

# Use of Atomic Bomb As a Terror Weapon Held Morally Wrong

By Wilfrid Parsons, S.J.  
(Written for N.C.W.C. News Service)

When the news of the fall of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima reached the American people, there was no feeling of exultation, or even of satisfaction. It was a feeling of awe, of uncertainty, of wonder. Was it also fear, that the same thing might happen to us? Or was it a mighty stirring of conscience?



Rev. Wilfrid Parsons, S.J.

For many months now we have accepted with little protest the bombing by Fortresses and Super-fortresses of military installations in Germany and then Japan, with an accompanying enormous loss of life among civilians.

Our military communiqués were always careful to specify that the target had been this or that military objective, and that seemed to justify in the eyes of the authorities and of ourselves the horrible destruction of property and of lives.

Now comes along a bomb, whose explosives are you can hold in your hand, and whose destructive force is equal to that of 20,000 tons of TNT, and we suddenly become aware to all the wild and dangerous implications that it may hold for the preservation of life itself.

Yet there is nothing essentially different, from a moral point of view, between this new bomb and the other ones, except in the vastly increased degree of destruction that it can wreak.

Was the use of it immoral, where the use of the others was not? That point will have to be examined.

Hitherto, the justification of bombing could be expressed in the following argument: It is morally lawful to bombard a military objective, such as a fort, even though in the bombing some civilian lives are lost, aside from the intent of the bomber. Then, in the case of a specific objective, it was only necessary to prove it a military objective to justify it morally.

But in the course of time, and especially in this war, the concept of what constitutes a military objective began to be enlarged. The railroads and railroad stations which furnished munitions to the front were a military objective; so were communications. They, therefore, also could be bombed.

Then we enlarged the concept to include the factories in which the munitions were made. They, too, became military objectives, and could be bombed, after due warning, though non-combatants lives were lost.

But factories can be quickly repaired, so in Britain they began to include the worker's houses, as necessarily connected with the factories, which were necessarily connected with the soldiers at the front. These, too, were bombed, and their bombing

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## Atomic Bombing Scored by Press

London (INC) — Two British Catholic papers have condemned in strong terms the use of the atomic bomb as "immoral" and as "utterly and absolutely indefensible."

Under the headline "Use of Atomic Bomb Immoral" the Catholic Times writes as follows: "Throughout the war we have endeavored to keep the standards of Christian morality before our readers. We recalled the things necessary for a just war: that it should be a war of defense, not aggression, conducted with some hope of victory and carried on with just weapons. We protested indiscriminate bombing in that it offended against Christian canons of morals by killing the innocent and non-combatant.

"Killing old and young, women and children, combatants and non-combatants, war workers and non-workers is immoral," the Catholic weekly declares.

In an article signed by the editor, the Catholic Herald declares: "The use of such a weapon, we hold, is not only utterly and absolutely indefensible in itself, but the reaching of this appalling goal lights up for us all the immorality along the path

## New Polish Army Oath Omits God

London — In the new oath of allegiance for members of the Polish Army, the expression "Polish Land and the Polish Nation" replaces the former pledge to "God, One in the Most Holy Trinity," according to KAP, Polish Catholic Press Agency.

There is no mention of the Deity in the new oath, which was adopted by the Presidium of the so-called Polish National National Council at a meeting on July 15.

According to the order of the day of Marshal Zymierski, this new oath is to be taken by all soldiers regardless of any military oath formerly taken.

Source: The New York Times, August 15, 1945.

# Moral Aspects of Atomic Power In War Reviewed by Theologians

## Cradle of Church In Japan Target Of Atomic Bomb

(By N.C.W.C. News Service)  
When the second of the atomic bombs was dropped upon the Japanese home islands it struck a city which was the cradle of Christianity in Japan and which has been the center of the Catholic Church in the modern empire—Nagasaki.

Nagasaki, erected as a Diocese in 1901, today is estimated to have a Catholic population of some 60,000. In all the Japanese Empire, including Korea, Formosa and Islands of the South Pacific, the Catholic population is estimated to be in excess of 280,000.

The 60,000 faithful in the Diocese of Nagasaki are the fruit of the seed sowed more than 300 years ago by the Twenty-six Martyrs of Nagasaki. The Holy Mount of Martyrs at Nagasaki is the principal place of Catholic pilgrimage in the empire.

The martyrdom of the Twenty-six, on February 5, 1597, was the beginning of years of persecution. Thousands and thousands were martyred, and afterwards, for those who lived, there was exile. The pagan historian, Takemoto, estimated that 250,000 Christians died for their Faith in the "Bloody Persecution."

The extent of the growth of the Catholic Church in Japan was shown by figures released in April 1942. At that time 2,497 priests, Brothers and Sisters — more than half of them natives — were laboring within the empire, including Korea, Formosa and the Marianne and Caroline Islands.

Due to censorship, the extent of the physical damage suffered by the Church during the prolonged bombing of Japan cannot be determined.

No word has been received of the fate of the Catholic University of Tokyo, the erection of which was made possible through contributions of Catholics throughout the world.

Hiroshima, See city of the vicariate of that name, was the first of the Japanese cities to suffer the visitation of the atomic bomb.

