

mankind, of economic uncertainty which could bring social collapse — “Do it again, Lord, do it again!” We confess that our churches are lukewarm and many of your people are absorbed in materialism and pleasure, but in spite of our sin and faithlessness — “Do it again, Lord, do it again!”

It is a time when it seems that the four horsemen of the Apocalypse — famine, disease, war and death — are ready to ride and ravage the earth. Let your church be ready for apocalyptic days — “Do it again, Lord, do it again!”

With nearly three thousand million yet to believe in the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, “Do it again, Lord, do it again!” Before the last trumpet sounds and Jesus Christ returns in power and glory, “Do it again, Lord, do it again!”

In a few days we will leave Lausanne, Lord, and go back to our people and our work as your men and women. We will be writing another chapter in the Acts of the Holy Spirit. As you have helped your people in every age write chapters of victory, of conquests, of praise to your Son — “Do it again, Lord, do it again!”

Amen.

## LIVING THROUGH AN APOCALYPSE

*Malcolm Muggeridge*

*Mr. Muggeridge, Sussex, England, is an internationally-known journalist and commentator.*

Whenever I come to the town of Lausanne I always think of a corpulent Englishman named Edward Gibbon, who some two centuries ago was settled here to complete his majestic *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, a great masterpiece written with elegance and detachment which characterized the eighteenth-century mind. It is only fair to add that his detachment, if not his elegance, deserted him when he was confronted, not with the breakdown of an ancient civilization, but with actual disorders near at hand consequent upon the revolutionary situation which had arisen in France — what might, perhaps, be regarded as the first shots in a process fated to submerge the civilization Gibbon so rejoiced in and regarded as the acme of all human achievement. We are all, I think, a little like this, and easily endure the troubles of the past while beating our breasts lustily over those of our own time.

Even so, let me boldly and plainly say that it has long seemed to me clear beyond any shadow of doubt that what is still called Western Civilization is in an advanced stage of decomposition, and that another Dark Age will soon be upon us, if, indeed, it has not already begun. With the Media, especially television, governing all our lives, as they indubitably do, it is easily imaginable that this might happen without our noticing. I was reading the other day about a distasteful but significant experiment conducted in some laboratory or other. A number of frogs were put into a bowl of water, and the water very gradually raised to the boiling point, with the result that they all expired without making any serious effort to jump out of the bowl. The frogs are us, the water is our habitat, and the media, by accustoming us to the gradual deterioration of our values and our circumstances, ensure that the boiling point comes upon us unawares. It is my own emphatic opinion that the boiling point is upon us *now*, and that as a matter of urgency Christians must decide how they should conduct themselves in the face of so apocalyptic a situation.

To talk in this strain, to draw attention to the fact that the temperature of the water is rising alarmingly, is, as I well know, to invite accusations of pessimism. In my opinion, the boot is on the other foot. If I ridicule a prospectus for a housing estate to be built on the slopes of Mount Etna, I am not being a pessimist. On the contrary, it is the advocates of so ruinous and ridiculous a project who are the true pessimists. To warn against it and denounce it is optimistic in the sense that it presupposes the possibility of building a house on secure foundations — as it is put in the New Testament, on a rock, so that when floods arise and streams beat violently against it, it stands firm.

In other words, the most pessimistic attitude anyone could possibly take today would be to suggest that a way of life based on materialist values, on laying up treasure on earth in the shape of an ever-expanding

Gross National Product, and a corresponding ever-increasing consumption stimulated and fostered by the fathomless imbecilities of advertising, could possibly provide human beings made in the image of their Creator, sojourners in Time but belonging to Eternity, with a meaningful basis for existence. So each symptom of breakdown, however immediately painful and menacing in its future consequences, is also an occasion for hope and optimism, reminding us that truly God is not mocked, and that men can no more live without reference to him now than could the Children of Israel find their way to the Promised Land without his guidance and support.

