

Raoul Follereau

**ATOM BOMB  
OR CHARITY?**

## ATOM BOMB OR CHARITY ?

*This text was first published in 1949; it was translated into fifteen languages and millions of copies were printed. It was a proclamation for the campaign "Love one another or perish"<sup>1</sup> led by Raoul Follereau - together with his "Fight against Leprosy" - in favour of more justice, peace and love in a world blinded by power, money and the arms race.*

*In the years 1944, 1954, 1955, 1959 and 1962, Raoul Follereau appealed to world leaders "Lords of war and peace". He attempted to make heads of states face their responsibilities and to make each of us face our own.*

*From 1964 to 1969, his campaign to the UN "One Day of War for Peace"<sup>2</sup> was supported by three million young people from 125 countries. He required each UN member to devote the equivalent of one day of its military budget to the fight against illness, poverty and hunger every year.*

*In the international year of peace, 37 years after it was published, "Atom bomb or charity ?" is still relevant.*

... At least, now, it's simple...

There is no place for equivocators, temporizers, those who make a base compromise with life.

Today we must choose,  
immediately, irrevocably.

Men must learn to love one another,  
to understand one another;  
man must learn to live for man,  
or all men will be destroyed,  
all men, and all together.

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True there has always been warfare and strife.

It began with Cain and Abel.

But Cain only killed Abel.

There has been progress since then,  
and progress has become an immense machine for murder.

Tomorrow one man, one alone,  
one man's madness could annihilate humanity itself.

For who can guarantee that a thousand, two thousand, ten thousand  
atom bombs,  
dropped on the world  
won't mean the end of the world ?<sup>1</sup>

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But all this was inherent in the Creation,  
in the earthly Paradise.

God willed it, with all else.

God allowed man to discover how to split the atom, and left him  
free to use his knowledge as he would.

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<sup>1</sup> - See Raoul Follereau, *messenger d'espoir et de vie*, by F. Brunnschweiler, pp. 108 to 127

<sup>2</sup> - *Id.* pp. 128 to 147

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<sup>1</sup> Today ten thousand bombs wouldn't be necessary to annihilate humanity.  
Progress has been made since 1949...

If man so wishes, he has at his disposal an inexhaustible supply  
of energy and warmth.  
No one would be cold.

Soon no one would be hungry.

But if man wishes otherwise,  
it's the destruction of the world,  
the disappearance of mankind.

Which fruit will man pick from the Tree of Knowledge of good  
and evil ?



Whatever happens,  
the atomic age is the end of the world :  
the sort of world where each could live for himself,  
think only of himself,  
and make his own respectable, hypocritical little kingdom.  
It's the end of that sort of world,  
or just of the world.

Man must learn to live for man,  
or all men will be destroyed,  
all men,  
and all together.



### **Charity ! Charity !**

Charity opposing the atom bomb :  
that is the war that is beginning.  
It is a momentous struggle.

Only charity can wipe out the atom bomb from men's hearts.  
Because the atom bomb is like charity.  
Its terrible strength is that nothing along the road to death can  
make it pause.

One atom destroys another, and the next and the next.  
It's a chain of destruction,  
unlimited,  
and perhaps limitless.

The man who drops the bomb knows nothing of the number of  
corpses sprawled across the earth.

Therefore, have charity.

One good act, one true gesture of friendship creates a feeling  
of joy.

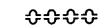
From one feeling of joy another one springs.  
A chain of happiness,  
unlimited,  
and perhaps limitless.  
The man who does something good never knows how much  
good he has done.

Atom bomb or charity ?  
Chain of death or chain of love ?  
We must choose,  
immediately,  
irrevocably.



Two thousand years ago, he told us.  
But men crucified him for saying it.  
And because his disciples spread the word,  
men killed his disciples.  
But they could not silence the gentle, holy voice that, for two  
thousand years, has ceaselessly repeated :  
**Love one another !**

**Christianity is a revolution  
brought about by charity !**



A crusade, then ?  
Why not ?

Do you think to save the world  
with politicians' speeches or round  
a conference table ?

For our aim is to save the world, from itself, and its atom bomb.  
A world that no longer dares to believe,  
because it has been taught to deny;  
that no longer expects,  
because of all it had been promised.

To save the world.

To teach it a new approach to life, an alert and joyful friendship.  
To tell it that the only happiness is that which one gives to others,  
that the wicked are the truly wretched,  
that only the selfish are alone.

Charity,  
light of our lives.

Charity.

Not alms-giving.

Money corrupts all things, even the true meaning of charity.

Charity has nothing to do with money.

It's an act of love,

the gift of oneself that ennobles and repays the effort and renunciation with joyfulness.

Charity, source of all joy.

Charity, that knows neither class,  
nor caste,  
nor race.

Charity, that breaks down frontiers;

Charity, that rejects all warfare;

Charity, stronger than death.

Charity, God's law,

and reflection of his eternity.



I once dreamed...

A man came to the Seat of Judgment.

"Look, God" he said, "I have kept your Law, done nothing dishonourable, wicked or impious. Lord, my hands are clean."

"Doubtless, doubtless," replied God, "but they are also empty."

Atom bomb or charity ?

We must choose.



... And first we must learn to live for others.

If we could only think of something other than ourselves,

realize that at every moment in our life,

while we are eating and sleeping,

and wasting our time,

or even worse,

there are people,

millions of human beings,

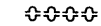
our brothers in Christ,

dying of hunger,

dying of cold;

if we could only think of others  
we could not go on eating like pigs,  
sleeping like logs,  
in mindless contentment.

If we could only imagine the misery of others  
we would become like men.



We shan't solve everything, of course.

We can't revive the earth,

and we haven't the power to restore life.

The poor, cold dead will not reopen fearful eyes to laugh tomorrow  
in the daylight of the world.

Thousands of simple lives have ended in mass graves.

But there are still the living,

still people to protect,

and a world to rebuild.

We shan't finish everything

but we can accomplish something.

If all of us, all together, now,

do what we can,

more than we can, I mean,

then some will be saved.

Then, inspired by our example,

others will copy us,

do better than us, I mean,

and they will be followed by others again.

And others will copy them,

I mean, do better than them.

A great chain of love will encircle the world.

Chain of love or chain of death,

we must choose,

immediately,

irrevocably.



A crusade ?

Yes.

As long as there is a helpless creature starving on earth,  
cold,

persecuted;

as long as there is famine on earth that could have been avoided,  
imprisonment without cause,

Christ's message of love will not be fulfilled,

Christianity cannot relax its struggle,

neither you, nor I, will have the right to keep silent,  
or to rest.

Atom bomb or Charity ?

The supreme struggle has begun.

But victory is sure :

**Charity will save the world !**

You can obtain this text, free of charge, by writing to the following  
address :

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