

man, the whole world embellished by man's work, his science, letters, and arts.

Man, the animal with the sun inside him, has not been created to be a 'cooling planet', but to move in saecula saeculorum in the orbit of the Sun and to 'shine as the stars in heaven'. And - as it is solemnly declared in the Mass for the dead - his works will follow him.

Catholic Attitudes about War¹

F. H. DRINKWATER

Three priests talking: an imaginary conversation

JAMES. Well, here we meet again. Quite a lot has happened since our last conversation on nuclear war.

PHILIP. One thing has *not* happened, thank God. Nobody has actually used a nuclear bomb on human beings.

JAMES. Not yet. Not intentionally. Though they seem to have come pretty near doing it by misunderstanding once or twice, don't they?

JUDE. The only thing I'm really interested in is the Catholic teaching on the subject. It does seem to be clarifying itself a bit, don't you think?

PHILIP. Oh, do you think so?

JUDE. Well, take our own country. All the responsible people - theologians, prelates, editors and so on - now seem to be saying that indiscriminate killing must always be unlawful. A few years ago they were saying, or letting it be said, that the indiscriminate killing of a few million people is quite all right in a good enough cause; all the bomber need do is to fix his intention on some military target in the area. Now they condemn that as wicked mass-slaughter, a crime against God. That *is* a real advance, surely?

JAMES. Ah, we needn't worry. It's just these theologians all over. They give out solemn statements of principle like that, as a sop to the traditional teaching, but they wouldn't dream of making any practical application of it that would 'disturb' anybody's

¹Previous conversations appeared in BLACKFRIARS, April 1955, December 1958 and September 1959.

conscience. There's always some loop-hole left so that people can carry on as before. The Government may proclaim loudly that it intends to use the H-bombs on enemy cities; but theoretically you can think up possible lawful targets for them, so there's your loop-hole - you can go on making nuclear weapons with one hand and writing letters of protest to the Government with the other. Similarly the Government proclaims that it will be the first to use nuclear weapons anyhow; but again you can find a loop-hole - perhaps our Government is bluffing, or anyhow it has every right to keep the enemy guessing, or else the balance of terror is the best chance of avoiding war. So the upshot is that all the scientists and soldiers and factory-workers will gather that the Church allows them to go on with the preparations for nuclear war. And a jolly good thing too. Having the bomb is the surest way of not having to use it.

PHILIP. How can you talk like that? To me it is inconceivably shocking. Don't you think so, Jude?

JUDE. It's a scandal, if that's what you mean; the all-too-usual Catholic double-think and double-talk. As for being shocked - well, I don't know. Scandals are what you must *expect* - Our Lord *said* so. They seem all right to most people - that's why they *are* scandals.

JAMES. Nonsense, there's nothing scandalous about this. On the contrary it's a case of not *giving* scandal. It *would* give scandal to lots of simple folk, and to over-inflamed consciences like you two have, if the authorities said straight out that bombs will have to be used if the need arises and decision must be left to the military. Scandal is avoided by dwelling at great length on the unthinkable wickedness of H-bombs and then slipping in the qualifying sentence about the lawfulness of making and possessing them. It's just a case of making theology work. Theology says a defensive war is just; well, if so, any means that are really necessary for defence are theologically justified. You must admit there's no defence against nuclear attack except nuclear defence.

JUDE. But it isn't defence, it's just a kind of suicide-pact.

JAMES. The defence lies in the *threat* of it - our only salvation from war now. It gives everybody time to think, and as long as they do think they won't press the button.

JUDE. On the contrary, the more they think the more nervy they will get, and the more they will see the advantage of being the first to press the button.

JAMES. Well, of course you can't rule out preventive war altogether. After all, you're dealing with Communists, who will stop at nothing to gain world power, and abolish religion. Almost anything would be justified to stop that. If you were morally certain that the other side was plotting something, I'm sure theologians would find a useful formula to justify a first strike, or whatever the military call it. If they can justify our possessing the H-bomb, at present, with our Government's declared intentions what they are, obviously they can justify anything, can't they?

JUDE. Well, it does look like it. And yet they tell us to exhort our Government to better ways.

PHILIP. The only people who really do that are the C.N.D. people. And they're nearly all pacifists, as far as I can see. I suggest that the ideal of non-violence has gained a lot of ground since our last conversation.

JAMES. Non-violence, indeed! I've got better things to do than listen to that drivel of yours, Philip. Besides I've got Benediction at eight: my boss has put on a triduum of prayer for peace. That's more use than all your agitation.

JUDE. You're an optimist, aren't you? Praying for peace without working towards peace will never be heard in heaven. It's just another bit of good old Catholic double-speak!

JAMES. Ah, you're practically a Communist already. Well, good-night all! (*Exit*).

