

At our United Church of Christ Association Meeting in Riverside Church yesterday (16 Apr78), Bill Coffin preached a peace/disarmament sermon of simple and relentless logic --after condemning the event for giving no attention to (1) nationism[etatism] as the ultimate "-ism" (more threatening than sexism, racism, classism), and (2) the upcoming disarmament conference at the UN. This thinksheet is my version not of the sermon itself but only of its flow of logic. The playful exegesis may not be true to the texts, but it is true to the Source, the gospel itself and the Love behind and within it.

Here's the military situation:

whereas a part of the world used to might be able to protect itself against another part or parts, now the whole (the good earth, finite in resources and in ability to clean itself) cannot protect itself against the parts. *The situation is really new, and calls for new thinking, beyond war.*

We humans easily get used to horror, so the mere threat of nuclear destruction--Hutchins' "the good news of damnation"--is containable in conscience whether or not in history. Certainly not in history unless the world comes fast to fresh thinking--and what gospel can compare with ours for opening the door to fresh thinking beyond violence and war? So who as much as we Christians should be under the burden, are under the responsibility, of fresh thinking? When Hitler destroyed Coventry, we shook our fist--but soon moved from fist-shaking to shoulder-shrugging (and scarcely batted an eye over Dresden, Hiroshima, Nagasaki): "Hitler won." So it is with "the irrational love of loveless power."

TEXTS: End of Mt., and Second Temptation of Jesus

Jesus says baptize "the nations." Now, an individual is hard enough: how would you go about doing it to a whole nation?

Baptism means, among other things, that the person's claims against neighbor yield to the Community of Love. Today, nations' "territorial discrimination is as evil as racial," so we can't baptize a nation that boundaries itself advantageously against other nations and uses its energies to police its boundaries and protect its citizens' advantages against the human claims of outsiders. The Abraham-Jesus question *How can our people be good news to the world?* is lost to the louder question *How can we maintain national sovereignty/security?* And that question is drowned out by the loudest question: *How can we prevent loss of our power/privilege over against all comers and competitors for the brass ring?* It's more and more clear than the third question is the question, since the arms race makes the second question increasingly nonsensical: the more the arming, the less security....The test question is, *What can't you give up?* If you're in the service of the Lord, the answer is LOVE: if of the Devil, the answer is POWER....Now the nations belong to the Devil, who offers them to Jesus on condition that Jesus surrender the nonsense that there's power in love.Maybe now we have another chance at shalom--now that it's becoming clearer that there isn't power in power.

Play 25-26, 1978
THE OTHER FUNCTION OF THIS THINKSHEET IS TO SERVE AS AN AD FOR THE 25f May 78 "INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS CONVOCATION FOR HUMAN SURVIVAL."
Write for the 24-hour Schedule of Events: Religious Taskforce % Cley and Laity Concerned 198 B'way NYC 10038