A scene that has stayed in my memory bears on the point. I was in a New York television studio with Mother Teresa for one of those morning interviews which help Americans to munch their breakfast cereal and swallow their coffee. It was the first time she had ever been in an American television studio, so she was unprepared for the constant interruptions for commercials. This particular morning, as it happened, the commercials all had to do with different sorts of packaged food, commended to viewers as being non-fattening and non-nourishing. Mother Teresa's own constant preoccupation is, of course, to find the wherewithal to nourish the starving and put some flesh on human skeletons. It took some little while for the irony of the situation to strike her, but when it did she remarked in a quiet but perfectly audible voice: "I see that Christ is needed in television studios." A total silence descended on the studio, and I fully expected the lights to go out and the floor-manager to be struck dumb. A word of truth had been spoken in one of the mills of fantasy where the great twentieth-century myth of happiness successfully pursued is fabricated — an unprecedented occurrence. Actually, since the commercial was running we were not on the air, and the impact of Mother Teresa's interruption was soon spent. All the same, I felt that in the Book of Life, if not in the *New York Times*, it would rate a mention.

In many respects, then, crack-up conditions are more conducive to the understanding and practice of the Christian religion than ostensible stability and prosperity. The Apostle Paul's amazingly successful evangelism, remember, took place during the reign of the Emperor Nero, a ruler who makes even some of ours seem positively enlightened and far-seeing. Moreover, the early Christians had the inestimable advantage of believing that the world would shortly come to an end — a belief that, as Dr. Johnson said of a man about to be hanged, wonderfully concentrates the mind. The ill consequences of the opposite proposition — today's dogma — that the world will go on indefinitely, in the process getting better and better, have become all too clearly apparent. Sooner or later the world must end, anyway; whereas the utopias men persuade themselves are just round the corner, whether realized through the final installation in power of the triumphant proletariat, or through the fulfillment of an American Dream of eternally burgeoning health, wealth, and happiness, or whatever, never even begin.

Think of the advantages the early Christians derived from their conviction that the Last Days would soon be upon them! For one thing, they were spared the illusory hopes in revolution and counter-revolution, in insurrections and liberations and conspiracies, which then, as now, abounded. With thoughts of an imminent Apocalypse, who today would bother his head unduly about such alluring future developments as supersonic flight, computerized literature, birth pills for tiny tots, or transplant surgery with a view to changing our spare parts as they wear out and so keeping us on the road indefinitely like vintage cars? What a blissful relief for the early Christians to turn aside from the capers of an Emperor Nero and the turgid rhetoric of his critics and joyously await the promised Second Coming of their Lord and Savior! It almost looks as though the best hope of revivifying institutional Christianity would be to convince the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Metropolitan Nikodim, and other dignitaries that the world would shortly be coming to an end. Or — maybe better — to get the World Council of Churches to pass a resolution in this sense at its next meeting.

It is in the breakdown of power that we may discern its true nature, the skull beneath the skin, and realize that what the Devil offered Jesus in the wilderness — the Kingdoms of the Earth, to do what he liked with — was, like all his propositions, a fraudulent one. On the other hand, it is when power seems strong and speaks with a firm voice that we are most liable to be taken in, and to suppose it really can be used to advance human freedom and well-being. We forget that Jesus is the prophet of the loser's, not the victor's camp, proclaiming as he did that the first will be last, that the weak are the strong and the fools the wise, and that the poor and lowly, not the rich and proud, possess the Kingdom of Heaven.

the decay of the institutions and instruments of power. On every hand intimations of empires falling to pieces, money in total disarray, dictators and parliamentarians alike nonplussed by the confusion and conflicts which encompass them, and the very weaponry at their disposal so monstrous in its destructiveness as to be unusable except to blow our very earth and all its creatures to smithereens. Confronting this scene it is sometimes difficult to resist the conclusion that Western man has decided to abolish himself, creating his own boredom out of his own affluence, his own vulnerability out of his own strength, his own impotence out of his own erotomania; blowing the trumpet that brings the walls of his own city tumbling down; and, having convinced himself that he is too numerous, laboring with pill and scalpel and syringe to make himself fewer. Finally, having educated himself into imbecility, and polluted and drugged himself into stupefaction, he keels over, a weary, battered old brontosaurus, and becomes extinct.

