

PREFACE

THERE is a resistance movement by the clergy.

Asked about Polaris, a minister replied that he had not given it much thought as he was not mechanically minded!

A Scottish Presbytery of forty-five ministers had an official conference to hear the non-pacifist case and twenty ministers turned up. At a subsequent official conference to hear the pacifist case nine turned up.

In an English town stamped addressed envelopes went to forty-five full-time religionists, from the Vicar to the Salvation Army Captain, for a reply to an offer that competent exponents on the moral issues of the Bomb would come to speak to Vestry, Woman's Guild or Youth Group. Three envelopes were returned: two requesting a speaker, the third averring that repentance should precede disarmament. The Bishop of the Diocese and the Archbishop of the Province were equally approached. Neither even acknowledged the communication.

There is a resistance movement by the clergy.

In a measure it is meritorious. The clergy are trained to take a world view of issues. They see, more clearly than some young enthusiast for nuclear disarmament, the very grave consequences were the Church to adopt a pacifist position: consequences, in the relation of Church and State, unparalleled for at least twelve hundred years. Men must be sure of their ground who would commit the Church to oppose the State at the point of its greatest expenditure.

But in a measure this resistance movement is meretricious. It appears attractive to 'stand by the ship of State'. No one in a crisis wants to rock the boat. Yet what if the ship founders for lack of the Word from the only institution that can declare it? What if the paralysis be one of mutual international fears? What if the only cure is faith so strong that only the Church's Word is its adequate repository?

The German autocracy was the ultimate cause of Eichmann's unbelievable act; resulting in the death of five million men, women and children in three years. What if our democracy is judged in years to come as the ultimate cause of a more unbelievable act: the death, by

one Polaris, of ten million men, women and children in fifteen minutes? What if the Church, from which the democratic ideal seeded, is then recorded to have been silent? Faith alone can now save the State. Faith in non-violence when, short of it, violence may destroy all. 'Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon the Throne': we still sing it regularly. With equal certainty we do not believe it.

Thus is the Church muddled. When one attempts to sort out the muddle, central in the fog one stumbles on a doubt about the nature of progress. Scores of clergy chant: 'I was a pacifist once.' They belonged, that is, to the idealist school that flourished too luxuriant in the days when men spoke of the 'evangelization of the world in our time'. No wonder they reply to no circular when the destruction of the world in our time has become the sober possibility.

It is a cardinal value of this book by Jean Lasserre that it discards either the evangelization or the destruction of our world. The book is biblical throughout. He has felt on his pulses all the shattering dilemmas of our time. In wartime France he knew the attractions of the Resistance, the bankruptcies of the collaborators, and the tragedy of a great nation defeated. But he also knew His Bible, the sure Sovereignty of God and, in it, the Majesty of the Crucified.

Not since G. J. Heering's *The Fall of Christianity* has there appeared, in similar compass, so compendious a statement of the issues involved in accepting the non-violent interpretation of the gospel.

The reformation of John Knox stemmed in part from his courageous condemnation of the 'monstrous regiment of women'. The central moral issue of our time is the 'monstrous regiment of the bomb'. The new reformation for which the whole reformed world waits will stem in major part from a recovery of the doctrine of non-violence as central to the message of the Cross.

A sufficient declaration of its principles is contained in this short but pungent work.

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