

WAR AND PEACE¹

FROM a German Dominican, Fr. Franziskus Stratman, O.P., comes 'the first complete examination of the problem of Peace and War by a Catholic theologian since 1914'—so the publishers tell us. The result of this examination—conducted most gravely and dispassionately—is not only unfavourable, severely unfavourable, to war in general, it leaves all the wars of history, ancient and modern, condemned by the theologians and finds the makers of war guilty of doing violence to Christian principles. The clear statements of St. Augustine and St. Thomas, of Francis de Victoria, O.P., of Bellarmine and St. Alphonsus Liguori, quoted amply and relevantly by Fr. Stratman, prove fatal to proposals for the justification of war. No government in Europe of the nations called to war can be acquitted of offending against justice; so stringent are the conditions of a just war, so many are the rules laid down by theologians to bind mankind in the ways of peace.

True, later theologians are named—Suarez in especial—who allow war to be waged 'if the prince or ruler considers there is more to be said on his side than on the other'; but these opinions are 'the first loosening of the old, strict war morality,' to be rejected by all who hold (with Fr. Stratman) 'completely to the teaching of St. Augustine and St. Thomas,' *i.e.* 'the teaching till the seventeenth century of the Catholic Schools.'

At the same time we are reminded that 'the Catholic Church *as such* has no defined teaching about war'; and that relying on St. Thomas the best that can be done is to declare the obligations of peace;

¹ *The Church and War*. A Catholic Study by Franziskus Stratman, O.P. (Sheed and Ward; 5s. net.)

since 'a just war of aggression is hardly possible,' and, on investigation, the wars of Christian no less than heathen powers turn out to be in nearly every case aggressive. Even when 'a war is declared by lawful authority and for a "just cause" it may yet not be justifiable because the intention of those undertaking it is wrong'; St. Thomas requiring for the third condition of a just war the intention to further good and avoid evil. St. Augustine is quoted: 'With the true servants of God even wars make for peace, as they are not undertaken for greed and cruelty but for the sake of peace, that the wicked may be restrained and the good protected.'

The principles which constitute a just war 'according to St. Augustine, the Thomists, and Francis de Victoria' are grouped by Fr. Stratman under ten points:—

1. Gross injustice in the part of one, and only one, of the contending parties.
2. Gross *formal* moral guilt on one side—material wrong is not sufficient.
3. Undoubted knowledge of this guilt.
4. That war should only be declared when every means to prevent it have failed.
5. Guilt and punishment must be proportionate. Punishment exceeding the measure of guilt is unjust and not to be allowed.
6. Moral certainty that the side of justice will win.
7. Right intention to further what is good by the war and to shun what is evil.
8. War must be rightly conducted; restrained within the limits of justice and love.
9. Avoidance of unnecessary upheaval of countries not immediately concerned and of the Christian community.
10. Declaration of war by lawful authorised authority exercised in the name of God.

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Failure in these conditions, in one of these conditions, makes war unjust. So Catholic theologians taught before the seventeenth century.

Catholic theologians may impose conditions, the powers of Europe, it would appear, have never been hindered in making war by any over nice regard for justice. Is it possible to name one just war waged by a Christian government in the last four hundred years?

What of the wars waged by British governments in Europe, Asia, Africa and America? These wars consolidated and enlarged the British Empire; can they by any means be justified by the ten points? It is quite certain that the rulers of England who ordered war were not in the least interested in the opinions of Catholic theologians. To preserve the balance of power in Europe is the policy of England from the time of Elizabeth till August, 1914. To maintain throughout the world the safety of every settlement of English-speaking people is the Colonial policy.

If the British Government falls very far short of the Thomist standard in the history of its wars the rulers of France, Germany, Spain and Austria present no better appearance when called to judgement. Nor can the United States plead that its wars of annexation and its war with Spain in 1898 can be justified by any one of the ten conditions named. Catholic and non-Catholic powers, monarchist and republican alike, resort to war when the safety of the country is held to be in danger, or its prosperity can be enhanced by conquest. Richelieu and Louis XIV—Catholic cardinal and most Christian king—invoke no theological principle of justice in the making of war or peace. They stand for France, not for the commonwealth of Europe or the peace of Christendom. As well may Frederick the Great—hero of Thomas Carlyle and all worshippers of the successful manipulator of armies

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—be dubbed scrupulous in the building up of Prussia as Richelieu in seeking the honour and security of France.

(Shakespeare in Henry V can put into the mouth of Archbishop Arundel other arguments for war than the safety of England. The king is, of course, satisfied that he is putting forth his 'rightful hand in a well-hallowed cause').

When political or economic considerations are involved, when it seems the interests of a nation can be best served by war, the Catholic prince will draw the sword and strike as swiftly and as readily as his Protestant neighbour. Both parties to the quarrel will at the same time declare before heaven their cause to be just, and count the support of subjects as ignorant of the immediate cause of battle as Henry of Monmouth was of the Salique law in France.

