

editorial

So stand your ground, with *truth buckled round your waist*, and *integrity for your breastplate*, wearing for shoes on your feet *the eagerness to spread the gospel of peace* and always carry the shield of faith so that you can use it to put out the burning arrows of the evil one. And then you must accept *salvation from God to be your helmet* and receive the word of God from the Spirit to use as a sword. Ephesians 6:14 ff.

In years past, perhaps, as a result of historical circumstances the Church has made too neat a distinction between what has come to be known as the "religious sphere" on the one hand and the "political sphere" on the other. This duality, while its existence has undoubtedly had some advantages, has, in fact, led to a polarization of one against the other with the result that intercommunication between the two is a veritable rarity. We have only to look at secular society to see how highly esteemed have become the correlatives "private and public." Furthermore, common parlance has worthily assigned the "religious" to the private armature of one's life; whereas, the "political" domain is for the most part open to the "public." This stratification appears to me as less than desirable.

The Second Vatican Council has taken pains to remind us that Christ came to save the world, not to save mankind *from* the world. The Redemption was first and foremost a redemptive incarnation which poignantly points to a factor which is contingent, and, hence, very much the paramount activity of God *in* history. What this means is that Jesus, truly and explicitly God-made-man and all that implies, has entered history, and continues building up the Kingdom of God, already and not yet, *within* history. Thus, the sanctification of man, not in a vacuum, but *in* history, comes about through a series of theophanies subject to Divine Providence. Given this fact, history, by all means, ought to be embraced by the Christian. His alternative would be to consider the historical, and, thus, the "political", as secular, and open himself up to the accusation of attempting to post-

pone to a point beyond history such problems as that of evil, and ways of making the world a better place to live in.

It is all too easy for the Christian to forget in his workaday world that corrupt and degenerate political life is primarily the result of personal irresponsibility which is the product of sin. It would not be too pretentious a conclusion to assume that the Gospel applies to political life more especially when corrupt politics attempts to thwart the proper progress of those whom it purports to serve.

If one lends credulity to what has already been said, one can readily see the context in which those who seek a non-violent world operate. If one accepts the premise that history is graced by the presence of Christ, His Lordship in history, then one would be forced to admit vis-à-vis the New Testament, that a non-violent world does not lie outside the realm of possibility.

Violence can be seen as the result of sin, i.e., violence is either sinful in itself or a response to the transgressions of another. The point here is that sin is a consideration in any act of violence. The nub of the problem is, then, whether or not the most fitting response for the Christian in the latter type of violence is some type of violent return in given circumstances. While violent regress has been often in the past theologically justified, many Christians today look for other means of response to a transgression of their rights. Their conclusion is that of non-violence and they base their conclusion on the New Testament which urges upon the follower of Christ "turning the other cheek" and putting on the "armor of God." The essence of the Christian life does not consist in merely loving God, but in loving *like* God whose love is not only infinite, but patient. St. Paul in his famous passage in I Corinthians 13 says of love that ". . . that it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes." Furthermore, nowhere in the New Testament is there an admonition to resort to violent means of retaliation in face of a wrong committed against the Christian. The whole elan of the Christian faced with the violence of others has been aptly summarized by St. Paul in his Letter to the Romans:

Never repay evil with evil but let everyone see that you are interested only in the highest ideals. Do all you can to live at peace with everyone. Never try to get revenge; leave that, my friends, to God's anger. As scripture says: *Vengeance is mine—I will pay them back, the Lord promises.* But there is more: *If your enemy is hungry, you should give him food, and if he is thirsty, let him drink. Thus, you heap red-hot coals upon his head.* Resist evil and conquer it with good. Romans 12:17 ff.

Vatican Council II and Paul VI have both advocated non-violent means to solve the world's ills. Furthermore, a corollary derived from the Council's Decree on Religious Liberty is that the Christian has the obligation of respecting the freedom of another even when he has chosen evil.

Non-violence is not easy, nor at all times a palatable course to follow, and to promote willy nilly that non-violence be the criterion for judging who is and who is not a Christian is being unrealistic. That non-violence should become a hallmark of Christianity is an ideal to be striven for, and like most ideals it will continue to fall short of its goal in the living out of human existence. This in no way gives us a mandate for lack of attempt. Our alternative will not be to give the Lord of History His due—a formidable evil for which none of us would be willing to answer.

ALAN MILMORE, O.P., *Editor*

PHOTO CREDITS

Cover N C News Service

Others Washington Free Press
