

The Politics of Hope

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by E. M. Egan

Looking over the list of speakers scheduled for the International Convocation on *Pacem in Terris*, a Catholic economist remarked, 'I'm afraid it is going to be an international name-dropping jamboree.' Another reaction was that the gathering would represent no more than the attempt of a feuding family to 'bury the hatchet' long enough to pay respects to a deceased and much loved grandfather. As I looked over the massive gatherings at the United Nations and in the grand ballroom of the New York Hilton, I experienced something much more hopeful. For the four days of February 17–20, 1965, less than two years after Pope John XXIII addressed his letter to all humanity, 2,300 persons from 20 countries concentrated on that letter. The over-riding impact of the International Convocation was the intensity with which humanity was combing *Pacem in Terris* for guidance, and yes, for hope.

Paul G. Hoffman, Director of the United Nations Special Fund, in introducing Vice-President Hubert Humphrey at the opening ceremony, stated: 'When Pope John renewed our awareness that war and peace are not only political matters but moral matters, when he reminded us that a cynical divorcement of the moral from the political has historically been the prelude to disaster, he gave us a message that we need and must not fail to heed.' This was indeed the theme of the Convocation. 'Peace is a process, not a miracle', said Vice-President Humphrey, and added that the encyclical offered a basis for a 'politics of hope'. 'In the encyclical, John XXIII presented to the world a public philosophy for a nuclear era', Humphrey pointed out in his prepared text. 'The leaders of the world must understand, as he understood, that since that day at Alamogordo, when man acquired the power to obliterate himself from the face of the earth, war has worn a new face.'

The next day, against a background that seemed to evoke the face of an incinerated world, the talks and panel discussions began on the dais of the Hilton grand ballroom. The backdrop showed a giant photograph of a mass of grey-brown earth, wrinkled and pock-marked. A soft but unmistakable shadow of a dove could be seen on the expanse of earth. Above the photograph, in enormous gold letters, *Pacem in Terris* stood out on a meadow-green ground, and alongside, the words 'Peace on Earth' were outlined in dark blue against the pale blue of a peaceful sky. Before this background, there passed a constant parade of philosophers,

theologians, scientists, Nobel Prize winners, political leaders from Western, Communist and non-aligned countries, scholars, economists, writers, publicists, all focussing their insights on 'The Requirements for Peace' in the light of Pope John's letter.

No single article could cover all the facets of such a conference, or bind together the wealth of insights of the many speakers, so I shall confine myself to four chief points: how the Convocation happened; trends in the speeches and discussion; the special climate in which the gathering took place; the implications of the Convocation for Vatican Council II.

I How the Convocation Happened

It was Dr Neal, a Professor of International Relations and Government, who first conceived the idea of a meeting under private auspices 'to consider the practical implications of a message from a great spiritual leader'. *Pacem in Terris*, he felt, was the most remarkable document on political and social matters of our time. Until its appearance, the theory of co-existence had been an instrument of the East, and had been viewed as a necessity for the eventual triumph of communism. Pope John presented co-existence as a necessity for the survival of mankind, and for the eventual penetration of religious ideas about man and his world.

Dr Neal took the idea to the Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions at Santa Barbara, California, where the only guiding rule for discussion is 'Feel free'. What Dr Robert M. Hutchins and others at the Centre wanted to know was whether Pope John actually meant what their reading of the encyclical had revealed to them. Fortunately, it was possible to invite to Santa Barbara Monsignor Pietro Pavan, who had aided Pope John in the drafting of the encyclical. Monsignor Pavan was able to reply in unequivocal terms: Pope John had meant exactly what they had thought he meant.

Invitations were dispatched to a sampling of governmental leaders from all ideological groupings who would be willing to join in the search 'to bring about a climate in which dialogue could flourish and thus help preserve the peace'. Because of visa restrictions by the American Government, no invitations could be sent to the Peking Government or to intellectuals on the China Mainland.

Encouraging messages were received from high sources, including the following words from President Lyndon B. Johnson: 'The idea of assembling in this country outstanding spiritual and intellectual leaders should provide a welcome new dimension to the discussion of these fundamental problems, and help make the International Co-operation Year count in the search for practical program for peace.'

