

particular causes; only the sheer fact of existence, which is not a characteristic, could lead thought to the cause of all. This has consequences for such arguments as the one from design, which in its modern as opposed to its classical form is essentially scientific in character, and consequently as presented in many textbooks certainly invalid.

To sum up, I have suggested that you cannot argue to God's existence by reasoning derived from science, or to the revelation we accept in faith by any natural reasoning at all. But speaking within a common faith, I have tried to show why science is a fit Christian activity. First because it is a serious, a moral way of life, which we can share with Christ. Further because when applied it helps us to win back the world for man from the evil Spirit. Finally because when theology is properly understood it is seen to have implications for certain situations that are also investigable by some sciences: and thus the theologian's hand is strengthened, though he may also have to face possible conflict. Yet all this, as I have said, is as yet not acceptable to many English Catholics, and I have tried to indicate the lines along which the renewal of theology might bring about such a change of heart.

Keep Left for the Church—I

BRIAN WICKER

There must always be a tension in Christianity between the demands of the world and the demands of the Kingdom of God. By her very nature the Church must be forever reminding herself that it is part of her vocation to be potentially subversive of any worldly order of things: and she must also be forever reminding the world of this fact too. But the definition of where this tension ought to lie, in the twentieth century, is not easy. We are still mainly influenced in our conception of it by late medieval and Jansenistic ideas. The spirituality of the *Imitation of Christ* lingers: 'Fly the tumultuousness of the world as much as thou canst: for the talk of worldly affairs is a great hindrance, although they be discoursed of with sincere intention . . . we are quickly defiled

and enthralled with vanity' (l. 10). The trouble is not that this kind of thinking is in itself bad, but that it is no longer taken seriously. The result is, I believe, catastrophic. Just as D. H. Lawrence was right to criticise the modern world – the product of the cold northern spirit of the Reformation and of the narrowing Catholicism of the counter-Reformation – for being obsessed with 'sex in the head', so we are right to criticise Catholicism for being preoccupied with a 'spirituality in the head' which is equally false. The essence of this parody of proper spirituality is to think of other-worldliness in terms of a future heaven of disembodied souls, instead of thinking of it as a new heaven which is to grow out of a new earth. Corresponding to this false spirituality is a false morality, according to which the main purpose of the sacramental and prayerful life of the Church is to give us help in living according to the moral law. We are to try to live fully in the body of Christ in order to be able to live according to the code. Whereas of course it ought to be the other way round: we need to keep the law in order to be able to live the sacramental life of the Church of Christ. It is precisely because of our practical legalism that writers like the authors of the Quaker report on sex seem so plausible, when they remind us that morals are for man, and not man for morals. (They go wrong, of course, when they commit the *non-sequitur* of assuming that morals are made by man: a very different doctrine.)

So there ought to be some obvious points at which the life of the Catholic exhibits a tension with that of the world: and indeed there are. Fish on Fridays. No contraceptives. Special schools, erected and maintained at vast expense, devoted to the perpetuation of these curious anomalies, apart from which the Catholic is expected to live up to the high ideal of Auden's 'Unknown Citizen':

He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be
 One against whom there was no official complaint;
 And all the reports on his conduct agree
 That in the modern sense of an old-fashioned word, he was
a saint,

For in everything he did he served the Greater Community.

Minority habits are what principally distinguish Catholics from others: and the fact that some of them are extremely recent makes no difference. For instance, it is taken for granted that it is part of Catholicism to have a larger than average number of children per family: a situation only made possible by the widespread use of contraception in recent decades. Perhaps we ought to thank the birth-controllers for

providing us with this new virtue.