JUDE. Good-night James. Well, there you are, Philip. He's a priest, and I suppose he represents seventy per cent of Catholic clergy and laity, and thirty per cent of the human race at large.

PHILIP. Appalling isn't it? Well, we've got to educate them, that's all. It's a slow process, God knows, but in the end the Christian pacifist and the ideal of non-violence must conquer.

JUDE. You're deceiving yourself, dear Philip. James is not only the majority, he is also *right* - right as against you, I mean.

PHILIP. Oh come, come! I know you're not a pacifist yet, Jude, still you needn't go over to the enemy, surely!

JUDE. Don't let's talk of enemies, as amongst members of the Church! I hope I've got *no* enemies. But if James is an enemy of the truth in one way, forgive me, Philip - so are you in another.

PHILIP. But you're a semi-pacifist yourself already. You'll find that's an impossible position. Besides I've heard you defending non-violence as a method of resistance.

JUDE. Against an enemy using nuclear weapons, yes; not against ordinary aggression.

PHILIP. I can't see much difference. Nuclear weapons have come to stay, people won't forget how to make them. It's all war that must be renounced now, not just nuclear weapons.

JUDE. That argument proves too much. Renouncing all war would mean giving in to every aggressor every time.

PHILIP. Not giving in exactly. Non-violent resistance.

JUDE. All right, non-violent resistance to every aggressor every time.

PHILIP. In other words, just obeying Jesus Christ.

JUDE. Oh, no, I can't agree for a single moment that that was Our Lord's teaching. Certainly you'll never get the Church to admit that. We've gone into all that before². You must leave Our Lord out of the argument, please.

PHILIP. How can I? We who are Christian pacifists believe that this idea of forgivingness, of not revenging, of returning good for evil, of acting out love completely - ahimsa, satyagraha, creative mercy, charity - call it what you like, anyhow it is the essence of Christianity, and would be the best practical politics too if people would only see it.

JUDE. That's all right, I agree with every word, *in sensu explicando*. It may well be the key to right human living - I believe it is, and I can think of a whole list of practical applications in family life and law and education and everything. Incidentally, it seems to be the leading moral idea in Shakespeare, as well as the Gospels, where of course Shakespeare found it.

'Why, all the souls that were, were forfeit once,
And He that might have best the vengeance took
Found out the remedy.'

PHILIP. Never mind about Shakespeare. I'll be content if you just let me put the gospel into practice.

JUDE. But that's just what you pacifists *don't* do: you fail to think the thing through into concrete details. You're hopeless at definitions - words like force, violence, police action, self-defence, modern war - each pacifist seems to attach his own meaning to them. Some of you would allow police but not soldiers, some would allow the police to have truncheons but not fire-arms, some would allow small-arms but not tanks and guns, some would allow us to obstruct an aggressor but not to take his life. You just will not

²Cf. BLACKFRIARS September 1959

face the fact that the human race will always continue to produce lots of Bill Sykes's and Hitlers and obedient Adolf Eichmanns, and even larger numbers of ostrich-like citizens who take no interest in public affairs. The Bill Sykes's and Hitlers can only be held at bay, the rule of law can only be precariously preserved, an area for the full try-out of creative mercy can only be kept free, by a continual effort of the minority of public-spirited people who get good laws made and see that they are enforced - yes, *enforced* - by police and prisons and guns and all the rest of the sad machinery of State, backed up by the armed forces ready to deal with the Hitlers from outside. And yet you doctrinaire-pacifists think, you can dispense yourselves from this basic effort of sustaining civilized life. You claim freedom for yourselves without any eternal vigilance, you use up so much love on Bill Sykes that you've none left for his victims, and you expect the police to protect you even while you're breaking the laws.

PHILIP. Go on, we're used to being abused. I should have thought that you of all people would be a respecter of conscience -

JUDE. Conscience is right reason, man! The pacifist 'conscience' is just an inflamed sense of guilt.

PHILIP. Actually I'm not anti-State myself. I admit some pacifists go in for theoretical anarchy, mostly the women -

JUDE. Women don't count in this. I love and honour all women, but their judgments come from the heart more than the head. They're out of place in questions of government and law.

PHILIP. All right, all right. I'm just saying that I'm no anarchist myself, but I'll always uphold conscience against the State, even erroneous conscience. And this business of modern war is a matter for the individual conscience. Our Bishops and theologians say so - why do you suppose they say that?

JUDE. Ask me another. They don't say it about other modern problems, do they? I suppose the theologians are genuinely bewildered. Perhaps it's a move in the right direction, after all.

PHILIP. Anyhow it must mean I'm free to be a pacifist if I want to be, and a layman is free to be a conscientious objector. We're free to say that non-violence is the only way out, given the circumstances of modern war.

JUDE. And I'm free to tell you that total non-violence - meaning renunciation of all force against aggression - is neither lawful nor practical.