II Trends of the Discussion

Despite the state of the world situation and the black events of that very week, the note that was most frequently struck was that of hope, a

tempered and qualified hope, but nevertheless a species of hope. Even Dr Paul Tillich, a leading Protestant theologian whose teaching stresses that for every Yes there is the corresponding No, delivered his own tempered version of hope. He pointed out that there were many signs of real hope in man's present situation – a hope that could be sharply distinguished from Utopian expectation. 'The basis for genuine hope is that there is something present of that which is hoped for, as in the seed something of the coming plant is present – while Utopian expectations have no ground in the present.'

For Dr Tillich, *Pacem in Terris* was 'an important event in the history of religious and political thought' that 'may have practical consequences for man's historical existence'.

He questioned whether Pope John's key motif in *Pacem in Terris*, the greatness of the person, reached further than the limits of Christian-humanist culture: whether it can penetrate other religio-cultural traditions where the 'principle of the dignity of the individual is not ultimate'. He put forward as the real seed-bed of peace 'communal eros, that kind of love which is not directed to an individual, but to a group'.

'It seems', said Dr Tillich, 'that no world community is possible without this eros which trespasses interest as well as law. Every expression of such eros is a basis of hope for peace: every rejection of such eros reduces the chances of peace.' He did not think it was valid to expect a final stage of history in which peace and justice rule, but rather that 'history is fulfilled in the great moments in which something new is created, in which the Kingdom of God breaks onto history, conquering destructive structures of existence, one of the greatest of which is war.' He ended his message of qualified hope by asserting that, 'We can hope for practical victories over the forces of evil in a particular moment of time.'

Linus Pauling, double winner of the Nobel Prize, in 1954 for Chemistry and in 1962 for Peace, began by concentrating on war and the sufferings caused by war. He quoted from the encyclical on these subjects and stated his own conclusion: 'I accept, as one of the basic ethical principles, the principle of the minimization of suffering in the world.' He acknowledged his impotent frustration before the mystery of suffering, always a mystery but especially to those who do not hold the Christian belief on the redemptive aspect of innocent suffering. 'One of the most evil aspects of human suffering', he averred, 'is the absence of any justice or meaning in its distribution.'

Yet at the end of his speech he arrived at a posture of hope and quoted the prayer with which Pope John closed *Pacem in Terris*. 'I join in this prayer', said Dr Pauling, 'and I express now my hope and my belief that we shall succeed in abolishing from the earth forever the great immorality of war'.

Perhaps the most clearly spiritual statement of eschatological hope came from a Judge of the International Court, and former President of the U.N. General Assembly, Sir Mohammad Zafrulla Khan. He referred not only to *Pacem in Terris*, but to *Ecclesiam Suam* of Pope Paul VI. He quoted Pope Paul on the necessity of dialogue with other religions, and the need for relationships between peoples 'so as to diffuse in every institution and in every soul the understanding, the relish and the duty of peace.' His final sentences contained his own statement of faith as well as a reference to the overall aim of the Convocation: 'Let us hope that this Convocation will in the words of Pope Paul VI make "a contribution of experience and wisdom which can stir up all men to the consideration of supreme values."' Our last word is that all praise belongs to Allah, Who has created, sustains and nourishes the Universe and leads it, stage by stage, towards perfection.'

The speech that won a standing ovation was delivered on the last day of the Convocation by the Deputy Prime Minister of Israel, Abba Eban. In a prophetic, biblical tone, Eban dared to make a concrete proposal to 115 nations of the globe. Pointing out that traditional diplomacy was conservative and bound by convention, he urged that a breakthrough be made from it, and that 'the leaders of the nations should come together for the first time in history to review the total human destiny.' Amongst the over-arching problems were population, hunger, illiteracy, poverty, disarmament and the pollution of the very fabric of our planet. 'Let there be', he cried, 'the first assembly of governmental leaders to survey, not the state of any nation, but the state of mankind. The papal message "Peace on Earth" was governed by deep compassion for man in his vulnerability. There is also a sense in this wondrous age, of what man can achieve in his redeeming moments of grandeur.'

Running through speeches and discussions was a single thread linking the need for continued coexistence and disarmament, (including the destruction of the Bomb) with the necessity of strengthening the United Nations. The famous Section 145 of *Pacem in Terris* relating to broadening of the United Nations to 'the magnitude and nobility of its tasks' was frequently echoed. The concomitant of a strengthened United Nations, namely, a willed diminution of national sovereignty, was confronted by many speakers, the most notable being Arnold Toynbee.

