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# VICTORY

... Our Faith



'The Battle Is  
Joined' . . .

ENEMY IS  
Atheistic  
Materialism

1954 STATEMENT OF  
THE BISHOPS OF THE UNITED STATES



# Introduction

CONTAINED in this booklet is the full text of the Annual Statement of all the Bishops of the United States. It was released on November 21, 1954, immediately following the general meeting of the Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops in Washington, D.C.

The Statement was signed by the members of the Administrative Board of the National Catholic Welfare Conference:

- ✠ Edward Cardinal Mooney
- ✠ Samuel Cardinal Stritch
- ✠ Francis Cardinal Spellman
- ✠ James Francis Cardinal McIntyre
- ✠ Karl J. Alter
- ✠ Patrick A. O'Boyle
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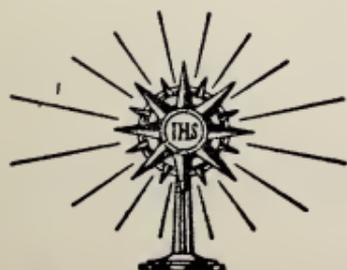
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# Victory . . . Our Faith

‘Battle is Joined’—  
Enemy is Atheistic Materialism





# Victory . . . Our Faith

THE Bishops of the United States of America, gathered in annual assembly at Washington, send greeting and paternal blessing to all their priests, religious, and people.

This greeting and blessing we send to you with mixed hope and concern. For while our hope is in the blessing of Christ and His Church, our concern is aroused by a tyranny already imposed upon a billion souls. It threatens the destruction of our own land as it has already attacked the culture of others. That tyranny is atheistic materialism, whether revealed in Communism or in Godless humanism.

The battle is joined. If our nation is to escape the fate of Poland and of China, of Yugoslavia and of Hungary, and of so many others, if we are to survive as a free Christian nation, then we must be clear-eyed and we must be strong. It is the blind and the weak who fall into the pit.

## This is Our Enemy

We need, first of all, to identify our enemy; to recognize it for what it really is. Some see the enemy only as a political state or group of states, or merely as an

economic system. Spiritual vision gives better intelligence of the fact. The enemy is atheistic materialism. Whether it be entrenched in the organs of a foreign state, or in one of our own domestic institutions, it is atheistic materialism that seeks to destroy us. This is the enemy.

In the second place, we must be strong. Material strength is necessary, of course, and its proper organization and disposition are of immediate urgency. But material strength, like physical vision, is not enough. This nation must look to its spiritual strength. Our vast physical resources and our masterly technical skills will avail us nothing unless we are a people strong in the Faith which gives purpose to action, and in the morality which fosters discipline and courage. The true strength of a Christian nation is in the power of God which outweighs all force of arms.

Unfortunately, in recent times the drift from God and from the spiritual and supernatural view of life has seriously weakened this country. It is true that a rise in church membership has been reported during the past few years, but in the light of other evidence, one is forced to question how significant such mere statistics may be. One looks in vain for any corresponding increase of religion's beneficent influence upon the nation's life.

Indeed, the trend in public and private morality has been downward; there is an alarming disregard in practice for God's teaching and for God's law.

Is there any need to instance the growing evils in family life, the lustful self-indulgence which leads from birth prevention and divorce, from broken homes to the broken lives of youthful delinquents? Need we adduce in evidence the appalling circulation of indecent literature, and the low moral level of so much of the public entertainment in these days?

## God and His Law Ignored

It is not that the existence of God is expressly or generally denied; it is rather that so many men ignore Him and His law in their absorption with the material world which He created. There is not yet a deliberate turning away from God, but there is an excessive preoccupation with creatures. This form of materialism reveals itself as secularism in politics and government, as avarice in business and in the professions, and as paganism in the personal lives and relations of all too many men and women. "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." (Mark 7:6)

Materialism has brought about a decline

in the influence of religion upon American life. Confusion in our thinking and a sort of paralysis of the national will have been the inevitable results of this decline. Here then we have the source of that weakness which is causing so much concern to men of good will. Unless we arrest this religious decline, unless we push back the domestic invasion of materialism, we shall not be able, as history clearly attests, to withstand the enemy from without.

Materialism is the real enemy, at home as well as abroad. In its varieties there is little difference of kind; the difference is largely one of degree. Both are deadly for America. The way of matter and of the flesh is the way of death; the way of God and of the spirit is the way of life. If we would have life, we must renew and reaffirm our Faith in God and in His Christ; we must cling again to that Christian moral code which is the American way of life at its purest and its best.

## We Need Faith

We need Faith, first of all; belief in God and in the Son Whom He sent us, Jesus Christ. Faith is the first essential of human living. But let us be clear about what we mean by this wondrous word. Faith is not a mere emotion. It is not a vague senti-

ment of reverence in the presence of goodness and beauty, or of awe in the presence of mystery. Faith has to do with knowing, not with feeling. It is knowledge in its highest and surest form. Faith is the intellectual act by which, under the influence of grace, we accept on the authority of God the truths by Him revealed.

