

the presence but the active intervention of those who have, with the vast extension of the Church's mission in new countries and in new situations, the precious gift of their own pastoral experience.

In praying for the success of the Council, then, Christians ask for nothing less than that outpouring of the Holy Spirit which may restore to the Church the fulness of her life as at work among men. The individual points of argument and decision matter less than this central need for renewal. And that this should be seen by all men of good will everywhere to be not just a domestic affair for the bishops who are assembled in Rome must be counted a great grace and an augury for a happy outcome.

Saint Augustine and the Just War

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It is normal today to defend the right of one state to make war against another by comparing a war against aggression with a private individual's exercise of his right of self-defence. If I have a right to live, it seems that I must have a right to protect my life against violent and unjust attack; it is probable that in order effectively to protect myself I may have to use violence, even such as to cause the death of the aggressor in a case of extreme necessity. If an individual can do this, then clearly an organized group can do the same, and this implies the use of an army by a state. Such an army would be used as an individual uses his fists or his sword or his gun in a lawless land; it would be used to protect the life of the country in an internationally lawless world.

Such is the commonsense approach to the justification of war today; and such, if we make allowances for the lack of theological refinement, is the current Catholic view of the just war. It depends for its cogency on an extension of the rights of the individual to the rights of the state.

It may cause some surprise, therefore, to those who regard Saint Augustine as the main source of the just war tradition to find that not only is such a line of reasoning absent from his writings, but that it is in fact directly contrary to his teaching.

In his treatise on Freewill, he states clearly that an individual has no moral right to kill an assailant in defence of life, liberty or honour.¹ A law permitting such killing may well be objectively reasonable, since it permits the lesser of two evils; it is a lesser evil for a robber to be killed than for a good man to be killed. But this law which sensibly permits killing in self-defence, does not enforce such killing; and the Christian must have in mind an eternal law and an eternal judge, before whom killing even in self-defence would involve that malice which is the sinful element in all justly punishable crime. This sinful element is what he calls *libido*, an excessive attachment to transitory things, that is to things which can be taken from us against our wills. Clearly life, liberty and honour are things which can be taken from us against our wills, and therefore should not be unreasonably loved; and to kill in order to defend them would certainly be to show an excessive attachment to them.

Nevertheless, although there is for the Christian no *individual* right of self-defence, St Augustine feels it necessary in the same chapter of *De Libero Arbitrio* to establish the innocence of a soldier who kills in war. It is interesting to see how he does this.

The soldier, he claims, can undoubtedly kill without *libido*, because he is a *minister legis*, a minister of the law. The law itself, promulgated to protect citizens by demanding the repulsion of force by force, cannot be accused of *libido* (presumably because it is an abstraction). The law-maker may be free from *libido*, if he has acted according to God's command in making the law—that is an accord with eternal justice; but even if the lawmaker is not free from guilt, the law may well be a good one, and may be carried out without blame. This argument serves to exculpate all those who act under rightful authority—but not the private citizen acting on his own account.

Here, then, is a dichotomy which reveals a certain tension in St Augustine's thought. We shall want to examine more closely the details of the above argument, which is in many ways typical of his approach to the problem of war. But first we should see how the problem of war presented itself in the light of the primitive Christian tradition and of the general philosophy of St Augustine himself.

¹*De Libero Arbitrio*. Migne, P.L. Vol. XXXII, 1227-1228.

The Christians of the first two centuries were opposed to war, and probably abstained on principle from military service.² This attitude was based on two New Testament traditions. The first was that of the Sermon on the Mount. Our Lord said that we must not resist evil, but that we should turn the other cheek. He promised blessedness to the peacemakers, the merciful, and the persecuted; he said that we should love our enemies, and pray for them, not seek for vengeance and destroy them. Evidently there is at least a *prima facie* difficulty in reconciling these precepts with the practice of war in any form, and the early Christians did not attempt such a reconciliation. The second main tradition was that of the Kingdom. Our Lord said that his Kingdom was not of this world, and he chose to be crucified, when he could in a moment have destroyed his persecutors. In this he showed that Christians belong to a spiritual Kingdom, to be fought for with spiritual and not with carnal weapons. The Kingdom of Light has nothing in common with the Kingdom of Darkness.