Here I speak with some feeling, since it is through a realization of the fantasies of power that I have come to recognize the irresistible truth of the Gospel of love that Jesus came into the world to expound. The trade of journalism which I have followed for something like half a century is calculated to induce this awareness. Who can be engaged in the quest for news without realizing that what he purveys bears as little relation to what is happening in the world as *Muzak* does to music? Indeed,

the two — *Muzak* and what might be called *Newzak* — are decidedly similar, the one being a drooling melange of tunes and the other of ostensible events, both calculated to keep the mind of a motorist in a suitable condition of somnolent vacancy as he cruises along mile after mile of motorway. How many liberations celebrated that only led to new servitudes! How many reigns of peace ushered in that only generated new wars! How many liberators installed in power only to become even more ferocious tyrants than those they replaced! The splendid words of the Magnificat go on being fulfilled; the mighty are put down from their seats and the humble and meek exalted, the hungry are filled with good things and the rich sent empty away. Yes, but how soon, how very soon, the humble and meek who have been exalted become mighty, and in their turn fit to be put down! How quickly the poor who have been filled with good things become rich, thereby likewise qualifying to be sent away!

My earliest memory of the public scene is of the First World War. I was given to understand that it was a war to end war and make a world fit for heroes to live in. God, I gathered, was on our side, and when victory was achieved his spokesman turned out to be Woodrow Wilson, who in Princetonian accents delivered to us Fourteen Points as Moses had Ten Commandments. Later, in the columns of the old *Manchester Guardian* I thundered away about how the League of Nations would ensure peace for evermore if only everyone would disarm, and institute free education for all and universal-suffrage democracy. As the events of the interwar years unfolded, it was borne in upon me that the governments of the world were failing to follow this enlightened advice.

Jesus, I was brought up to believe, was a most high-minded and altogether estimable man, who, if not actually a paid-up member of the Labour party, would have been if a Labour party had existed in Palestine in his time. By setting up a welfare state, in accordance with Labour party policy, dismantling the British Empire, and otherwise reforming our capitalist-imperialist ways, we should effectively bring his Kingdom to pass, whereas, through the centuries of Christendom, it had been relegated to celestial regions, thereby inducing the downtrodden and oppressed to be content with their lot. Alas, the Labour party in due course was in a position to form governments, but Jesus' Kingdom seemed as far off as ever, if not farther. As for the dismantled British Empire, its liberated components tended to become mirror images of the authoritarian regimes which had been dispossessed.

Feeling thoroughly disheartened and disillusioned, I directed my hopes for a better world towards the U.S.S.R., where, the then Dean of Canterbury, Dr. Hewlett Johnson, regularly proclaimed from the cathedral pulpit, Stalin was busily constructing the Kingdom of Christ. At the time, the dean was commonly regarded as a buffoon; on the contrary, he has proved to be something of a pace-setter, and would today find himself very much at home among large numbers of his fellow clergy. Managing to get myself posted to Moscow as a newspaper correspondent, I soon realized that, far from giving a new validity to liberty, equality, and fraternity, the Soviet regime was rapidly turning into one of the most absolutist tyrannies of history, presided over, in the person of Stalin, by one of its most cruel and obscurantist tyrants. The only origi-

nal feature, as compared with other tyrannous regimes in the past, was that for some bizarre reason it met with the unstinted approval of the flower of our Western liberal intelligentsia, who, as long as it was humanly possible, went on applauding each restriction of liberty, each brutal suppression of dissidence, which at home their lives were dedicated to opposing.