By Faith, we know. It is a key to knowledge, to knowledge of the highest and noblest character. By Faith, we rise above the things of earth and of time and glimpse the things of heaven and of eternity. From this high point of vantage, we sweep the horizon of human life from origin to destiny, and make the discovery that God is our beginning and our end. With Faith we break through the barriers of nature to the supernatural vision of grace. How they misunderstand who consider Faith a mere pious emotion! It is, instead, the surest of all forms of cognition, the word of Him Who knows unerringly and speaks with truth because He can neither deceive nor be deceived. God Himself is both revealer and guarantor of the truths of Faith.

## God Falsified

Let us be clear, too, as to what we mean when we utter the sacred name of God. Those who have confused the notion of

Faith, have also falsified the wonder which is God. To the timid who retreat before any positive assertion, there can be no understanding of the majesty of Pure Being, Infinite Affirmation, which is God.

Shallow men prattle of a shadowy world spirit or essence of things; of a dim projection of the ego, of a hypothetical construction of the mind for the purpose of explaining the hidden laws of nature. The reality is so inexpressibly greater, warmer, more uplifting, more comforting, more profoundly influential in our lives.

*God is.* He is self-subsisting, perfect Being. He is Personal God, all-wise, all-powerful, all-good, all just, all-holy. He is changeless, eternal, infinite. He is one God in three Divine Persons. He created us innocent and holy. He redeemed us after our fall into sin. He sanctifies us. He is our beginning and our final purpose or end. He loves us as our Father with a tender love, and He wants our filial love in return. He gave us His Son as our Brother, and with the love that surpasses all other loves, our Brother laid down His life to give us life eternal.

## Here is the Answer

Here is the answer to all our questioning; the satisfaction for all our needs. The

purpose of human life can be summed up in the three luminous propositions which define our relationship to God: We were created to know Him, to love Him, to Serve Him. We were created by Him and for Him. We shall find no rest until we rest in Him. He is the fulfillment of all our aspirations—truth and goodness and beauty. He is the beginning and the end, our origin and our destiny. He is our only hope for happiness.

The most perfect revelation of God to man is made in His Son, Jesus Christ. He is Emmanuel, *God with us*. Just as the Creator brought light and order to the ancient chaos at the dawn of creation, so His Divine Son, Jesus Christ, restored light and order to a world sunk in error and evil. The mission and message of Christ complete the earlier, partial revelations of God, and launch the world on the Christian era.

The era of Christ! In the sign of the Cross, Christ conquers the paganism which had enslaved mankind, and He sets man's feet on the highroad of Faith, Hope and Love; the highroad of happiness through harmony with God, with fellowman, and with himself. Jesus Christ restored meaning and purpose and love to human life; He warmed and illumined our life where before it had been cold and dark. He rescued man from the wild wandering and the black

despair of the atheistic materialism of that day. In this day of the new paganism, we Christians can again triumph in the sign of the same Cross of Christ.

Christ is the Prophet and the Teacher, in Whose doctrines are the truths which inspire and satisfy the souls of men. He speak to us with power and authority. He has the words of eternal life.

## Priest and King

Christ is the Priest, the Mediator. His is the great Atonement. By His Sacrifice, we are redeemed from our sins. The Cross of Calvary stands for that great love which throughout the centuries has drawn men powerfully to Christ—that love by which He laid down His life for His friends.

And Christ is King, the Lord of Heaven and earth, Whose kingdom endures for ever and ever. He is the Lawgiver, laying down the code of conduct that binds the consciences of men. He is the Judge, merciful and just, Who rewards the good and punishes the evil. He is the Ruler Who reaches from end to end mightily and disposes all things well. From Him alone do earthly magistrates receive their power of governance. He is the King of Kings. Worship and obedience, order and discipline, filial love—these He exacts from His subjects, but

in return He gives them His Father's love and His Father's home, rich largess of grace and abiding peace of soul. Truly, to serve Him is to reign.

## Answer to Our Quest

This, then, is what we mean by the Faith; this is the truth about God and Jesus Christ. This is why we repeat without ceasing that God and His Christ afford the answer to all our problems, and provide the solution to all our difficulties. Those who have never known the Christian religion, or who have not known it in its fulness as taught by the Catholic Church, should turn to it now, and examine its credentials. It is the answer to their quest.

The western world, with its law of fraternal charity and its humane culture, was created by this Faith in God and in His Son, Jesus Christ. At its best, our civilization was the fine flowering of the Christian Faith. Now that the West has fallen from its former greatness, let us recognize that it is because so many have fallen away from the Faith, or have denatured it by dilution and compromise.

We have fallen down before idols of flesh and of gold. It is not the True Faith that has failed us; it is we who have failed the

Faith. A weak and vacillating Christianity, a partial, truncated Christianity, paying lip service to God and to the Spirit, but devoted in practice to man and matter, can never triumph in the battle with total, determined materialism.

Our nation, if it is to survive, must recover and renew its Christian Faith. Here alone can we find purpose to end the present confusion; strength instead of weakness; a dynamic zeal to overcome the difficulties of life; an uplifting, soul-stirring motive for the fight to the death against the total materialist enemy. In the sign of Christ's Cross our ancestors in the Faith conquered the ancient paganism and gave mankind the golden ages of the Christian era. We in our day shall conquer the new paganism, atheistic materialism, in the same triumphant sign.

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