There is little doubt that St Augustine would have found himself very closely in sympathy with these positions, though he would not have followed them to their pacifist conclusions. It is a favourite theme of his sermons that there is no exception to the rule that enemies are to be loved, and that this is indeed a precept, and not a counsel.³ We may have no money, and so be exempt from almsgiving; but we can never say that we have no love to our enemies. Indeed, we find in the sermons the rather unusual doctrine that enemies are more to be loved than friends⁴—for whereas our enemies bring us nearer to the Kingdom of Heaven by making us suffer, our friends by pampering us may bring us nearer to eternal damnation. In his exposition of the Sermon on the Mount, St Augustine finds that there is no class of indignity which we are not taught gladly to suffer in a spirit of patience, rather than to return blow for blow. As for the doctrine of the Kingdom, the main theme of the *City of God* is the radical distinction between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of this World. The worldly kingdom is filled with strife and bitterness, attacked by enemies from within and without, thinking themselves conquerors of peoples when they are merely the slaves of vices, exulting in victory when they should rather be grieving at the thought of sorrows to come.⁵ In a moving passage from *Contra*

²See Cadoux, C. J., *Early Christian Attitude to War*.

³Sermon 225, P.L. XXXIX, c. 2161.

⁴Sermon 62, P.L. XXXIX, c. 1862.

⁵*De Civitate Dei*, Book XV, chapter 4.

Faustum,⁶ which has very close affinities with writings of the early Fathers, St Augustine extols the fortitude of the first Christians, who died as a testimony in the face of the world to the eternal life and happiness of the Kingdom of God, whereas if God had wished that they should fight they would have been so numerous that none could have resisted; and in so acting they followed the example of Jesus, who likewise suffered to assert the primacy of the spiritual Kingdom.

Apart from his general sympathy with the outlook of the early Christians, St Augustine, himself an African and a representative of a subject nation, had a deep sense of the wrongs of the conquered; repeatedly he deplored the miseries attendant upon warfare, and condemned outright any war for the extension of empire or the satisfaction of the lust for power.⁷

In view of theological background then, and of his sympathy with the Early Church, we are not surprised to find in *De Libero Arbitrio* that he insists on the strict application of the rule of non-violence in regard to the individual. On the other hand it may surprise us to find that he insists on the innocence of soldiers who kill in warfare. Nevertheless, this is a position which he consistently adopts, not only in *De Libero Arbitrio*, but in most of his writings which touch on this subject. We must remember not only his theological background, but also the immediate political situation. St Augustine was writing as the intellectual champion of the Christian Church, now allied with the state and co-extensive with the Empire. After the end of the second century, service of Christians in the army had been increasingly accepted as normal, although the former pacifism remained sufficiently strong to lend colour to the accusation that Christianity was responsible for the military collapse of the Empire, and especially for the sack of Rome by Alaric the Goth in 411. It was St Augustine's duty to meet this attack and to establish the Church's position both for Christians themselves and for their critics. We find him writing to a Christian Roman general in Africa who had asked his advice about withdrawing into a monastery, when Africa was in fact on the verge of invasion by the Vandals;⁸ and in the letter to Marcellinus he faces the express accusation that Christian pacifism is treacherous to the safety of the state. These challenges St Augustine chose to meet by a limited ethical defence of war.

How was the 'just war' ethic to be reconciled with the precepts of

⁶*Contra Faustum*, P.L. XLII, c. 449.

⁷C.D. Book IV, chapter 15.

⁸Epistle 189, P.L. Vol. XXXIII, cc. 854-857.

the Sermon on the Mount: How was killing for the preservation of the worldly kingdom to be reconciled with the primacy of the Kingdom of God? These were questions which could not be avoided, and we shall examine St Augustine's attempts at finding a solution.

The letter to Marcellinus faces the first problem.⁹ The precepts of patience and benevolence towards the enemy, it states, are always binding; but they are binding *in the heart* rather than in outward actions. Our Lord in fact did not turn the other cheek when he was struck, but he attempted to restrain his assailant, saying, 'Why strikest thou me?' Sometimes love must express itself in ways which are displeasing to the recipient, as when a father chastizes his son. God shows his mercy in punishing vices; in the same way human wars, 'if it be possible', should be waged with mercy, in order that the benefits of just rule should be extended to those who are enslaved by wickedness. The same problem is stated again in *Contra Faustum*,¹⁰ when he considers how God could have initiated wars, as recorded in the Old Testament, when our Lord said that we were to turn the other cheek. His answer begins on the same lines as in the letter to Marcellinus; the disposition of patience is to be preserved in the heart, the *sanctum cubile* of virtue; in this sense it was preserved even by the prophets and patriarchs. The thought however is not pursued, for it is difficult to reconcile the disposition of patience, even *in sancto cubili*, with the wars in question. Instead St Augustine leaves the question of dispositions, and considers God's over-ruling providence, which ordained that the temporal victories of Israel should foreshadow the coming of the eternal Kingdom in the New Testament.