## U. S. Chaplain in Italy Hails Rome Maryknollers

New York (INC) — A letter received here, addressed to the Most Rev. Francis J. Spellman, Archbishop of New York, praises the work done by Maryknoll Fathers in their house in Rome for Allied chaplains in the Mediterranean area. The writer the Rev. John L. Kenney, U. S. Army Chaplain in Italy, says that the Maryknollers made each chaplain feel as if he were in his own home.

Washington (INC) — The immense moral problems arising from the use of atomic energy as a weapon of modern warfare have been informally discussed by a number of leading Catholic theologians and scientists in this country.

While one of them expressed the view that use of the atomic bomb is "just and moral insofar as the war itself is just and moral," two other theologians draw a clear distinction between the use of the weapon as a "lawful" means of destroying "strictly military objectives" and as an "immoral" means of terrorizing civilians and breaking down civilian morale.

Another opinion sees in the military use of atomic energy a perversion of science "to the cause of slaughter and destruction," while a fifth one regards it as evidence of "degenerate moral cynicism."

It also was observed that the Holy See during the first few days after announcement of the atomic bomb has abstained from commenting in any way on the moral issues involved in the exploitation of a new scientific discovery for military purposes. Reports in the American secular press, quoting "an authoritative Vatican source" to the effect that "the use of atomic bombs in Japan has created an unfavorable impression on the Vatican" have been revealed to emanate from unauthorized sources.

According to a report in the Washington Star of August 8, His Holiness Pope Pius XII, in an audience granted to Newbold Noyes, Jr., that newspaper's Rome correspondent, permitted himself to be quoted to the effect that the "circulated, allegedly, 'official' report on Vatican views 'was an unauthorized statement.'"

The view that the atomic weapon is legal in a just war, because in modern total war "the old distinction between combatant and non-combatant has lost much of its significance," was expressed by the Rev. James B. Macelwane, S.J., professor of geophysics and director of the Department, Dean of the Institute of Geophysical Technology, St. Louis University. "Modern warfare is an armed struggle between nations," Father Macelwane said. "The object of each side is to win the war, that is, to force the opposite side to surrender by making it difficult or impossible for it to wage further warfare. Provided the war be a just war the choice of weapon is immaterial as far as morality is concerned.

"The use of the atomic bomb," Father Macelwane concluded, "to knock the enemy out of the war is, therefore, just and moral insofar as the war itself is just and moral. Now most people and all Catholics agree that war is a just and moral means of defense against any aggressor nation."

The Rev. Francis J. Connell, C.S.S., associate professor of moral theology at the Catholic University of America, commenting informally, began by saying that "at present it is impossible

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## Atom Splitter



Brig. Gen. Thomas Francis Farrell of Albany, N. Y., who made his secondary school studies at La Salle Institute in Troy, N. Y., was detailed by the War Department to be first assistant to Maj. Gen. Leslie R. Graves in the work of coordinating the vast scientific resources employed in the epoch-making atomic experiments carried on by the Governments of the United States and Great Britain. The noted Catholic Army engineer also served with distinction on the Panama Canal.

## Non-Combatant Deaths Deplored

New York (INC) — The killing of non-combatants through use of the atomic bomb was deplored in a statement issued here by the Rev. Francis W. Walsh, president of the College of New Rochelle and Vicar Delegate of the Military Ordinariate.

"On the supposition that the press and radio reports of the bombing of Hiroshima are true, I profoundly regret that an attempt was made by our armed forces to obliterate a whole city in complete disregard for the lives and property of thousands of fellow human beings, who could have no responsibility for or cooperation with the unjust aggression of Japanese arms," Msgr. Walsh said.

"As a Catholic, I deeply grieve that the long tradition of humanity for non-combatants by which the Church has sought to mitigate the horrors of war has been ruthlessly violated.

# Notre Dame Did Atomic Research

Notre Dame, Ind. (INC) — The world can look forward to limitless peacetime possibilities of atomic energy, according to the Rev. Phillip S. Moore, C.S.C., dean of the graduate school of the University of Notre Dame, in commenting upon the university's contribution in the research that has led to the development of the atomic bomb.

The United States Government has clamped a lid of secrecy upon the Notre Dame activities in connection with the atomic research, but Father Moore said that while the university's facilities were not used in the development of the atomic bomb itself, "our research facilities played an important part in the

unlocking of the riddle of the atom."

Three other Notre Dame men, in addition to Father Moore, have been instrumental in the atomic research program at the university. They are the Rev. Henry Bolger, C.S.C., head of the department of physics at Notre Dame; Dr. Marcellus Wiedenbeck, who completed his graduate work at Notre Dame; and Dr. Bernard Waldman, currently on a leave of absence.

Although Father Moore and his associates are not permitted to disclose the methods they used in their contribution to the atomic project, at which thousands of scientists all over the country have been working at a cost of more than \$2,000,000,000,

it is a fact that before the war Notre Dame was completing the construction of a mammoth electrostatic generator capable of bombarding atoms with 8,000,000 volts of electricity.

In pointing out tremendous post-war applications to atomic energy, Dr. Wiedenbeck revealed that if the atomic energy stored in the thimble full of water should be converted into energy, the resulting power could run a 20-horsepower engine, or a small automobile, for the next 2,000 years. Moreover, he revealed, less than a quart of water conceivably would be the only fuel needed to power a giant ocean liner — the Queen Mary, for instance — on a voyage around the world.