

The Pope's Encyclical

The recent Encyclical of Pope John XXIII was addressed, not only to his own people, but to "all men of good will." The members of the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches are "men of good will;" therefore, it is incumbent upon us to express ourselves concerning it.

The General Association of Regular Baptist Churches rejects the Encyclical for many reasons, chief among them are the following:

First, we reject the Pope's foundation upon which he bases his proposals for disarmament and a world government. He rests his case for his dream world upon the nature of man and not upon the nature of God. After describing the world of the future for which he pleads, he says that it is to be derived "from the human nature which they have in common." Nowhere in his Encyclical does the Pope even remotely recognize that apart from the new birth, the nature which we all have in common is a sinful, fallen, and totally depraved nature. We therefore reject the basic foundation upon which his entire Encyclical rests.

Second, we reject the Pope's suggestions of a world government. On this matter, he says:

"Today the universal common good poses problems of worldwide dimensions, which cannot be adequately tackled or solved except by the efforts of public authorities endowed with a wideness of powers, structure and means of the same proportions: that is, of public authorities which are in a position to operate in an effective manner on a worldwide basis. The moral order itself, therefore, demands that such a form of public authority be established."

All of this completely ignores the sovereign rights of individual nations. We therefore reject it.

Third, we reject the Pope's argument for disarmament. He pleads for the destruction of all arms and the banning of future arms. While agreeing that war is a horrible thing, we do not agree with the proposal of disarmament in a world where men are still possessed of a fallen, sinful, and depraved nature. The Pope bases his argument for such disarmament upon his confidence in fallen man. He says:

"The production of arms is allegedly justified on the grounds that in present-day conditions peace cannot be preserved without an equal balance of armaments. And so, if one country increases its armaments, others feel the need to do the same; and if one country is equipped with nuclear weapons, other countries must produce their own, equally destructive. . . . All must realize that there is no hope of putting an end to the building up of armaments, nor of reducing the present stocks, nor still less, of abolishing them altogether, unless the process is complete and thorough and unless it proceeds from inner convictions: unless, that is, everyone sincerely cooperates to banish the fear and anxious expectation of war with which men are oppressed. If this is to come about, the fundamental principle on which our present peace depends must be replaced by another, which declares that the true and solid peace of nations consists not in equality of arms, but in mutual trust alone. We believe that this can be brought to pass."

Here the Pope again bases his hope for a weaponless world upon "a mutual trust alone." Here the Pope asks us to do what Christ refused to do. In John 2:24 and 25, we read, "Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man for he knew what was in man." And what was in man? Jeremiah 17:9 declares that man has a heart that is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Pope John would have us trust this heart even though our Lord would not. We therefore reject the Pope's appeal for disarmament in this "age of man."

Fourth, we take special note of the fact that the Soviet world has highly praised this Encyclical. An Associated Press dispatch from Rome, dated April 12, 1963, says:

"The Communist camp, where atheism is a basic tenet, has given a rousing welcome to Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* ("Peace on Earth"). Without waiting for word from Moscow, the major Communist parties of Western Europe greeted the Pope's call for peace and disarmament.

The Encyclical and the reaction are symptomatic of the new spirit developing between Communism and Roman Catholicism."

This reaction of the Communist world is due to the fact that the Pope's Encyclical rests its appeal upon the nature of men rather than the nature of God.

The very fact that godless Communism acclaims the Encyclical is further cause for the rejection of it by the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches.

The General Association of Regular Baptist Churches renews its declaration that our only hope is in God, and not in man.

We reaffirm our conviction that there can be no permanent peace among men while man himself is at war with God. We reaffirm our conviction that the Bible is true when it declares that wars will not cease until the Prince of Peace Himself shall come and judge this present evil world and set up His own kingdom of righteousness. Then, and not until then, shall men beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. So long as sinful, fallen, depraved man is running the affairs of this world, we declare our conviction for the need of adequate defense for our own beloved nation.

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