'The mutual interest of all nations is that the human race shall survive', he said. 'If the nations destroy the human race, they will be destroying themselves with it. There it is the mutual interest of the nations to subordinate their national sovereignty to world-authorities. This is the only condition on which the nations can survive in the Atomic Age.' Concerning the often mentioned coexistence, Toynbee said flatly, 'I do not believe that mere coexistence is going to be possible for much longer in the new kind of world into which we have now moved.' In this he was

echoing Pope John whose idea of coexistence seemed not an end in itself but a stage toward a world order where justice and love could operate for the whole human family.

Of the five speakers from the Marxist world, in whose speeches Section 159 on coexistence found frequent mention, Adam Schaff from Poland had the greatest impact. He asked, 'What does coexistence mean in the matter of bringing nations closer together? True coexistence admits ideological differences. It admits a peaceful fight. Is it not better to throw ideologies at people's heads than bombs? . . . This is a fight for ideals. It is a competition, a very noble one, for the hearts and brains of people.'

Even the *spiritual* was not omitted by one of the speakers from the Soviet Union, Yevgenyi Zhukov of the USSR Institute of History. For him the competition that was conducted during peaceful coexistence was 'for the spiritual and material happiness of the human race'.

In discussing the main trends of the debate, it is worth mentioning that while speakers from every major religion and cultural tradition addressed themselves to the encyclical, there was no major speech by a Catholic. This was as it should be, since the very matter of the debate was the Catholic contribution. Barbara Ward, probably the best known Catholic participant in the Convocation, served as chairman of a panel. Before the end of the meeting, one could see the fall-out effect of the Convocation on the Catholic population of the United States. Representatives of some of the most important Catholic organizations met with Barbara Ward and James J. Norris to work out ways to expand the international anti-poverty action broached in Vatican II. As Christians and as citizens of an affluent country, they wished to break new ground in this basic work for peace.

Much more Convocation fall-out was likely when the score of nuns and several score priests took back the messages they heard at the New York Hilton to their universities and diocesan organizations. More immediate fall-out was promised by the North American Commission of the PAX Romana which resolved to promote regional and local continuations of the discussions held during the Convocation and to establish an *ad hoc* committee to explore in depth certain specific phases of the encyclical.

It has been notable up to the present that few concrete steps have been taken by the Catholics of the United States to divulgate the contents or put flesh on the proposals of *Pacem in Terris*. Some of the articles most often referred to at the Convocation, for example section 159 on coexistence, and section 112 on disarmament and the banning of nuclear weapons, are hardly digestible by masses of American Catholics. This refers particularly to those Catholics whose ideas are frozen in the fears and suspicions of the cold war and who see diabolism in communism.

III *The Climate*

Three shadows loomed much stronger during those four days than the shadow of the dove on the expanse of earth behind the podium. These were the shadow of the escalating war in Vietnam, the shadow of the Bomb, and the shadow of the increasing impotence of a United Nations virtually paralyzed by the crisis of payments for peace-keeping operations.

So urgent became the threat to peace during the days of the Convocation that Pope Paul VI, who had sent a message of greeting for the first session, sent a second message – this time a telegram clearly related to the Vietnamese hostilities. In it, His Holiness urged ‘the irreplaceable mission of the United Nations in promoting mediation of disputes and restoration of peace.’

It was then that a group of participants in the Convocation, none of them Catholic, decided to take Pope Paul’s second message seriously. They quietly prepared a statement echoing his appeal for negotiation. Despite the fact that petitions were not supposed to be a part of the meeting, they hurriedly circulated the petition and gained 400 signatures for it.

The sense of urgency heightened as the meeting drew towards its close. On Saturday morning, a group of peace workers from such organizations as the Committee for Non-Violent Action, the War Resisters League and the *Catholic Worker* stood in silent vigil in front of the New York Hilton. They held aloft placards blazing with bright red excerpts from *Pacem in Terris*, including: ‘. . . Disputes between States should not be resolved by recourse to arms, but rather by negotiation’, and, ‘Justice, right reason and humanity urgently demand that the arms race should cease . . . that nuclear weapons should be banned.’

