

The first two paragraphs of this editorial originally contained an account of events in Derry such as is available to readers of newspapers outside the United Kingdom. We are advised by our lawyers that it is illegal to print this in England and that publication could lead to action not only against the editor but also against our excellent printers. For this reason the section is omitted. The passage ended with a statement that whatever the legal phrase may be we do not hold the Widgery inquiry in contempt.

Contempt is certainly the right word for the government ministers, and particularly for Reginald Maudling, who spoke about the massacre in the House of Commons without expressing the slightest sympathy for the victims or even for their families. We can only regret that Miss Devlin's physical strength does not match her sensitivity, courage and intelligence.

In a curious way such a revelation of human evil brings out the reality and relevance of our faith in God. To be overcome by black and bitter rage, to be nearly carried away by an immediate passion for vengeance can be the occasion of a kind of religious experience; that is to say it can be an occasion on which our faith really makes a difference in our experience.

To believe in God is to believe that the deepest fact about us is that we are loved; this, at any rate, is what the Christian means by his faith. God is the mysterious unfathomable love that goes out to all men—to all men, not just to those whose bodies lay scattered in the Bogside, but even those responsible for their killing. Faith means that we can hang on to that proposition even when every natural impulse clamours for its rejection. Those who tell us expansively that faith is no mere matter of the mind but is 'a total response of the whole person' may easily be forgetting those occasions when everything is swept away except a stubborn refusal to abandon a proposition. To abandon that final faith is to destroy the one foundation on which our lives rest—the absolute and unconditional love of God for us.

The marxist who is an atheist may remind us that, after all, the paratroopers are also members of the working class and equally victims of exploitation; the atheist liberal may say that they share our common flesh and blood; but neither of these considerations provides a dike strong enough to withstand the demand for vengeance. It is only the Christian who can say: 'These too are men for whom Christ died.' In the end the links that bind us in a common humanity must go beyond the human. It is because we are united with God that we can remain human in spite of what men do to us.

The Christian does not pretend to understand how his enemy can be loved by God, still less does he pretend to feel warmth or affection for him. An enemy does not cease to be an enemy because God loves

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him, but he remains a human enemy. He cannot be written off, he cannot be thought of or treated as subhuman. The Christian's struggle for justice need not, in our opinion, always be non-violent (though it is unlikely to succeed unless it is very largely non-violent), the agents of injustice may sometimes have to be deterred by the fear of death, but they must never be degraded or dehumanized, they must never, for example, be tortured or barbarously treated. This, for the Christian, is no mere tactical decision; it is an absolute limit set to his conduct by the fact that he is dealing with those whom God loves.

The injunction to love our enemies only reveals itself as mystery when we actually have enemies—otherwise we are likely to mistake it for a sentimental recommendation to be friendly to everyone. The Christian can recognize a group or a class as men who must be fought and defeated, but at the same time he does not lose sight of their mysterious ultimate value. The Christian makes the astonishing claim that he has been taken up into the unintelligible love by which God can love them. It is this that makes forgiveness possible, and without forgiveness, however effectively your enemy has been crushed, there is no peace. For the Christian, the roots of forgiveness, the roots of the reconciliation that will follow the victory are already present in his struggle.

H. McC.