PHILIP. Well, I'm listening; why wouldn't it be lawful?

JUDE. To let aggression succeed if resistance was possible, would be against justice - against social justice. The very *purpose* of nations and governments is to protect the citizens against such things. It would be a government's duty to offer resistance, and a citizen's duty to support his government.

PHILIP. A government might hold a referendum and get a mandate for surrender, or for non-violent resistance.

JUDE. You mean when the aggression was 'conventional', and the nations more or less matched in strength?

PHILIP. Yes, why not, if some Christian nation decided to be really Christian?

JUDE. In the first place it would not really be a Christian thing to do, to act as if original sin were extinct. In the second place I can't imagine a nation voting that way. In the third place, if it did vote that way it would be more likely through a general mood of cowardice than through any wish to follow Christ.

PHILIP. That wouldn't make it unlawful. There's always a mixture of motives in any political action. But you said that non-violence was impracticable too?

JUDE. Yes, as an answer to ordinary aggression.

PHILIP. How do you make that out?

JUDE. Because it would be such a temptation to every would-be aggressor. You'd get farcical situations, such as the Isle-of-Man sending an expeditionary force to occupy Blackpool. Besides, the average citizen would never see the point - no Government could behave in that way and survive. In face of nuclear aggression, yes, because there would be every reason for ceasing military resistance. But as long as military resistance is practicable, a Government ought to keep it up.

PHILIP. And when the aggressor resorts to nuclear weapons?

JUDE. That would be the moment to switch over to non-violent resistance, which we must suppose has been well planned and prepared beforehand.

PHILIP. I should have thought you would want to switch over to underground fighting: guerillas, partisans, maquis and all that.

JUDE. No, I don't think so. Of course that sort of thing is rather fun for the freedom-fighters themselves, but it's bound to lead to terrible reprisals against the civilian population. And then I'm afraid the experience of the last War shows that all this under-

ground fighting is rather demoralizing to many who take part in it. All that hatred and deception and reprisals and intimidation of one's neighbours - it's not a good education for the young, not a good training for peace-time. Years ago I'd have been in favour of underground Resistance-movements but the spectacle of Ireland first, and then of so many countries during the war, seems to show that they end in more harm than good. So if I were the government I would rule it out from the start, and my resistance-programme would be ready to change suddenly from full military resistance to 'non-violence'.

PHILIP. But why not *start* with non-violence then?

JUDE. Because it wouldn't be right or practicable at the pre-nuclear stage.

You'd never persuade people - your government wouldn't survive.

PHILIP. Gandhi persuaded them. You are forgetting Gandhi - he *proved* that non-violence works.

JUDE. Gandhi wasn't a government. He was a leader *agin'* the government: a much easier proposition. All he proved was that non-violence can be a powerful weapon against an unpopular government, at any rate a humane and well-meaning government such as British rule in India was. How far he would have succeeded against Hitler or Stalin we don't know. Gandhi was a remarkable man, a saint if you like; 'a politician trying to be a saint' was his own account of himself: and he knew when to soft-pedal his principles. He organized an ambulance brigade to help in the South African war. When India was preparing to resist a probable Japanese invasion, he didn't protest as far as I remember. And when the British left India, and Gandhi's fellow-countrymen began killing hundreds of thousands of each other in communal riots, he saw how little he had really accomplished after all. 'There will have to be many more Gandhis', he said. He did the best he could do - he retired to a peaceful district and broadcast a radio-talk to the nation every night. On his own principles he ought to have exhorted people not to defend themselves when attacked, but as far as I can make out he took self-defence for granted - the only practical thing to do - and every night he hammered away, quite rightly, against the idea of revenge and reprisals. The stress of circumstances had driven him to the truth. *That's* the real Christian discovery, the real 'creative mercy' - not the idea of non-resistance, but the idea of no revenge, no reprisal, no retribution, no punishment even - I mean no *pure* punishment.