Thenceforth I had no expectation whatsoever that man could perfect his own circumstance and shape his own destiny. As Pascal put it: "It is in vain, O men, that you seek within yourselves the cure for your miseries. Your principal maladies are pride, which cuts you off from God, and sensuality which binds you to the earth. Either you imagine you are Gods yourselves, or, if you grasp the vanity of such a pretension, you are cast into the other abyss, and suppose yourselves to be like the beasts of the field and seek your good in carnality."

So, without God, we were left with a choice of megalomania or erotomania; the clenched fist or the phallus, Nietzsche or Sade, Hitler or D.H. Lawrence.

Meanwhile, I managed to sleep-walk my way through the Second World War and its aftermath, increasingly conscious that the weird human scene which I had to go through the motions of reporting and commenting upon and interpreting, and its cast of men seeking power with a view, as they all insisted, to promoting the public good, belonged rather to fantasy than reality. In a way it was easier to cope with it as editor of *Punch* than as what passed for being "serious" journalism, except that, in trying to ridicule those, as the Book of Common Prayer puts it, set in authority over us, one was constantly frustrated because, as it turned out, they were themselves infinitely more absurd in what they did and said than one's wildest inventions.

This applied particularly to the clerical echelons, whose strange gyrations were the envy and despair of the professional humorist. What satirical invention could hope to equal a bishop in gaiters appearing in a court of law to testify that *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was a representation of Christian marriage at its best? Or a dialoguing Jesuit looking for common ground between the Sermon on the Mount and the Communist Manifesto — like an ardent vegetarian exploring the possibility of teaming up with the Worshipful Company of Butchers. Or a priestly dispenser of gelignite to freedom-fighters as representing the readiest means of manifesting how they love their enemies and seek the good of those who persecute them.

The fact is that the quest for power itself is a deadly serious one. Dictators, like brother-keepers, abominate laughter, which the saints have all loved, hearing it ringing out from heaven itself, louder sounding when heaven's gates swing open, abating and dying away as they swing to. Shakespeare makes his King John refer to "that idiot laughter, a passion hateful to my purposes," therein speaking on behalf of all power-maniacs at all times. In this sense, power is a sort of pornography of the will, corresponding to the other sort — equally humorless — of the flesh. When the Roman soldiers played their sick joke on Jesus, dressing him up in a scarlet robe, putting a crown of thorns on his head, bowing low before him in mock reverence as King of the Jews, they were not, as they supposed, just ridiculing a poor deluded man about to die; they were holding up

to ridicule all kings, all rulers, all exercisers of authority who ever had been or were to be. They were making power itself derisory, ensuring that henceforth we should see thorns beneath every crown, and beneath every scarlet robe, stricken flesh.

The only alternative I could discover to the ultra-solemn quest for power was Jesus' ultra-joyous quest for love, but I confess I did everything in my power to evade it. Contrary to what is often suggested, a hedonistic way of life, if you have the temperament for it and can earn a living at it, is perfectly feasible. The earth's sounds and smells and colors are very sweet; human love brings golden hours; the mind at work gives great delight. Unfortunately, however, I was driven to the conclusion that something was lacking in the hedonistic set-up, some essential ingredient, something I had vaguely glimpsed, and whose lack made everything else seem somehow savorless. The words that most often sounded in my ears were Peter's reply on behalf of the twelve when Jesus asked them whether they, too, proposed to desert him: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." If only there had been someone else, some other words, some other way!

This is how I came to see my situation, in a sort of dream or vision, something more vivid and actual than most happenings and experiences. I am confined in the tiny dark dungeon of my ego, manacled with the appetites of the flesh, shackled with the inordinate demands of the will — a prisoner serving a life sentence with no hope of deliverance. Then I notice that high above me there is a window through which a faint glow of light comes filtering in — seemingly far away, remote and inaccessible; yet, I realize, a window looking out onto Eternity. Inside, darkness, a place of fantasies and furies; outside, the white radiance of God's love shining through the universe, what the Apostle Paul called the glorious liberty of the children of God.