Apologists for war—and these in any land are rarely soldiers—dwell on the heroic qualities produced in the stress and agony of battle, while at the same time they commonly urge the overthrow of militarism in other nations. (But the psychologist can best explain why men and women of civil occupation debarred from military service and constitutionally incapable of bearing arms are always to be found encouraging other people to fight and calling on the Government to take strong measures). The Duke of Wellington's words in that memorable debate in the House of Lords at the end of March, 1829, when the issue was decided in favour of Catholic Emancipation, may be recalled: 'I am one of those who have probably passed a longer period of my life engaged in war than most men, and principally I may say in civil war; and I must say this, that if I could avoid, by any sacrifice whatever, even one month of civil war in the country to which I am attached, I would sacrifice my life in order to do

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it. I say there is nothing which destroys prosperity and demoralises character to the degree which civil war does. By it the hand of man is raised against his neighbour, against his brother, and against his father; the servant betrays his master, and the whole becomes a scene of confusion and devastation.'

And what is every European war between Christian states but a civil war? When Catholic draws the sword against Catholic, what is it but a war between members of the household of the faith? Moreover, the heroic qualities displayed by soldiers on active service—in reality it is the domestic virtues and the domestic arts that are, and must needs be, the daily practice of the soldier both in war and peace; patience, forbearance, personal cleanliness, capacity to sew and cook and 'do a bit of washing,' in these things how much of a soldier's life is spent!—do not in any special way belong to war and are not evoked by war.

Famine and fire, flood and earthquake, shipwreck and railway accident—when did the spirit of man fail in the presence of these calamities? Where is it written that men and women snatch at safety when companions and comrades or, it may be, chance acquaintances call for help? The annals of every race record the life laid down at need for friend and neighbour. Yet hardly on that account do we welcome flood and famine, extol the railway accident and applaud the shipwreck. Occasions of heroism are never wanting and are habitually used in the everyday life of the miner, the railway worker and the seaman. The 'glory' that in literature, and in Parliamentary oratory, are bestowed on mankind in war may be absent from the heroism of men and women living dangerously under modern industry; this very 'glory' gets tarnished—and is in fact conspicuously challenged by debasements and degradations that have always belonged to war.

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The German Dominican is quite frank concerning the moral collapse observed in the late War.

'Again, sins against sexual morality, adultery and unnatural sins, are frightfully increased in time of war. It is, after all, not surprising that men who have been in the hell of the trenches, cut off from all the amenities and decencies of ordinary life, should, when they returned from them, break loose for a short time from all restraint. It was the same immediately before troops were sent up to the front line. The chaplain noticed that the Sunday before many men and officers who could perfectly well have been at Mass were absent—amongst them many who had even been regular communicants. That night the *maisons tolérées* of the town were stormed; a soldier observed cynically, 'they were practically starving.' It was a sign that the regiment was going into special danger.

'But the license of individuals is not the worst feature. The worst is the recognition and approval of the system, the providing opportunities for vice. According to modern ideas, brothels for soldiers are as much a necessity as baths or hospitals.'

In fact, war cannot be reconciled with justice. General Gordon called war 'organised murder, pillage and cruelty,' and the words coming from so brave a man may be permitted.

What then can be done by Catholics and persons of goodwill to mitigate and finally extinguish this plague of war between Christian nations? (Not that it is to be inferred that the Christian nations in their wars with savages have primarily been seeking after justice. Only first things must come first, and the peace of Europe threatened to-day in many quarters is the immediate business of honest men).

Fielding's 'pious wish'—an eighteenth century hope—suggests possibilities :

'That all quarrels were to be decided by those weapons only with which nature, knowing what is proper for us, hath supplied us; and that cold iron was to be used in digging no bowels but those of the earth. Then would war, the pastime of monarchs, be almost inoffensive; and battles

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between great armies might be fought at the particular desire of several ladies of quality; who, together with the kings themselves, might be actual spectators of the conflict. Then might the earth be this moment strewed with human carcases, and the next, the dead men or infinitely the greatest part of them, might get up and march off at the sound of drum or fiddle, as should be previously agreed upon.'

International sporting contests, with the development of international postal and railway agreements, may discourage the notion that war is worth while. Fr. Stratman's hope is in the papacy and in the conscience of Catholics. All the weight of the papacy—he points out—has been cast on the side of international peace for many years. With the passing of the German and Austrian empires the appointments to the episcopate in middle Europe are no longer under political constraint.

'The Church is reproached because she has done so little to put an end to war . . . Peace-making and the ideal of the fellowship of nations has been left to Jews and Freemasons and Internationalists. The duty of the Church is plain.'

JOSEPH CLAYTON.