The fact of the matter is that the tension which ought to exist between the Church and the world has been transformed into a tension within the individual Catholic. The conflict between the City of God and the City of Satan has been turned into a struggle by the individual to keep a foothold somewhere between a true sense of the contemptibility of the world, on the one hand, and a true engagement in the work of the world on the other. The opposing pressures are clearly felt in the family, for instance, in which the demands of frequent child-bearing and consequent domesticity on the mother, collide with the demand for engagement in public affairs on the father. The result is often a practical tension, within the 'good Catholic family' at any rate, which is due precisely to this contemporary confusion as to what such a Catholic family should be like. It is an attempt to compromise with the modern world, not fully accepting what is good nor wholly rejecting what is bad, but just floundering. Because we have not wholly accepted the good, we cannot properly reject the bad: and hence no challenge is presented to the world, only a slightly complacent oddity.

Again, to be a Catholic does not mean living in actual poverty in the midst of affluence: it only involves struggling not to be preoccupied with the maintenance of the affluence one has. But this is a purely 'spiritual' struggle, resulting in a purely 'spiritual' poverty, which is not poverty at all, but just a state of being worried. Poverty is not seen either as bad, or as good. It is not bad enough to demand a wholesale devotion to its eradication, in the name of sheer justice, nor is it good enough to be any use in the development of sanctity: it is simply a nagging uncertainty about one's status in the world.

Finally – and I believe this is the crucial matter, out of which some new outlook may develop – being a Catholic does not involve actually being a conscientious objector, but it does involve having reservations, while being under military authority, about the limits of that authority. The hopeful thing here is that the tension is getting so great that, for those who are aware of it at all, it may well break the old bonds completely. The recent imprisonment of two RAF airmen for insisting that even military persons ought to be allowed to distinguish between war and murder (for nobody pretends they were punished just for writing to the press) should be proof enough that one's duty to defend one's country by everything short of immoral means can no longer be reconciled with service in the British forces. Again the attempt by the 'Christian Democrats' to prosecute an Italian priest who said, in defence

of a Catholic conscientious objector, that in a nuclear war it would be the moral duty of any serviceman to desert, is symptomatic of a genuine, explicit tension in a Catholic country between those who trust in the promises of God to preserve Christian values, and those who trust to the old casuistry of a naturalistic moral theology. But the tension here is not between the Church and the world, but lies within the Church and her individual members. What offers us some hope is that the problem of nuclear warfare is so far-reaching that it may well be through the efforts of Catholic unilateralists to commit the Church to their views that a new conception of the tension between the Church and the world may be born. In this sense it is impossible to over-emphasize the importance of the debate within the Church on this question.

But there is a difficulty which faces us at this point. For it would seem to be implied by what I have said so far that the only legitimate Christian attitude is to contract out of the world entirely. I do not mean that we should all retire into the cloister: for it seems to me that often the modern cloister is almost as cluttered up with the false positions I have indicated as the outside world. I mean rather a retirement into anarchy: a refusal to have anything to do with the civic responsibilities which have led us into the situation. Should we not refuse to pay taxes, send our children to school, join Trade Unions, or put up for elections, and simply devote ourselves to a life of continuous protest until we are carried off by the undertaker or the sanitary inspector or the police? Is it adequate, under modern conditions, to say that 'Disobedience to civil authority is justified only if and when the particular order contravened is in conflict with the higher law of God?' Does not an attempt to enlist our total and unconditional support justify a total and unconditional rejection, in which minor distinctions cease to be relevant? Surely we can no longer reasonably assume (if we ever could) that the state is right until it is explicitly proved wrong?

No magisterial pronouncements by moralists, who see in such anarchism only a wholesale surrender to rebellious emotionalism, or by the 'new men' like Sir Charles Snow, who can see nothing in it except a 'scream of horror', can rob such an attitude of a certain human dignity and courage. It is not because it is wrong that I reject it, but because it represents, in its own way, only another kind of narrow-mindedness, and even arrogance. It forgets that, with the failure of the Church to maintain her old place as a creative cultural and political force in the world, the leadership has passed to those outside her fold. What is best, as well as what is worst, in modern society has largely

been the work of people who have rejected the Church, if not Christianity itself. Democratic institutions, for instance, in England and America, were the products of liberals deeply hostile to the very idea of the Church. An institution claiming allegiance from the world but also claiming to stand apart from it and above it is bound to seem to such people to be a rival to democracy, not a bastion of it: and their fears are mostly confirmed by the behaviour of politicians in Catholic countries. They are also confirmed by the attitude of those Catholics who say that, since democracy is not a Catholic notion, it cannot be very important, and many of the best people get on quite well without it. The only kind of reassurance such liberals get is from spectacles like the presidential campaign of Mr Kennedy, who saw how necessary it was to make clear that his being a Catholic was not going to make the slightest difference to his political behaviour.