The second problem, that of the primacy of the Kingdom of God, is nowhere systematically approached, but is perhaps answered in general terms by the assertion that war is always fought that peace may prevail and that peace even of this world has *some* value, though of a relative kind; this seems to be implied by various passages in the *City of God*.¹¹ Similarly in the letter to Darius, St Augustine grants that *some* glory is justly accorded to *faithful* soldiers who bring peace to the state by victory;¹² and, in the passage from *Contra Faustum* referred to above, a certain relative value is given to the victories of Israel by virtue of their prophetic nature. This is probably where St Augustine comes to

⁹Epistle 138, P.L. Vol. XXXIII, cc. 525-532.

¹⁰P.L. XLII, cc. 444-449.

¹¹e.g., C.D. Book IV, chapter 15, and Epistle 229.

¹²Epistle 229, P.L. Vol. XXXIII, cc. 1019-1020.

providing even a basis of value on which to construct a 'natural law' justification of defensive war. Nevertheless, the theme is not developed, for in each of the above mentioned passages, the principal theme is the absolute transcendence of the Kingdom of God. Indeed the suffering of tyranny is commonly seen as an occasion of virtue for the good;¹³ and it is difficult to see how the preservation of the brittle worldly kingdom could provide a reason for killing when the preservation of an individual's life or liberty does not do so.

Although he does not provide a systematic answer to the positive New Testament teaching on which pacifists based their position, St Augustine does bring into the argument a number of what we might call 'peripheral' texts to undermine the pacifist position, thus establishing a tradition of argument which is still very popular. He points out for instance that the centurion was commended by our Lord for his faith, not rebuked for his calling; and that the soldiers who came to John were told to be content with their pay, not to leave the army.¹⁴ These texts had been used in this way before of course; but St Augustine gave this use his authority, and combined rather ingeniously John's injunction to the soldiers to be content with their pay with our Lord's command that we should give to Caesar the things which are Caesar's —thus helping to provide the pay with which the soldiers are to be content! This, St Augustine argues, clearly implies that military service is not *wrong*, and that it is *possible* to please God as a soldier.

Apart from what is contained in these rather sketchy answers to the main pacifist arguments from scripture, there is very little in St Augustine that we would recognize as positive teaching concerning the just war. There is, of course, the often quoted theme that wars are always fought for peace; but this is an observation of fact rather than a rule of conduct, and applies to the aggressive resistance of robber bands as well as to just defensive wars.¹⁵ There is also the statement that wars originate in the wickedness of one side;¹⁶ this reminds us of the punitive aspect by which Augustine sought to reconcile war with love, and suggests also the idea of the God-sanctioned war, which we shall consider later; but again it is no rule of conduct. In his commentary on the Heptateuch¹⁷ he does say that just wars are 'usually defined' as

¹³C.D. Book XIV, chapter 3.

¹⁴PL. Vol. XLII, c. 447.

¹⁵C.D. Book XIX, chapter 12.

¹⁶C.D., Book XIX, chapter 15.

¹⁷P.L. Vol. XXXIV, c. 780.

'those which avenge injuries, if a city has refused to make amends for an injury or has refused to return what has been wrongfully taken'; the *definiri solent*, however, should caution us from laying too much stress on these conditions, which in any case are not typical of Augustine's thought or of the subsequent Christian tradition; and the sentence is subordinate in thought to the following one which asserts almost in contrast the unimpeachable justice of wars which God himself initiates. There is one further reference to the conditions of the just war, in the *City of God*, where Cicero's rule is quoted that a just war is fought to preserve either the safety or the faith of a city; but again the rule is not ratified by St Augustine, but he rather questions whether safety and faith are always compatible in the earthly city, and again draws a contrast with the City of God, where safety and faith always coincide.

It seems, then, that St Augustine was concerned to maintain the general possibility of a just war. At the same time he was very much aware of the traditional arguments of Christian pacifism, which were indeed very close to his own way of thinking; and he had little directly to oppose to these arguments, except to maintain that a punitive war could have love as its motive—a consideration we may feel rather remote from political reality.

