

COOPERATION

AMONG ALL MEN OF GOOD WILL

Any serious talk of cooperation among men of good will must start from an exact insight into the nature of the contemporary crisis in our civilization, as this crisis has been analyzed by the Holy See.

Surely, religious divisions are a great evil, in themselves and in their effect on the social order. But the basic evil of our times is not religious division, but sheer unbelief—unbelief that is organized, active, crusading, desirous of assuming control over the whole social order. We live, said Pius XI, in a day when the world has in large part lapsed back into paganism.

The Popes have insistently pointed out the religious and moral vacuum that exists at the heart of our civilization. The atomic bomb has dramatized this emptiness. A devastating power has been released; it can be controlled only by moral and spiritual means; and men of good will are wondering, "Have we the moral and spiritual resources necessary for this control?"

We start therefore from the fact that not only have innumerable sects split off from the Church (this would be bad enough) but society itself has escaped from its right religious and moral bases. What is at stake is not simply the good of the Church, but the common good of all mankind. We live at a moment of crisis—spiritual crisis—and a spiritual crisis situated in the temporal order.

Our first response to this fact must be in terms of charity—that love of the common good which is an essential part of the

virtue of charity. An immense work of charity has to be done. It is too immense for the resources of a Catholic minority. It is, said Pius XII, "a universal undertaking for the common good," in which all men of good will--Christians and believers in God and in man's duty of love--must cooperate.

But this work of charity must be directed by intelligence. It is difficult, and it could be dangerous. We must be clear-sighted in our approach to it, and grasp firmly all the principles that must guide us.

The customary Protestant approach to the same problem is quite different from ours. They say: "The world is in disunity and disorder; in this situation our religious disunity is a sin, and it impedes our efforts; let us, therefore, end our divisions--let us all (Catholics and Protestants) admit that we are all somehow members of the one Church, which has many 'branches'; and thus, having solved the problem of religious disunity, we can all cooperate toward the common good of mankind."

From this we draw back. Not from the cooperation as such, but from the theory which supports. We cannot cooperate with others (in worship or even in social action) on the basis that the Catholic Church, the Protestant communions, and the Orthodox Church are all "branches," equally good and true, of the one Church of Christ. This theory is false. Still more false is the theory of "indifferentism," which says that our differences in belief do not matter, that what really matters is "working together

in love."

These ideas will not do as a basis of cooperation. And any cooperation that would foster these ideas must be regretfully refused. It is an essential part of our faith that Christ laid down the lines for the unity of His Church, and that these lines are fulfilled only in the Catholic Church, which is the Mystical Body of Christ—a spiritual fellowship in the Holy Spirit, and a visible society, whose members are one in faith, one in obedience to the same authority, and one in the use of the same sacraments.

Here precisely is the problem about which we must be intelligent: How can we work together with other men of good will to defend (as Pius XII said) Christian civilization against anti-Christian and atheist forces, while at the same time we keep inviolate the unity of the Church and the integrity of our faith?

To solve the problem an essential distinction must be made. ^{supernatural} The unity of the Church is one thing; the natural unity of human society in this world is another. We do not cooperate with others to create the first unity; it already exists. But we can cooperate with others to create the second unity.

The purpose and end of cooperation, therefore, will be in the temporal order—the order of social life. We work with other men of good will, not to procure the eternal salvation of mankind, ^{simply} ~~man~~ to assure that man here on earth may lead a truly human life, in a social order governed by the principles of justice and charity.

The motive of our cooperation is a love of the common good. And the solid intellectual basis of the cooperation is the con-

viction, common to all men of good will, that the common good of mankind demands that political, economic, and social institutions should be governed by four principles:

First, the God is sovereign Master not only of individuals but of society as such.

Second, that there is a moral law, superior to all human law and human or national desire, which prescribes justice and charity as rules of human action.

Third, that the human personality has an innate sacred dignity, which commands respect and forbids that any man be treated as a "thing."

Fourth, that all mankind is a unity, a brotherhood, within which both men and nations are bound to seek, not their own exclusive good, but the good of ~~individuals~~ each other and of the whole.

We do not put these four truths forward as the "substance of the Gospel," beyond which all other beliefs are unimportant. We put them forward as the essential bases of a human social order. They are the four truths on which the recent Popes have based a whole philosophy of society. And the Holy See has supposed that they are truths native to the human and Christian conscience. The problem of the social order is essentially that of giving expression, in institutional form, to these four truths.

All of them are, indeed, part of the Christian tradition; but in themselves they are accessible to reason. Therefore, all men of reason and good will can and do accept them as the basis of a social program. The program based on only these four truths

will not be complete and perfect, but it will be a sound program and the beginning of salvation for our disrupted and inhumane world. Actually, the programs that Pius XII has outlined in his Christmas Allocutions have been based on these four truths.

The cooperation they inspire will be limited, but important, in its field. From them an attack can be launched against certain common enemies of peace and order. Against these enemies, for instance:

1) Against unlimited national sovereignty as a political principle governing international society;

2) Against all manner of injustice in the economic order (Pius XII's pleas for cooperation have chiefly regarded the problems of the economic order);

3) Against our American pattern of segregation in racial relations; against religious persecution and disruptive social prejudices;

4) Against juvenile delinquency, inhuman housing conditions, immoral films, and literature, child labor, and other enemies of the home; these would include neglect of conditions in rural life.

5) Against secularism in education, and the "indoctrination" of pupils by teachers steeped in materialist ideology.

These are enemies against which a common attack can be launched. If they could be defeated, the world would not yet be fully Christian, indeed; but it would be a lot better than it is.

Cooperation is a work of charity; but it is not a matter simply of creating a vague sort of "good will." Reason and intelligence are essential to it. It is no field into which those should

venture who are not solidly grounded both in Catholic doctrine and in the social thought of the Church. It is not enough to be a person of good will; one must have clear ideas.

All things Catholic are done in order. This means, in effect, that Catholic cooperation with others is a matter that comes under episcopal supervision. Our Holy Father has indicated the need for it, its aims, bases, and motive. But there are many considerations of pastoral prudence that come into the whole matter. And in such things the bishop is the lawful judge. It is for him to determine or approve the practical steps that may be taken. And Catholics owe obedience to him, as Pastor of the diocese.

Finally, it must be remembered that cooperation with men of good will in the work of justice which is social peace and order can be only a prolongation of specifically Catholic social action. It is a supplement, not a substitute. The primary concern of the Catholic laity must be the vigorous carrying out of the papal social program in its entirety. Of this program the laity is the responsible executor, under the mandate of the bishops.