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THE CATHOLIC HOUR

Conditions Of A Just War

By

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CONDITIONS OF A JUST WAR

The tragedy of our day is that so many minds are confronted with problems, unexpected tragedies, or catastrophies, for which they have no principles of solution. The Christian is never in that quandary because he has his philosophy of life and hierarchy of values made before a difficulty presents itself. The difference between the modern pagan and the true Christian is: The former is confronted with strange roads without guide-posts, the Christian has a map to cover all the roads; the pagan has need of measuring something but has no measuring rod, the Christian has his standard of values already made before the valuable is presented for approval. The Christian is like a carpenter who carries his rule in his pocket—he does not know whether he will have to measure floors, ceilings, dog houses, palaces, movie theatres, or churches; but regardless of whether he has to stand or stoop, he never throws away his ruler, never decides to be a Liberal and make the foot measure 13 inches, or a reactionary and make it measure 11 inches. A foot for him is 12 inches despite Progressive education. The modern, on the other hand, uses moral principles like clothes. He uses one set of principles at one moment, another at another, as he wears white trousers for tennis, formal black for dinner, trunks at the beach, and none at all in his tub. His likes and dislikes determine his moral principles instead of his moral principles determining his likes and dislikes.

This difference between the modern and the Christian is true not only as regards education, eco-

nomics, politics, science, but even as regards war. The Christian does not wait until war is declared, and then through the influence of propaganda, emotion, or slogan, deride its justice or injustice. He has a body of principles of justice grounded in the Eternal Reason of God, anterior to any conflict. What these principles are in relation to war we propose to discuss in this broadcast. In other words, is a war ever justified? The question is so worded as to ignore this war completely. All we want to do now is to set down the invariable Catholic principles for a just war—principles we had before this war, before the Civil War, before the French Revolution, before Lepanto, and before Constantine, and which we will have long after this war.

Our procedure will be to set down in general the determinants of a moral act, and then apply them to war. In every moral act three elements must be considered: First, the object; second, the intention; and third, the circumstances. Not one of these may be contrary to the moral order, if the act is to be considered morally good. To express this idea we often use an old Latin maxim: *bonum ex integra causa, malum ex quocumque defectu*; that is, all the moral determinants of an act must be good: Its object, its intention, and its circumstances. If only *one* of them is not good, the act cannot claim to be wholly good.

To illustrate: Suppose you want to know whether it is a morally good act to help a poor friend who needs \$1000.00 to remain in his business. Ask yourself, first, What is the *object* of the gift? To help a neighbor. Obviously that is good—but that alone does not make the act morally good, for two other points must also be considered.

Second, what is your intention or the motive

for your action? The act can be good and the motive bad. If your intention in giving is to relieve your friend's financial burden so he can continue to give himself and family the normal comforts of life, then your act is so far morally good; but if your motive for giving was to win the favor of his wife and ultimately to induce her to divorce him, then your act was vitiated by an evil intention.

Third, you must inquire: What are the circumstances? If you made the gift through the intermediary of a friend of his wife who, in giving the gift ridiculed the sanctity of the marriage bond and justified divorce on the grounds that everyone was doing it, the good act would be further vitiated and spoiled by the unmoral circumstances surrounding the gift.

It cannot be too often repeated that all three elements must be good: The action itself, the intention, and the circumstances. An act must therefore be good not only in its end but in its *means*. That is what the modern pagan forgets: He thinks that because the end is good, he can use any means he pleases. No! The end never justifies the means. And incidentally, for those who have been deceived by lies, the Jesuits never taught anything else but this traditional Christian doctrine.

Let us now apply these principles to war. To be just a war must be good in its object, in its intention and in its circumstances:

The *object* must be good; that is, a war must have a just cause. Now wars are of two kinds, defensive and offensive. A defensive war is just in its cause if it is waged to defend an essential and fundamental right unjustly denied; an offensive war is just in its action if it is the only means for preserving an essential and fundamental right and justice

unjustly denied. It is of course here presumed that the war is the last resort in the preservation of justice; that *every* other peaceful means of righting the wrong must have been tried, and that the importance of the justice to be defended is proportioned to the gravity of the ills which the war would cause. (As Henry of Ghent phrased it in the Middle Ages: "There are two ways of combatting: by discussion or by violence; the first being peculiar to man, the second to wild animals, one should only have recourse to the latter when the former is of no avail.") The Christian under no circumstances can accept Stephen Decatur's doctrine: "My country right or wrong." A slogan of this kind assumes there is no law above a nation, not even the law of God—therefore whatever one's nation decides to do is right. Rather the Christian attitude is: "If our country is wrong, let us make it right; and when it is right, if need be we will die for it; then in dying for it we will be defending our country's justice because it is one with Divine Justice."

War must be good or right not only in its action or cause, but also in its *intention*. The only intention which can justify war is to promote common good and avoid evil. The common good here means not exclusively the common good of the individual nation but the common good of the world, because today no nation is hermetically sealed but rather its order and prosperity is bound up inseparably with other nations. Every sovereign State is part of the world.