- PHILIP. Oh, you're getting into deep waters, I can't follow you there. Let's stick to the practical point - the usefulness of non-violent resistance. I gather you admit that it *is* effective?
- JUDE. Yes, when it is practised by a whole population, on a pre-arranged plan. They can just ignore the occupying power altogether, and set up their own institutions underground - their own law-courts, local government, taxation - everything.
- PHILIP. Everything except an army?
- JUDE. That's what I mean. It was Arthur Griffith who really drove the English out of Ireland, with his idea of organized civil disobedience, not Michael Collins and his gun-men. Griffith got the idea from the nineteenth-century struggle in Hungary, I believe. Anyhow it worked, and it always would work if properly organized. No aggressor, however cruel and despotic, wants to get himself into a situation like that if he can help it. Total civil disobedience, or non-violent resistance if you like, on the part of an entire population, would be the best possible deterrent against aggression, if everybody knew beforehand that it would happen.
- PHILIP. Splendid! In that case we need not wait for the nuclear bombs. We can abolish *all war now*.
- JUDE. No, it's not so easy, Nation-wide non-violent resistance would be a rather heroic business, people couldn't rise to it or sustain it unless it was obviously necessary - the only alternative to surrender. If armed resistance was possible, most people would want to try it, and they would be quite right of course.
- PHILIP. And after all those heroics, you would surrender to nuclear blackmail?
- JUDE. Not to mere blackmail. I would be for holding out until the first nuclear bomb was actually dropped, and perhaps it never would be. Even if it was, we shouldn't surrender, we should cease armed resistance and take to the non-violent sort.
- PHILIP. And you think you can persuade the average sensual man to agree to that? He wants to retaliate in kind, that's what *he* wants. It would be easier for him to turn pacifist altogether than to follow your cool reasoning and drawing of lines.
- JUDE. Of course it's rather an unprecedented line of action, but the whole situation is unprecedented. It's a choice for mankind, between using cool reason or non-survival. The one chance is that the leaders, the Christian leaders especially, may see reason in time.

PHILIP. They never do, they never have. The very fact that they reach the seats of power in a society such as ours means that they are irresponsible flatterers of the crowd, or yes-men of some party-line. In the democracies the forces of unreason are quite irresistible, surely.

JUDE. My word, you are indeed a pessimist, aren't you! I think the rulers, in spite of their crazy long-term policies, will try to avoid war simply because this time they themselves and their families are certain to die miserably just like everybody else.

PHILIP. Yet they go on threatening each other just like small boys. And then just look at the newspapers - utter irresponsibility, anything for a sensation, anything for a momentary increase in circulation to attract more advertisers.

JUDE. I know. It will be a miracle if we get through the next few years. Still, there are some voices that still sound out calm and sane.

PHILIP. For instance?

JUDE. Well, Pope John for one.

PHILIP. I didn't know he had said anything about nuclear war. To tell you the truth, I've almost been glad he hadn't. His predecessor spoke too often and too variously.

JUDE. As far as I know Pope John has said only one thing, but it was the one essential fact that everybody keeps forgetting. He said over two years ago: 'If indeed (which may God avert) a new war should break out, the power of the monstrous new weapons is such that all nations, victors and vanquished alike, would be left with nothing but a scene of universal ruin and destruction'.

PHILIP. Yes, that *is* the essential fact. Nobody denies the fact, yet nobody draws the same conclusions from it. Not even you and I.

JUDE. You jump to a conclusion which would be a theoretical solution but psychologically unthinkable. I prefer to eliminate the unthinkable courses one by one and then hold on to the one course that is left, however improbable it may look. And I believe everybody else will come round - is coming round - to that, if only there is enough time for the facts to sink in.

PHILIP. If only there is enough time! If James were here he would tell us that time is just what we gain by the present balance of terror. It gives everybody a breathing space to think.

JUDE. My answer is that 'balance' is the wrong word for it. It is a highly unstable equilibrium, a race in insanity, an ever-mounting tension that must end in explosion. How can it possibly lead to any good

when it consists of defiance of God's law, a rivalry of illimitable hatred and murder, a permanent intention of mortal sin, the very essence of hell! I just can't see how any believer in God can pin his faith in such a blasphemy.

PHILIP. What a pity poor old James had to go off to pray for peace. I'm sure he would have had a resounding answer for you. Now we shall have to wait another year or two until we meet again.

Augustinus Semper Vivus

EDMUND HILL, O.P.

In his recent novel *Island* Mr Aldous Huxley says some very silly things about St Augustine, or to be quite fair he makes one of his 'wiser' characters say them. From them it can be deduced that all he actually knows about Augustine is the *Confessions*, or a vague impression about that work, *massa damnata*, and unbaptized infants. This is probably representative of what the average educated man knows about Augustine, and so he will readily accept Mr Huxley's dismissal of the man as a neurotic rigorist predestinationist. But the average educated Englishman cannot be excused this absurd misconception much longer, for what is in fact a monumental biography of St Augustine, *Augustine the Bishop* by Professor F. Van der Meer, is now available in English.¹ Describing Augustine's death the author says this about him: 'To his Church he bequeathed two things; the memory of his *humble and indescribably lovable personality* [so much for the neurotic pessimist], and his great library, the archive of his spirit' (p. 274).

It is quite clear that Dr Van der Meer knows that library inside out, and that he has read every word of Augustine's letters and sermons, which are the most self-revealing of his works. And so in an immensely readable 589 pages (excluding notes) he substantiates over and over again the humble and indescribably lovable personality of his hero. I feel bound to say that it seems a pity that the publishers have presented his work in a volume that is handsome indeed, and well printed, but

¹Sheed and Ward, London, £4 10s.