The transformation of the tension between the Church and the world into a tension within the individual rests upon the presupposition that it is the quality of individual life alone which determines the health of a society. That is to say, reform of institutions which does not presuppose reform of individuals is not only useless but pernicious: for it distracts us from our proper task, and is liable to lead us into forgetting that the only source of social evils is sin. But what is important to notice is that, as I have said, this attitude is not taken seriously. That is to say, it is not seriously supposed that you can do anything systematic to improve the quality of individual life to any appreciable extent. (Of course you can't if you don't believe that there is anything other than individual example to bring to bear: for this is precisely something which is not organised, not subject to any institutionalisation. Here then is the spiritual equivalent of *laissez-faire* economics. Any *organised* attempt to improve things will only make them worse). So the insistence on individual reform *first* turns out to be only a gesture towards religion, while the real business of life goes on, as it must, in an irreformable world. Of course, every so often something goes wrong that *must* be put right: but that is simply a question of a little human engineering, a dose of 'public relations' or 'joint consultation' or 'personnel management'. So the most systematic insistence on the endemic sinfulness of men goes along with a practical belief that there isn't anything wrong that can't be patched up, given the requisite 'good will' on both sides. Thus the Church becomes identified with a collection of mutually contradictory attitudes: on the one hand, with the view that what is wrong with our world can all be traced to the attempts which have

been made to by-pass or ignore individual sin; and on the other with a practical acceptance that the world must go on as it is. On the one hand we have the daily denunciations of liberalism, sexual frankness, artistic licence, educational experiment, religious tolerance, philosophical free-thought and *That Was The Week That Was*: and on the other the refusal to think of contemporary society in any other than high abstract terms, such as whether workers have the 'strict right' to any participation in control of the enterprise, or whether the individual can ever 'legitimately' sit down in the street to protest against mass-murder, or whether it is 'allowable' to educate the sexes together!

Now in natural reaction against these presuppositions of the establishment, the progressive Catholic finds it necessary to emphasize his solidarity with his humanist friends. He believes in the democratic welfare state as a worthy ideal for the modern world; he resists all forms of censorship as being unworkable; he believes that religious tolerance is a positive social virtue, which ought to be encouraged in any society and which furthers the true interests of the Church; he is as scandalised by the hold of superstition on the simple faithful as he is by the critical anger of the *avant-garde*; he does not believe that modern family life has consistently decayed in its standards from some recent ideal epoch, because of mothers at work, television or the collapse of paternal discipline; he sees as much good sense talked about sex in D. H. Lawrence as he finds in the pamphlets of the Catholic Truth Society; he believes that there is much of permanent value in the Marxist critique of capitalist society and that the fundamental structure of our society is in need of transformation; he finds clericalism as great an evil as anti-clericalism, and much less excusable. But the question now arises, if he finds so much that is good in the contemporary secular world, where is he to find that tension between himself and the world which his faith implies? Is he not in danger of forgetting that this tension is demanded by the precept to seek *first* the Kingdom of God? Is he not seeking in its place a false compromise with the world just because he believes so much of it to be good?

The danger is real enough: but this is a dangerous world, and its dangers have to be overcome, not evaded. There is only one way of overcoming the danger: namely by the development of a deeper, more truly theological approach to morality, a more definite concrete engagement of moral theology with practical affairs and a more relevant form of social organisation through which the riches of the Church's liturgical life can be made to bear upon the cultural vitality of the Catholic community.