And the window? I know what that is, too — the Incarnation. Time and eternity intersecting in a cross; Now becoming Always. God revealing himself as a man, and reaching down to us, in order that we, reaching up, may relate ourselves to him. Now I observe that the window is not, after all, far away, but near at hand, and that seen through it everything makes sense, so that, like the blind man whose sight Jesus restored, I can say: "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." Thenceforth, whenever I am looking through the window I see life as being full of joy and hope and brotherliness, whereas the moment I turn away the darkness encompasses me again. The ego once more lifts up its cobra-head, the servitude to the appetites and the will resumes. I am back in prison.

Through the window I look out on reality; within, there is only fantasy. Oh, the glory of reality, the horror of fantasy! The one, Heaven; the other, Hell — two states as clearly differentiated as are light and darkness, joy and wretchedness, life and death. As Simone Weil writes:

"Nothing is so beautiful and wonderful, nothing is so full of sweet and perpetual ecstasy, as the good; no desert is so dreary, monotonous and boring as evil. But with fantasy it is the other way round. Fictional good is boring and flat, while fictional evil is varied and intriguing, attractive, profound and full of charm."

Blake was making the same point when he wrote:

*This life's dim window of the Soul  
Distorts the Heavens from Pole to Pole  
And leads you to believe a Lie  
When you see with, not thru, the eye.*

He might have been predicting the coming of television, which pre-eminently requires us to see with, rather than through, the eye. And what a multitude and variety of lies it has induced belief in!

Let me conclude by recounting briefly two recent experiences which seem to me significant in relation to what I have been talking about. Both occurred while I was preparing the commentaries for a series of religious documentary films. In the first case, I found myself standing amidst the ruins which are all that now remain of Carthage, and trying to reconstruct the scene there when, in the year 410, the Bishop of Hippo, better known as Saint Augustine, heard the news that Rome had been sacked. For him, it was the end of civilization and to the world as he had known it — a world in many respects uncannily like ours, with a similar obsessive interest in public spectacles of violence and eroticism. Augustine compared Rome's destruction with Sodom's, and told his flock not to lose heart, since "there will be an end to every earthly kingdom."

You are surprised that the world is losing its grip and full of pressing tribulations. Do not hold onto the old man, the world: do not refuse to regain your youth in Christ who says to you: "The world is passing away, the world is short of breath. Do not fear, thy youth shall be renewed as an eagle."

Then Augustine devoted the remaining seventeen years of his life to the deeper question of the relation between earthly cities like Rome which men build and destroy, and the City of God, which is everlasting, embodying his conclusions in his great work *The City of God*, which defined for successive generations of Christians what they owed to God and what to Caesar.

Now I move on through fifteen centuries, and stand beside Tolstoy's grave at Yasnaya Polyana, in Russia, where he lived. As Augustine held the secret of what would follow the fall of Rome, so I had somehow the feeling that what lay ahead for us might be sought here where Tolstoy was buried, at the edge of a ravine and looking over a forest, with no monument or memorial, just as he wished it to be; simply a mound of earth, as usual piled high with flowers. Speaking about him in that place, about his beautifully lucid exposition of the Gospels, about his incomparable short stories — parables, like Jesus', about his distrust of all governments, all systems of power, as instruments for ameliorating our human condition — was one of the most enchanting experiences of my life. The words were addressed only to a camera and a camera crew, along with one or two Russian helpers, but they seemed to fly into the clear September air and lose themselves among the silver birches like joyous birds. I thought of Russia's fifty years and more of ruthlessly authoritarian rule, reaching into every aspect of the lives of those subjected to it, into their work and play and education, into their innermost thoughts and hopes, of how this immense apparatus of power, probably the greatest concentration ever to

exist in the world, had been dedicated to the extirpation of the Christian religion and all its works; and of how nonetheless, thanks to the genius of Tolstoy, Jesus' message, the enchantment of his words and presence, what he came into the world to do and say and suffer, had remained accessible.

