

EXTRACTS

THE FRENCH *Semaines Sociales* met in July this year at Pau to discuss the matter of 'War and Peace'. The conference was not convened to discover a programme of political action, but to apply the spiritual ideal of the Gospel to the existing social 'set-up' and thus to discover the attitude that Gospel requires of us in face of the present situation. Here are some of their conclusions:

1. Christian peace belongs to the spiritual order. As such it is not of this world, although it is mysteriously present in time as a seed of eternity. It is perfect justice and love radiating on the whole man and on all mankind. In so far as it lives in the heart of Christians, in the Church, this ideal radiates an atmosphere of peace in the world, but it also demands of Christians certain concrete acts in the temporal order. . . .

2. Hence the necessity arises of knowing the social context in which the threats to peace lie, for war differs greatly in its causes and forms according to different epochs. An unprecedented technical revolution has overthrown the respective positions of the nations, setting problems for each which are aggravated by violent ideological conflicts. They search uneasily for a solution which is conditioned in large measure by their geographical and demographical positions. So we are faced by a cleavage in the world between two blocks, opposed at the same time by rival ideologies, social structures and divergent economies. . . .

5. The Christian ideal, in view of the antagonism between these two blocks, condemns the split in the world, resignation to oppression, social injustices; it rejects neutrality at any price as much as the impatience which rushes into the adventure of a preventative war and the fatalism which resigns itself to war as though it were inevitable; it demands that everything should be done to support the evolution of a true peace . . . to hasten social progress and to assist the backward countries.

6. This Christian attitude of vigilance and courage towards peace should not be confounded with certain pacifist attitudes that are full of equivocations. It implies the recognition that in the present state of human nature a right cannot always forego the support of force, for it does not confuse the needs of an equitable temporal order with those of spiritual redemption. Liberty and justice are good things and men have no right to accept slavery and perversion for themselves and their children. This attitude finds its fulfilment not in a conscientious objection that is opposed to legitimate defence, but in the heroic refusal to enter the spheres where unjust aggression and a criminal 'set-up' are in force. . . .

IN VIEW of the Christian's attitude to the possibility of immense world-wide wars and devastation today he should be careful to avoid the facile apocalyptic that looks for the end of the world on the morrow. *Lumière et Vie* (September, 1953) with its usual thoroughness and sound scriptural foundations has tackled the question, 'Is the End of the World coming tomorrow?'. Since our Lord promised that the Day would come for all mankind, the Last Day, the Day of Judgment, Christians—saintly ones at that—have from time to time looked for the immediate fulfilment of that promise. Atomic destruction has raised those anxious questionings once again.

The misery of the world has always been the starting point for questions of this kind. How then can we avoid being disquieted by the terrifying means of destruction put into man's hands today? The use of atomic fission for killing leads even the most serene spirit to ask to what limits destruction may go. The setting up of huge political blocks animated by hate for each other leads one to expect clashes that will surpass in horror anything that humanity has so far had to suffer.

M. Pierre Humbert, of Montpellier University, affirms on behalf of the scientists that they can state only that the world will eventually come to an end, but whether sooner or later they are as much in the dark as the ordinary Christian. Père Dubarle goes further and reassures the reader that the likelihood of humanity utterly destroying itself with the new lethal weapons at its disposal is utterly remote, and he too speaks with the scientific authority of a physicist. Nevertheless the Day of the Lord will surely come, and it is the duty of the Christian to await that day without attempting to calculate whether it be near or far. The promise of Christ's return, here considered in the New Testament texts, remains a reality for every Christian.

RIVISTA DI VITA SPIRITUALE, the Roman Carmelite review, begins its large and interesting double number (April to July 1953) with an account of its founder, Father Gabriel of St Mary Magdalen, who died in March of this year. The world of mystical science as well as of true spiritual direction has lost a shining light in the death of this Carmelite with his world-wide reputation for wisdom and learning in the matters of the Spirit.

NOTICE

WALLS ARE CRUMBLING by John M. Oesterreicher was published nearly two years ago in America by Devin-Adair. We are pleased to welcome an English edition in a more conventional format from Hollis and Carter (30s.). In the review that appeared in our November 1952 issue, P. wrote: