

Holy Spirit and obedience in *particular* situations, not to organizational pressures and the demands of an exacting programme. The diaspora situation may well make an organized apostolate of monks impossible in any case.

For monastic renewal to be anything more than a pious wish, the monastic institution as we now know it must undergo significant changes. It should, perhaps become far more flexible than it is, much more capable of original and indeed charismatic initiatives. Those who guide the destinies of monasticism must get rid of the fears and narrowness that make them dread organizational breakdowns and upheavals more than the loss of monastic spirit. These fears come from the bureaucratic character of the monastic set-up today and from its desperate determination to preserve a venerable and prosperous institutional structure as if this were an end in itself.

The Diaspora of Rahner may well call for the small, poor, isolated and unknown monastery instead of the illustrious 'plants' or our great American communities. But in any case the monk will have an important place in that diaspora, that is to say, not a pious organization man, but a true servant of God.

Discerning the Real Situation

WALTER STEIN

In Spring 1963 the British Council of Churches appointed a Working Group 'to study, as a matter of urgency, the question of Britain's continued possession of an independent nuclear deterrent'. The group (which included a Catholic observer, Father Corbishley, S.J.) reported back to the Council that 'there is no case for independent nuclear action—that is, without prior consultation with our allies—in any part of the world', and the Council of Churches endorsed the report in a resolution of October 16th, 1963. The Resolution, together with the Working Group's Report, forms a document of considerable importance.¹

¹*The British Nuclear Deterrent*: British Council of Churches Resolution, October 1963, and Report of a Working Group; SCM Press; 1s 6d.

DISCERNING THE REAL SITUATION

Although it must be said that, like previous similar documents, such as *The Valley of Decision* (1961), *The British Nuclear Deterrent* fails to maintain its grip at the most decisive levels, it is a serious expression of concern, and its well-informed respect for the strategic and political realities of our situation is particularly striking after the endless hypothetical abstractions that still disable so much Catholic thinking in this field. One can only heave a sigh of gratitude when one reads that 'the Churches are bound to bear witness' where one's nation 'is prepared to annihilate vast populations in another country' and that 'our concern is to find God's will in this given situation—the will of a God of whom it may not be said that He does certain things in general but nothing in particular'.

This emphasis on Christian witness and 'the Christian obligation to discern the real situation' gives *The British Nuclear Deterrent* a relevance and urgency that even survive its failure to open the way towards firm, proportionate commitments. Nor is it, after all, negligible for such a body to resolve that Britain should be ready to renounce independent nuclear action 'if thereby more effective machinery can be established for shared control of the deterrent in any part of the world and so the proliferation of national nuclear forces can be halted'; or that 'it is intolerable that there should be any question of the West using thermonuclear weapons first'; and clause 4 of the Resolution squarely faces the underlying moral pressures of our situation:

At the present moment, nuclear weapons are being produced which threaten indiscriminate and mass destruction, and the stocks are continually increasing. . . . The Council is convinced that these things are an offence to God and a denial of His purpose for man. This clear acknowledgment of what is involved, and its unqualified condemnation as 'an offence to God', in essence contains everything that the most radical opponents of the deterrence set-up have sought to establish. If 'indiscriminate and mass destruction' is inherent in this set-up; if, as the Working Group's Report also spells out, 'there must be readiness to use' these weapons if they are to deter; and if these things are recognized as 'an offence to God and a denial of His purpose for man': what more needs to be established to confirm an unconditional—i.e. 'unilateralist' or 'nuclear pacifist'—*No*? Or what could possibly have any tendency to circumscribe, or qualify, these categorical recognitions? This indictment of 'the real situation' is so uncompromising that its immediately following conclusions leap at us with a—logical and theological—inconsequence only momentarily softened

by the urgency with which they are stated:

[The Council is convinced that these things are an offence to God and a denial of His purpose for man.] Only the rapid progressive reduction of these weapons, their submission to strict international control and their eventual abolition can remove this offence. No policy which does not explicitly and urgently seek to realize these aims can be acceptable to Christian conscience.

Can any policy be so acceptable that does not explicitly and urgently *implement an unconditional decision* to remove this 'offence to God' and 'denial of His purpose for man'?

The objection is not, of course, to the aims of negotiated disarmament and control, still less to the aim of an urgent and rapid realization of these aims: the objection is to the rapid (and only too familiar) slide down from a creative theological confession to a pious political hope. And it has to be said that, in this respect, the Working Group's Report—where we might at any rate have expected some relevant analysis—is equally unhelpful. Its discussion of unilateralism is so compressed that the decisive theological questions are summarily disposed of at this remove:

It was agreed by the whole group that the witness of the Christian unilateralists has been—and is—valuable as a protest against the iniquity of our present situation, with its threat of indiscriminate destruction, and as a call to end that situation. The majority, however, did not feel able to accept the unilateralist point of view, partly because they could not fully accept the theological presuppositions behind it and partly because they regarded the political action proposed as impracticable and even possibly disastrous.

And whereas we get a fair measure of political and strategic discussion, we are given no clue as to the theological standpoint that, whilst recognizing 'the iniquity of our present situation', cannot fully accept the apparently inevitable implications of this recognition. What, we cannot help asking, *are* the theological considerations that could suffice to dissociate the imperative correlatives of 'iniquity', repentance and unilateral commitment? To pass insensibly from a diagnosis of 'the iniquity of our present situation' to a merely pragmatic calculus of prescriptions seems like passing, unannounced, from Jeremiah to Machiavelli.

Why, then, in spite of the evident moral impetus behind it, in spite of its determination to look empirical realities in the face—its 'concern to find God's will in this given situation'—does *The British Nuclear Deterrent*

seem itself finally in danger of postulating a God of whom it may be said 'that He does certain things in general but nothing in particular':

The British Nuclear Deterrent, like previous statements issued by the British Council of Churches (and similar ones, by the World Council of Churches), is strong in the recognition that Christianity exists in and for the world; that its political witness must be borne not in aloofness from the world but deeply within the world's intractable dilemmas and afflictions. It is therefore admirably sensitive to problems of practical statesmanship, and concerned to avoid mere protest and negative generalities. This habit of mind, and the insights in which it is strong, remain as essential to the Churches' mission among the megatons as in less enormous times; yet there are times—and now, if ever, surely—when only prophetic strengths can hold up among the nations Christianity's presence in, and for, the world. Caesar must have his due: not only in peaceful co-existence with the things of God, but because justice and love—God's own things—require political wisdom and skill for their incarnate existence in the world. But the more Christianity accepts actual responsibility for Caesar's tasks, the more it is obliged to speak out with its own voice. The people of God, inhabiting this city that does not abide, are constantly subject to the complementary temptations of disowning one or the other of the cities to which they are called. Today there remains, as always, the temptation to contract out of the tangled world of human dilemmas with a glib flourish of other-worldliness. But is not the greatest temptation, by far, to recognize: 'These things are an offence to God'; and yet—in the name of human responsibility—to withhold the simple, and firmly audible, promulgation: 'Thus says the Lord'?

Protest is not enough; but there are essential departures in human affairs that can only begin in protest. Nothing is more destructive of the Churches' availability to the world than the kind of entry into worldly dilemmas that seems to confound divine imperatives with human tactics. Certainly, 'practical politics' make their own, authentic demands on Christian commitment; but so—much more radically—does the call to simple, direct witness. There are situations in which men cannot begin to feel their way towards appropriate, constructive affirmations until they have fully acknowledged the intolerable as intolerable. Is *apartheid* to escape denunciation and resistance so long as no tolerable alternative seems practical politics? Might opposition to Hitler's wars and war-crimes, or to the Final Solution, not, with reason, have seemed 'impracticable and even possibly disastrous'?

And what, really, does qualify as practicable—or safe—in the world of nuclear weapons? It is true that a policy of ‘rapid progressive reduction of these weapons, their submission to strict international control and their eventual abolition’ has much to commend it. But it takes at least two—actually, getting on for four or five, now—to be suitably practical about these things. For the moment, therefore—in the name of practicability and safety—everything is left exactly where it was. And ‘in the long run’ (Keynes’ quip has acquired new resonances) ‘we are all dead’.

New thought is certainly needed on the relations between the levels of protest and immediate political commitments. Unilateralism, at any rate as applied to the West as a whole, does indeed seem increasingly remote from practical politics; and ‘the Christian obligation to discern the real situation’ must somehow be brought to bear upon actual political dilemmas. But how exactly—and in what sense—should moral absolutes be brought to bear upon situations apparently closed to their claims? Does ‘an offence to God and a denial of His purpose for man’ not call for repentance? And is not repentance essentially a unilateral category? Of course it is possible to turn away from sin whilst having the fortune of being met half way by other people’s change of heart—but how could this be a precondition for obedience to known imperatives?

However much these imperatives are complicated by political obstacles, their inherent demands cannot be diverted or neutralized. Several grave confusions are apt to arise at this point, and nothing could be more challenging than the task of unravelling the problems underlying these. Thus, if the dismantling of indiscriminate threats is accepted as an unconditional commitment, how exactly does this bear upon the business of working for international control? Would a statesman recognizing these moral demands be justified in remaining in office unless he could, at any rate move with *real rapidity* towards appropriate agreements? Would any merely *relative* successes—as compared with rival candidates—justify his acceptance of power? How, moreover, does unilateralism, in the sense of *an individual’s, or group’s unconditional commitment against deterrence*, bear upon unilateralism as a *national policy*—where the nation, as a whole is quite unprepared for such a course? *How, or in what respects*, should the Churches—discerning the real situation—be absolute in their witness; and *how, or in what respects*, should they address themselves to these limiting factors?

These questions are becoming more and more pressing; and there is far too little usefully relevant material we can go to for help. On the one hand, there is the Catholic tendency to churn over principles nobody wants to dispute—in eloquent dissociation from practical actualities. On the other hand, we find Protestant thought, as in *The British Nuclear Deterrent*, so thoroughly at home in practical politics as to bow out absolute moral recognitions with an almost pragmatic nonchalance. Here, a world of self-enclosed casuistic manoeuvres; there, a succession of real-life problems, constantly giving the slip to acknowledged imperatives. Both dissociate life from doctrine. Either way, prophecy is evaded, and creative practical witness displaced by a chronic makeshift mediocrity.

Perhaps a thorough ecumenical confrontation between these tendencies might bring rescue. It is precisely their dissociation that renders them so disastrous. Might not a real meeting between Protestant realism and Catholic logic issue in that prophetic food for which all the sheep are hungering?

Two Revolutions

I. Cuba—The Expulsion of Priests

MGR BOZA MASVIDAL

In our issue of February 1964 we published an article by Leslie Dewart, the underlying implication of which (also worked out explicitly in his book 'Christianity and Revolution: the lesson of Cuba') was that the Cuban Church had made a too simple identification of the Christian cause with anti-Communism and of anti-Communism with pro-Americanism. In the course of the article (p. 56) Mr Dewart referred to the voluntary exodus of more than four hundred priests after the failure of the Pig's Bay expedition. In this connection we have received the following document from Mgr Eduardo Boza Masvidal. Mgr Boza was appointed auxiliary bishop and vicar-general of Havana in February 1960 and was forced into exile by the