For confirmation we have Solzhenitsyn, the Soviet regime's foremost rebel, who so brilliantly and forcefully challenges its pretensions, in the name not of freedom or democracy, or of any of the twentieth century's counterfeit hopes, but of his Christian faith, with its insistence on the absolutes of love rather than the relativities of justice, on the universality of brotherhood rather than the particularity of equality, on the perfect freedom which is service rather than the perfect service which is freedom. The odds against its happening were astronomical, but it has happened. If, when I was a journalist in Moscow, someone had said to me that the most distinguished Russian writer and the product of the Soviet regime would write as Solzhenitsyn has, and I quote, "I myself see Christianity today as the only living spiritual force capable of undertaking the spiritual healing of Russia" — if anyone had predicted that which was said by such a one as Solzhenitsyn, I would have given a million to one against it. Yet it happened. Surely, a miracle, and one of the greatest.

For me now the experience of living in this world is nearly over. My lines, such as they are, have been spoken; my entrances and exits all made. It is a prospect, I am thankful to say, that I can face without panic, fear, or undue remorse, confident that, as an infinitesimal part of God's creation, I am a participant in his purposes, which are loving, not malign, creative, not destructive, orderly, not chaotic; and that, however somberly at times the darkness may lower, and however men may seem at times to prefer the darkness, the light that first came to Galilee 2,000 years ago; and through the succeeding centuries has illuminated all that was greatest in the work and lives of men, can never be put out. The other day there were published in English the last words Tolstoy wrote. They, too, were about his light, and he concluded: "That, my dear brother, is what I have been trying to say." I echo his words.

## A LAYMAN LOOKS AT WORLD EVANGELIZATION

*Ford Madison*

Let me ask you, who are Christian leaders, what do you want from us? What do you want from common, ordinary believers?

Does the non-professional layman fit anywhere into your planning for world evangelism? Much of what I've heard here has emphasized systems and methods and materials and the sending of thousands of professional missionaries, but what about the millions of ordinary Christians? God's Word says in II Cor. 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Vs. 18, "And hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." Vs. 19, "Hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." Vs. 20, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ."

What do you want from us? In the last five months I asked many, many laymen — and several pastors — What is a good layman? What do you think most pastors want? The consensus is:

1. our attendance at all meetings
2. our money
3. our support of "their" programs
4. "Do not try to change anything."

Is that *all you really* want? My attendance and my money?

Laymen want to be involved in what counts. I believe the church's real program of evangelism should start when the building is closed and empty. Jesus said, "I don't pray that the Father take you out of the world but that he be with you in the world." The world is between Sundays, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. That's where the people are ... that God so loves.

The most exciting, greatest enterprise I have found is to be involved with God in the life-changing business. He is calling out a people and then building them up together. E.M. Bounds has written, "We are constantly looking for better methods but God is looking for better men. Men are God's methods." The Gospel is changeless, and I believe God's basic method of communication is changeless. God — the Holy Spirit — in people. The Word made flesh.

Why say, "Go here or go there," when, behold, the power to evangelize is within us?

Waldron Scott, who prepared an audio/visual presentation "The Task Before Us," helped me with some numbers: If each nominal Christian in the world (and there are about one billion) were motivated and trained to win only one person to Christ in a year and would train that person to repeat the process, the world could be reached in less time than it took to prepare for this Congress. Less than two years. If only 10% of these professing Christians would be faithfully winning and training it would take 5 1/2 years.

Of course, everyone won't win someone. But let's not close our minds and hearts to the tremendous potential of winning and training. As Paul wrote in II Tim. 2:2, "The things thou hast heard of me among many