

jhs



ABBAY OF GETHSEMANI
TRAPPIST, KENTUCKY

May 10, 1962

Dear Victor:

I was glad to get your letter, and Carolyn's card about Johathan Greene came at the same time. Thanks to you both.

You have certainly had a time with that engraving. I might have guessed that you were still fighting it. The struggle and its issue show that you are not satisfied with the possibility of finishing the print to your satisfaction. The steel engraving looked promising, yet you are right. I think it is better for the book to be without any illustration, and that in its simplicity it will say more than the picture which cannot satisfy you, and which has never the less cost so much. I am grateful to you for so much trouble. Whatever fruit it would have had in the finished engraving will find its way in some hidden way into the book itself. I am returning the proofs, of course without any correction.

I was thinking of writing you a note to find out what the news was and whether you were coming down again soon. It is too late to get you here this Saturday I suppose. And on the 19th you will not want to come as that is just before your trip to the east. What about June 2nd? Or the following Saturday?

J. will tell you about the book of essays on peace which seems to be coming along: we have a good group of authors. I am just going to get down to the proofs of my own contribution. But this business of writing about the war and peace issue is not much fun. Nor should one expect it to be. Every once in a while you stop to think what you have just said. It is unbelievable to be calmly talking about such issues as the destruction of continents. Yet it is still more unbelievable not to be talking about them when they so obviously threaten us.

More and more I see that it is not the moral principles which are at stake, but more radically, the whole outlook of modern man, at least in America, and the basic assumptions which tend to guide his thought, if it can be called thought. We are living in an absurd dream, and a very bad one. And it is the fruit of all sorts of things we ought not to have done. But the whole world is in turmoil, spiritually, morally, socially. We are sitting on a thin crust above an immense lake of molten lava that is stirring and getting ready to erupt. Nothing will stop this eruption. But at least we can refrain from setting off bombs that will start it in some far worse way than it normally would.

In addition my higher superiors have suddenly decreed that a monk does not know there is danger of war and consequently should not make any observations on the fact. I am hoping nevertheless to get a little book on the subject published, an observation that has already been written, and comes before their hieratic utterance.

Here is a prayer which was read in Congress by a good man who was military governor of the prefecture of Hiroshima and helped them rebuild the city. J. will probably tell you more about him. I am also interested in the steps being taken by Leo Szilard for peaceful policies in Washington. This seems to me to be about the sanest thing that has come up so far. All the rest is either way out, like the CNVA (the non-violent movement, which is largely amoral and beat) or ineffectual like the more solemn movements that do nothing.

Do let me know when I can expect to see you. I hope you have a good trip to New York. J will be happy to see you.

With all blessings and best wishes, in Christ

h. Louis