Some of those attending the conference went out to join the vigil and returned to the afternoon session. One of those who went out, A. J. Muste, former head of the Fellowship of Reconciliation and elder statesman of the American peace and civil rights movements, did not return to the hotel. He was arrested because the police had given permission for a small number of demonstrators, and he was one of those in excess. ‘A.J.’ as he is called, was scheduled to take part in the final round-table on ‘Implication of *Pacem in Terris* for U.S. Policy’. An emergency replacement was found in Steve Allen, a well-known television personality whose long-term interest in peace led him to attend the entire Convocation as a spectator. Allen focussed on the immediate problem, naming the American right wing as the block to every specific aim expressed at the Convocation, up to and including the banning of nuclear arms. His frankness was trenchant, especially when he reminded the audience that Cuba had not even come up for mention. While he felt that the Convocation had done little more than ‘scratch the surface’, even this was a positive good, since the surface had become so glazed and hardened that even

scratching it was some achievement.

In the absence of 'A.J.', who would have been the protagonist of non-violence, a psychiatrist, Dr Jerome Frank, presented the non-violent case out of depth psychology and human concern. Dr Frank, who is noted for his incursions into man's psyche in its relation to modern war, admitted that man has destructive tendencies and that there is viciousness in him. He made it clear that modern war, as an elaborate social institution, is not an outlet for these deep-seated qualities. What we must talk about, he felt, was not peace, but how to make the world safe for conflict. Conflict there will always be. 'We all want peace,' he pointed out, 'but we also want our own value system, and we will often be ready to die or kill to protect it. Our early childhood communications, through rewards and punishments, give us our tribal allegiances. It is these allegiances that must be broadened by communications with mankind and sometimes by changes in our value systems.'

During the discussion, Dr Frank gave two practical norms to aid people in a non-violent response to conflict situations: 'Never allow your opponent to dehumanize you; resolve in advance that whatever the provocation, your response will never be that of violence.'

U Thant's final message came in the midst of the greatest crisis the United Nations had ever met. He admitted to depression over the virtual paralysis of the General Assembly in the payments issue, but expressed himself as being heartened by the 'loyal and unceasing efforts of the member nations to preserve their organization by finding a solution.' Pointing out that history had taken a different turn from that of the immediate post-war period, he told of the necessity of the U.N. to break out of the stance it had taken after putting down German and Japanese aggression. That stance could not be forever imbedded in the U.N. structures. The time had come to bring the structures into line with the new realities, and one of those realities was that there were 'super-powers armed with hydrogen bombs.'

'Although we have abjured war as an instrument of policy', he said, 'all nations have not yet abjured the state of mind that has so often led to war . . .' He praised *Pacem in Terris* for giving 'an inspiring lead toward the necessary change of heart'. As he stepped down, he was given the petition echoing papal appeals for negotiation, and urging that means be found to end the 'gravest threat to the peace of the world.' Expressing appreciation of his efforts to date, the petition reiterated that 'means must be found of shifting the quest for a solution away from the field of battle to the conference table . . .'

Robert Hutchins, a President of the Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions, and Chairman of the Convocation, asked each participant to choose an aspect of the great task of peace-making and work on it. He stated that his own aim would be to see embodied in the American Con-

stitution an article similar to Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution. This provision, explained to the assemblage by a speaker from Japan, calls for the abolition of war as a sovereign right of the nation and the banning of armed forces in all forms.

Mr Hutchins gave the last word to Pope John, who said after the promulgation of *Pacem in Terris*, 'We are not deceiving ourselves that this is easy. The achievement of peace, progress and brotherhood is not easy.'

IV *Implications for Vatican II*

It was not lost on the Catholics present that *Pacem in Terris* was promulgated just about a round century after the 'Syllabus of Errors'. The 1864 papal letter, 'containing the most important errors of our time', had been viewed as a sort of windbreak to protect the faith from the currents of new thought sweeping the world. With that Syllabus, the relevance of the Catholic Church to the travail of a changing world seemed at its nadir. It was from such dogmatic postures that many Catholics went to their forays in the market-place, armed with their certainties as with clubs. Rather than listen and learn (for they might be contaminated by errors lurking everywhere) they flailed the uncertainties of a tentative and often agonized generation.

Six popes later, a papal letter emphasizing the realities and hopes that drew mankind together, had performed the stupendous task of uniting people from divergent political systems, believers and atheists, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, in a common search, and hope, for peace. By speaking out of love, in the language that men understand, rather than out of dogma in outworn Vaticanese, Pope John had entered men's hearts as a true father, and had catapulted humanity into a vision of itself as one family.