Though a war was declared by lawful authority and for a just cause, it could become unjustified by reason of the wrong intention of the one who waged it; for example, for the sake of civil vengeance, to satisfy the lust of domination, or to create internal

discords so as to incite revolution within a country at war. This latter applies to the Communist technique of using even a just war to stir up a civil war.

War is a terrible instrument, the last thing to be resorted to in defense of justice, and to make use of it one requires a pure heart and clean hands. One must therefore never confuse slogans with intentions. Civilization and culture are not the prizes of battle and hence must not be made the pretext of battle.

War to be justified, must be good not only in its cause, not only in its intention, but also in its *circumstances* or its methods. A bad method could vitiate a good intention; for example, to circulate foul literature to procure money for a maternity ward. The Church is most emphatic about the *circumstances* of war affecting its morality. In 1937, for instance, when the Mexican government was persecuting religion with the fury of the Nazis, there were some evidently who thought that a revolt by force would have been justified. For that reason, in March 1937 the Holy Father, Pius XI, addressed the following letter to the Mexican Bishops: "The Church condemns every unjust rebellion or act of violence against the properly constituted civil power . . . Although it is true that a practical solution depends on concrete circumstances, it is nevertheless our duty to remind you of some general principles which must always be kept in mind:

"1. The methods used for vindicating rights are means to an end, or constitute a relative end, not a final or absolute end." For example a gun is a means; it is not justified because it is shot, but because of the reason for which it is shot. Its morality is relative to something outside itself, for there

is a world of difference between a gun used to shoot a bear and a gun used to shoot a rich relative.

"2. That, as a means to an end, the methods for vindicating rights must be lawful and not intrinsically evil acts." In other words the end does not justify the means. No advantage however great may be gained at the expense of violating a moral law. I may not club a millionaire on the head to get money to buy ambulances for the wounded.

"3. That since the methods for vindicating rights should be means proportionate to the end, they must be used only insofar as they seem to attain that end, in whole or in part, and in such a way that they do not bring greater harm to the community than the harm they were intended to remedy." For example, a bomber is a means to win a war: to use it to bomb hospitals is not proportionate to the winning of war and therefore unjustified. There may be no limit to what men *will* do in war, because *physically*, they *can* do anything; but there is a limit to what they *may* do in war, because morally they *ought* not do certain things; for example, they ought not kill prisoners of war, make improper use of a flag of truce, force conquered people and particularly women to march in front of soldiers into battle. The Catholic Church officially believes that aerial bombardments of civilian populations is an unjustified method of war, and *Osservatore Romano* of the Vatican on June 10, 1938, declared that the protests of the world against bombings in Spain were justified by the fact that the centers bombed had no military interest.

When then an individual is confronted with the problems of war, he should ask himself these questions: Is the cause for which my country goes to war just? Is it grave and proportionate to the evils

which will follow? Is it to defend basic rights, which could not otherwise be preserved, or to expand possessions, and preserve a certain form of economy or politics? Secondly, supposing the cause to be just, has my country the right intention? Is it entering the war to save loans made to foreign countries, or to restore international order based on justice? Thirdly, are its methods justified? Is it using certain anti-religious forces? Is it so conducting the war that it realizes war is a conflict between states and not between individuals? Are its methods conducive to a true peace without vindictiveness? Only when these three questions of morally good end, right intentions, and justifiable methods can be answered in the affirmative can war be justified. These principles are as independent of propaganda and emotion as the sun is independent of the methods of government. They antedated this war and every war, because the order of the universe is grounded on the justice of God. As a ship can keep its course because its star is fixed, so a Christian can keep his thinking straight and his mind tidy in the midst of a self-interested and distracting world, because his justice is fixed in God and everything else revolves about it.

Two practical considerations follow from this Catholic theology of war:

First, we Christians should never talk of war, as the world does, in terms of freedom, but always in terms of justice. One of the greatest disasters that happened to modern civilization was for democracy to inscribe "liberty" on its banners instead of "justice". Because "liberty" was considered the ideal it was not long until some men interpreted it as meaning "freedom from justice"; then when religion and decent government attempted to bring

them back to justice, organizing into "freedom groups" they protested that their constitutional and natural rights were being violated. The industrial and social injustice of our era is the tragic aftermath of democracy's overemphasis on freedom as the 'right to do whatever you please'. No, freedom means the right to do what you *ought*, and *ought* implies law, and law implies justice, and justice implies God. So too in war, a nation that fights for freedom divorced from justice has no right to war, because it does not know why it wants to be free, or why it wants anyone else to be free.

