

plicit by our possession of genocidal arms. Every conflict would continue to risk escalation into global self-destruction unless we dismantled most of our weapons systems.

And if we took the further step of reducing our weapons systems unilaterally to avoid threatening an enemy with total devastation, all the way down to the point where our forces might pass back into the non-combatant limits of the just war, we would then be confronted by an opponent retaining possession of the genocidal power which we relinquished. To wage war against such an opponent would be nuclear suicide. It would also provide the paradox of Christians, who presumably take their inspiration from the most non-violent victory in history, being so wedded to the institution of war as to resort to it desperately without hope of either victory or spiritual gain. The Christian is, of course, resigned to doing much of value in this life without hope of worldly success. But it is difficult to see the spiritual value inherent in nuclear suicide unless one believes that violence is the only Christian way to resist an unjust aggressor.

The conclusion which seems unavoidable, provided one takes seriously both the doctrine of the just war and the facts of thermonuclear missiles, is that in the nuclear age we can no longer resort with justice to warfare on any level. This conclusion raises immediately the question of an alternative way of confronting Communist power. It is not a question which can be answered swiftly, and our final purpose here is simply to suggest the direction in which an answer might be found.

Pope John wrote in *Pacem in Terris*:

As a result of the far-reaching changes which have taken place in the relations between the human family, the universal common good gives rise to problems which are complex, very grave and extremely urgent, especially as regards security and world peace.

. . . at this historical moment the present system of organization and the way its principle of authority operates on a world basis no longer correspond to the objective requirements of the universal common good.

At this historical moment the only acceptable long-range alternative to thermonuclear war and the crime of genocide is world government. Only a worldwide authority with adequate governing powers corresponds to the objective requirements of a human race in possession of the power of thermonuclear destruction. If man remains divided into struggling nation-states, he will finally destroy himself.

Inasmuch as an effective world government is not even in sight, so distant a prospect appears as no answer at all to the immediate question of national defense. That much is true. If one accepts in conscience the traditional Christian doctrine of the just war, the only moral means of defense in a world of rival nuclear powers is non-violent resistance. For most this is an unacceptable alternative, regardless of the moral imperative behind it, and for that reason we have suggested a long-range solution toward which every man of conscience is required to work. In the meantime, in a world where genocide is threatened without scandal, the greatest challenge to the Christian is to bear witness as his Lord gives him strength to the Cross of Love, suffering, and victory.

other voices

THE CHURCH AND PUBLIC OPINION

Earlier this year Richard Cardinal Cushing, Archbishop of Boston, issued a pastoral letter, The Church and Public Opinion, which was addressed "to the clergy and faithful of the archdiocese of Boston and to men of good will in every tradition." Although his comments are directed most specifically to matters of national interest they have implications for international affairs as well. The section quoted here is concerned with the manner in which religion acts within our temporal affairs.

In its contacts with specific areas of public life the Church must take special care to guard against misunderstanding. In times past it often appeared that the Church, as an institution, was too attached to certain political, economic and social forms which came under assault in periods of change. Even today the charge is occasionally heard in some parts of the world that the Church is allied to the *status quo* and is in opposition to a spirit of reform in secular institutions. This charge would suggest that

the Church is a static organization, whereas its true nature, as we have pointed out, is that of an organic, living thing, Christ himself in a changing world. Just as the Church reforms itself to become more Christ-like, so it assists in the reform of the world bringing it into conformity with Christian ideals.

The Church in modern times, we know, is more and more involved in the temporal life of man, very often caring for many of his social needs in times of distress and caring for some even in normal circumstances. Answering these needs is a legitimate religious concern, but we must still admit that it is capable of misunderstanding. Often those who laud the role of the Church as a social force in the community have little notion of its divine role in promoting the life of grace among men. Organized charity, supervised recreation, technical education, and professional services assist the good life of man but, unless they are integrated with the essential purpose of the Church, men will see only a vast administrative agency where they should see the living face of Christ. We know that those involved in the varied tasks of administration within the Church can easily be caught up with a multiplicity of demands that seem little related to religion. It will not be enough, as men might say, "to sprinkle the program with holy water" to make of it a supernatural endeavor. It requires a much more difficult integration with the Christian life if men are to recognize in all of this a divine thrust and a holy labor that brings Christ to the world through his Church.

A special relationship exists between the Church and the state which requires continuing attention by all concerned. History here has given us too many examples of excesses in many directions: a state so closely allied to the Church as to suffocate its freedom, and a state so far separated as to be hostile to religion; the Church with too much power over the state, and the Church with no influence whatever in society. Dominance or suppression in either direction is an evil; both should cooperate within their distinct spheres of competence for the good of man and society.

In our American pattern the Church should make its influence felt less by direct action than by working through the institutions of democratic society.

An informed electorate brings good men to public life and insures programs consistent with the best interests of all. Guidance here in civic responsibility is of first consequence and the Church can bear its witness before all in constant concern for moral values. Too much official contact with government is more often than not likely to involve the Church in the world of politics in a manner that makes less recognizable her divine mission. The place of the Church is with the people, understanding their needs and bringing the ministry of the Church into relation with these needs in an effective manner.

The plural community in which we live also makes special demands, some of which are peculiar to us because of the facts of our social history in America. The mixed character of religion in America is a fact of life the Church must take into account. Not merely the rights of the separate groups but their present disposition and measure of understanding must be sensitively considered so that a realistic framework of mutual respect is established. Only against such a background as this will the Church be seen in its authentic role and feature.

As a human person moves by a new experience to greater maturity so also the Church becomes ever more self-conscious of the health of its own inner life and the effectiveness of its mission. Public reaction, properly measured, can often be a test of the ability of the Church to bring its divine message to the world at a given time. Matters of present concern in which the faithful may require guidance may in this manner be called to the attention of Church authority. In another direction, public reaction can urge the rejection of present means which are offensive even in the pursuit of good programs, means which may through excess bring needless hardship to Catholics or needless affront to others.

By measuring public opinion in this manner the Church goes through a salutary process of self-criticism, always testing itself against the demands of the present human problem. Such a process, ever operative, guards also against the complacency and the inertia which continually threaten our human effort.

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