

## THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

THE EDITOR

WE have learnt to expect Christmas words that echo the song of the angels of Bethlehem from the peaceful Pope, Pacelli. This year Pius XII may feel that his words have had some effect at least in the cessation of hostilities in Korea, but he will still be faced with deep-seated and incessant conflicts the world over; and there remains as urgently as ever the need for the Vicar of Christ to preach Christ's gospel of peace. We shall still look to him for leadership in this work, begun at the birth of our Lord, to knock down the walls of partition and to effect the killing of enmities in the flesh of Christ. 'And coming he preached peace to you that were afar off, and peace to them that were nigh' (cf. Ephesians 2).

We may be tempted to push the whole burden of our Lord's message on to the spiritual leaders such as the Pope or on to the national and political leaders upon whose decisions rests the choice of peace or war. The scale of the present-day problem of peace is indeed so vast. Not only does it lie in the spheres of international relations, of ideologies like Communism, of social theories and legislation such as trouble the peoples of South Africa today. But the modern contraptions of warfare have posed new questions to the Christian theologian. The Master of the Sacred Palace, Father Cordovani, o.p., wrote a while back in the *Osservatore Romano* about a book by Cardinal Ottaviani: 'This book shows us the revision that is necessary in our doctrine of war. It invites Catholic writers to deal with this question in order to find a solution both necessary and fruitful for the life of the nations.' The Cardinal himself had written that in view of present war-machines war should be entirely forbidden.

We might therefore feel inclined to sit back while the statesmen, theologians, economists and sociologists puzzled out some practical way of forbidding war and establishing peace. But the matter rests as urgently upon the individual spirit, the Life of which is the concern of this journal. Every Christian is bound by his vocation to be a peace-maker, which

is the same as being a 'Pacifist'—*Beati pacifici*. The shame of it is that the word has become so abused and degenerated almost into a term of opprobrium. The individual Christian in order to live must not only preach the gospel of peace, but he must also share in himself the peace of Christ; and that is to be a true pacifist.

He must first of all, however, recognise that there exists a constant strife against an ever persistent enemy. The Scriptures are filled with the stories and imagery of battle and warfare and the gospel of peace must be seen in this context, as of the three young men walking and singing the praises of God surrounded by the heat and crackle of immense flames consuming in wrath the enemies around. The professed pacifist so often appears to ignore this symbol of the Word of God and to forget that he must fight with heroic valour to the death. He is tempted to select the symbols and words of peace and to take his stand upon a passive attitude to every form of strife.

But the fight is on and will ever remain, the aggression of evil against the good, an aggression which must be resisted with the force of fortitude. This is of course the explanation of the constant appearance of wars throughout the ages, and as much in the Christian era as before. The Christian, however, must always realise that this warfare is principally within his own spirit. The enmities which Christ came to kill in his flesh, are enmities of the flesh warring against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. These are the principal concern of the one who struggles to keep alive in the life of the spirit, and he must never suppose that here on earth he will attain to a peaceful utopia when peace has been declared and he can lay down his weapons.

Yet he must also be constantly aware of the danger of forcing this warfare off its true battlefield of the soul into a social battlefield. This is what man is always tempted to do. To escape the strife within him he causes strife outside himself; he projects the dark enemy of self on to other people, neighbours or nations. If he feels irritated or fearful about the behaviour of others he should learn to look within himself for the cause of that irritation or fear. He will always find that what he condemns in others he is in some form

committing in himself. Those who are most irate and outspoken in their condemnation of the murderer or the adulterer, the swindler or the thief, are the ones who harbour these evils in themselves. We may notice the peaceful attitude of our Lord towards the woman taken in adultery and his delight to be among sinners. And this personal projection can also grip a whole nation or race. When some scapegoat like the Jew or the capitalist or the communist has been found there is a highly dangerous release of interior warfare, a sense of elation as the people feel themselves freed from their own strife in fighting for some slogan or banner or peoples.

True Christian peace then must always begin with the successful and victorious battle with evil within us, the dark side of ourselves. We have first to allow the powerful light of our Lord's love to penetrate into these dark depths, and when this has begun to transform the spirit into light the Christian discovers that he no longer finds a single enemy in the world. Fear has been cast out by love. St Peter up to the moment of Pentecost viewed with suspicion and fear the men around him who had slain his Lord and had led him in fear to deny his allegiance. As soon as the Spirit, with all the clatter of a victorious army, had descended in full upon his own spirit he steps out, the doors that had shielded him flung wide, and addresses these very 'enemies' and the whole world as his 'brethren'.

If the Christian continues to fear the activities of the communist or the possibilities of a world war or any other aspect of the lives of men around him he will to that extent be contributing to the unrest and strife in the world today. He will be in danger of running away from the true fight and casting the cloak of his evil ego on to some other victims. He must learn at the Crib that the flesh of this Child, his own flesh since he is a member of this Child, can only win the triumph of love through the Cross. Already as the angels sing of this peace of the Spirit the Child's hands and side bear the shadow of wounds to come. The Christian, as he comes to take upon himself ever more completely this flesh in receiving the Eucharist, must realise that the flame and fire of love, which is the true reality of the Real Presence,

must shine into and overcome his dark self. He must discover himself as he really is, not as he would like to be, and allow the sacramental grace to transform this reality.

What we look for today are witnesses to the Gospel of Peace, men who will take Peace, as they have taken Religion, for their vocation by self-dedication and vow. These will be true Pacifists, peace-makers, fed by the Body of Christ and looking towards every single man on earth, whether he be a Stalin or a Churchill, a striker or a murderer, a man under injustice and oppression or an inciter to race hatred, with the same peaceful spirit that sees them all as brethren in Christ.



## PROBLEMS OF THE PACIFIST

NOTES FOR A TALK ON PEACE

DOROTHY DAY

**I**N the fortieth annual social week held in Pau, France, this year the subject under discussion was 'Peace'. There was a brief note in the *Denver Register* calling attention to a letter of Monsignor Montini, pro-Secretary of State, which said that 'this examination of the problems of peace by men of faith, thought and action is most timely today when men's souls are more troubled than ever before. Never in human history has greater discord been known. This world-wide dissension invades the daily lives of the people. It feeds and maintains social conflict. Its origins are of an ideological as much as of an economic nature. It eats into the very hearts of families and institutions. Its psychological effects sap the will-power and cloud judgment. Even the flag of peace, unfurled for partisan ends, frequently divides mankind.'

This is a good sentence to open on, when I remember how Father O'Connor, theologian of the diocese of New York, said at one time that it was as much as one's life was worth to talk about pacifism at the Catholic worker. Fr O'Connor was being humorous, but unfortunately it has often been the