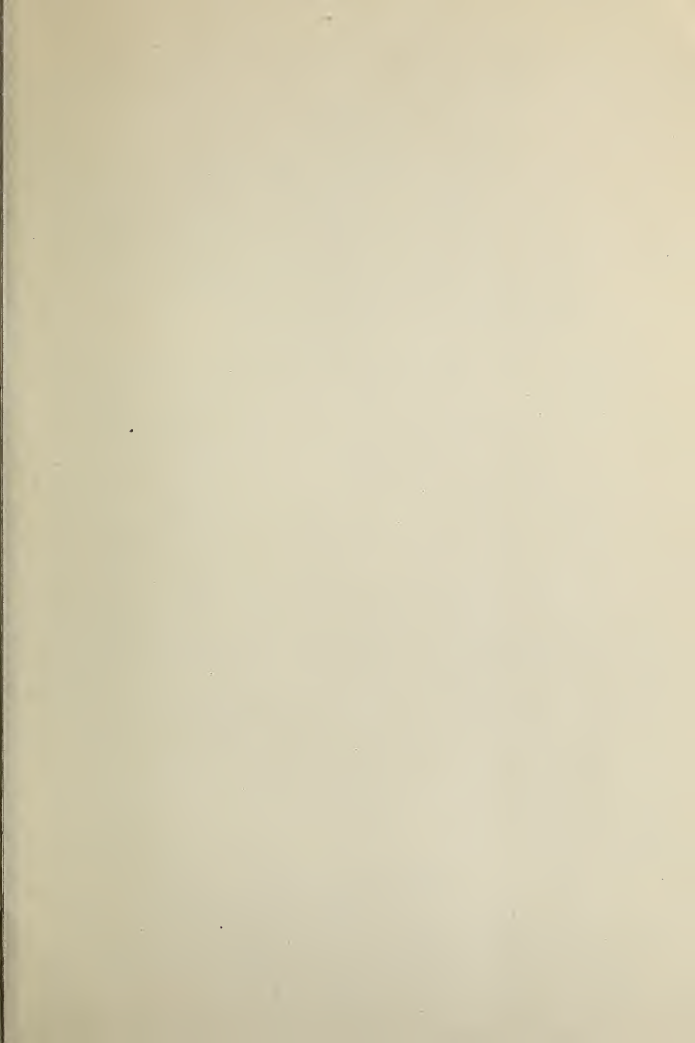
The Christian, in opposition to the spirit of the world, should think of war first and primarily in terms of justice. Whenever there is justice there is freedom, but when there is freedom, there is not always justice. There can be freedom without justice—and that is the basic reason why there is war today: men wanting to be free from discipline, and particularly from dependence on the Justice of God.

It is indeed interesting that Our Lord never praised those who sought freedom apart from justice. Never did He say: "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after freedom", but "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice" (*Matt.* 5:6), and "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice's sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (*Matt.* 5:10). Let us then, in the name of God, stop talking about freedom until we decide why we want to be free; let us, when the world has gone mad with freedom alienated from the law of God, unfurl the flag of justice—then we shall be free: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice and all these things shall be added unto you" (*Matt.* 6:33).

Secondly, since the God of Justice is the God of

Charity it follows that although a way may be justified, one may not enter into it in a spirit of hate. We too often identify what is really a sin against charity with a love of justice. It is precisely against this divorce of justice and charity that the Church cautions us, even in times of war. If you have read the utterances of the Holy Father you will note how like unto his Master he never separates the condemnation of injustice from the plea for charity and prayer—the hatred of enmity from the love of enemy. Justice may demand, in history, physical resistance to an aggressor's physical assault; but charity demands that we pray for his conversion from his onslaught against the morality and justice of God.

To keep justice and charity in our national life, to eradicate bigotry, anti-Semitism, hatred, and wicked intolerance, I will send you free for the asking a little book: *What can I do*. There is something every American can do whether he be Jew, Protestant, or Catholic, to spread good will, brotherly love. The little book will tell you the particular contribution you can make. We know now the conditions of a just war, but let us be more interested in peace, peace with one another, and peace with God. There is not a single one of us—not even the Nazis, the Fascists, the Communists, who are living in America—who would transfer allegiance to any other nation under the sun. Shall we make the abundant blessings of America the basis of discord and hate? Rather shall we thank God and love one another as He has loved us. America may be off the gold-standard, but let us not take it off the God-standard! God love you!



THE CATHOLIC HOUR

1930—Eleventh Year—1941

The nationwide Catholic Hour was inaugurated on March 2, 1930, by the National Council of Catholic Men in cooperation with the National Broadcasting Company and its associated stations. Radio facilities are provided gratuitously by NBC and the stations associated with it; the program is arranged and produced by NCCM.

The Catholic Hour was begun on a network of 22 stations, and now carries its message of Catholic truth on each Sunday of the year (and Good Friday) through a number of stations varying from 90 to 107, situated in 40 states, the District of Columbia, and Hawaii, including one short-wave station broadcasting to the entire western world. Consisting of an address mainly expository, by one or another of America's leading Catholic preachers, and of sacred music provided usually by one of Father Finn's musical units, the Catholic Hour has distinguished itself as one of the most popular and extensive religious broadcasts in the world. A current average of 40,000 audience letters a month, about twenty per cent of which come from listeners of other faiths, gives some indication of its popularity and influence.

The program's production costs now run to more than \$45,000 a year—less than eight dollars per station per Sunday—which must be raised entirely by voluntary subscription. The National Council of Catholic Men invites all those who are interested in the maintenance of this far-reaching and effective work of religion to contribute to its support.

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