more fanatical forms of nationalism seem basically motivated by these non-rational elements. Nor are democracies by any means immune to them.

On the other hand, positive spiritual forces can be the greatest inspiration in advancing the cause of a worthy peace. But the emergence of these forces is no more the sole result of reason than are the negative influences. This is proved by the fact that all the world's great religions arose from sources transcending reason and the conventional mores of the previous culture.

If there is some truth to this viewpoint, *Worldview* might consider giving some attention to it. There are theologians, psychologists, thinkers and international affairs experts who could speak cogently on this problem. Such a focus might contribute to advancing the aims of *Worldview* in a relatively new dimension. So far, most of the comparatively little constructive thought devoted to this area has been developed by doctors, but the problem transcends medical science. It is most of all the rightful concern of the religious-minded.

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