Are we to conclude then that St Augustine's acceptance of war remained largely undefined, unreconciled with his theology—that it was in fact a political necessity reluctantly accepted, while his heart and his mind were with the martyrs of the early Church? By no means. For although the problem of reconciling New Testament teaching with war remains, there is another way of solving the theological problem. If *God himself* can initiate a war, it must be a just one; and there is abundant evidence in the inspired word of the Old Testament to show that he has initiated such wars in the past, and why may he not do so again? *Bellum Deo Auctore* solves all the problems. No need to ask whether the dispositions of the combatants can accord with the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount if they are following the will of him who is the source of all justice and the source of all love. No need to ask whether we may fight for the worldly kingdom, for if we are fighting at God's express orders, then we must be fighting for his kingdom.

Thus the theme of the God-inspired war becomes the cardinal point of St Augustine's teaching concerning the just war; towards this he swings like a compass needle whenever he becomes involved in the problem. Three examples will suffice to show this. In *Contra Faustum*,¹⁸

¹⁸P.L. Vol. XLII, c. 448.

having briefly discussed the authority of a prince to make war, he goes on to point out that it is not lawful to doubt that a war begun by God is always legitimate, whether its purpose be to terrify, destroy, or subjugate mortal pride. He concludes the chapter by saying how innocent are those who administer war in obedience to God, who can do no wrong. In the commentary on the Heptateuch quoted above, the pagan tradition of just war is merely mentioned in passing, in order to conclude that a war commanded by God is always just, and that in such a war both leader and people are to be accounted ministers, rather than initiators of the war. Thus God takes the complete responsibility. Lastly, in the passage from *De Libero Arbitrio* referred to at the beginning of this article, it is indicated that a prince may be free from sinful *libido* in making the law that force is to be repelled by force, on condition that he has made this law *at the command of God*, and hence in accord with eternal justice.

If St Augustine's thought concerning the initiation of war tends towards the *Bellum Deo Auctore*, his thought concerning participation in it veers correlatively towards the idea of obedience, service, compliance with the right order. He finds that according to the eternal law Moses is in fact guilty in striking the Egyptians,¹⁹ for no man may kill even a wicked aggressor unless he has *ordinatam potestatem*. In *Contra Faustum*, he declares that a soldier may innocently serve even under a sacrilegious emperor, provided that what is commanded is not clearly against the command of God; thus in spite of the wickedness of the ruler, the soldier preserves his innocence by observing the right order of obedience. Again, in the same passage from *De Libero Arbitrio* which sums up so much of St Augustine's thought on this matter, we find that the soldier is held guiltless of wrongful killing only insofar as he is the servant of the law; all those who are under legitimate authority can thus act without that element of sin which enters into all killing by individuals.

That this reliance on the direct authority of God represents St Augustine's final and most settled conviction concerning the problem of the morality of war is evident from his treatment of the subject in the *City of God*. In chapter 20 of the first book, he directly tackles the question of which kinds of killing are not to be accounted murder; and his answer is unambiguous. 'Those men do not break the commandment which forbids killing', he states, 'who make war by the authority of God's command, or being in some place of public magistracy, put to

¹⁹P.L. Vol. XLII, c. 444.

death malefactors according to their laws, that is, according to the rule of justice and reason'. Thus only two exemptions are allowed; the execution of criminals, and the waging of war at the express command of God.

By this time the problem was not just a theoretical one; Saint Augustine had himself sponsored the use of military force against the Donatist heresy in Africa. The command of God could be expressed through the authority of the Church, and thus a 'Holy War' could be initiated, in which soldiers would fight directly as servants of God and of the Church, the children of Light ranged against the Children of Darkness. Thus at one stride we pass from the fifth century to the eleventh, from the Early Church to the Crusades. It would, of course, be rash to regard St Augustine as the founder of the crusading idea, which only emerged five hundred years later in a complex and very much changed historical situation. Nevertheless he is a significant forerunner, and it could well be argued that his contribution to crusading thought was more positive and more significant than his contribution to any natural law theory of a just war.

Catholic Ecumenism 1962

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The year 1962 has seen a remarkable step forward here in England in the recognition of 'unity' or 'reunion' work as 'a particular charge and duty of the Church'; an 'excellent work', which 'should daily assume a more significant place within the Church's universal pastoral care'. In these words the Instruction of the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office on the Ecumenical Movement¹ describes the place of Catholic Ecumenism in the Church's apostolate. This important Papal document was published in December 1949. It was addressed to Local Ordinaries,

¹A.A.S. *Ecclesia Catholica*, Vol. XLII Jan. 1950, p. 142. English translation *The Churches and the Church* by Bernard Leeming, S.J., London 1960, Appendix II, p. 282.