

the
sign of peace
Journal of the Catholic Peace Fellowship

SUMMER 2008 VOLUME 7.1



**On the 25th Anniversary
of *The Challenge of Peace***

Shepherding Christ's Flock in a Time of Crisis

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SUMMER 2008 · VOL 7.1

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The cover image is a stylized graphic of a 13th Century Italian ivory crozier showing the *Agnus Dei* and the Dragon. The actual crozier is housed at the Louvre.

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Letters

The last issue of *The Sign of Peace*, "Good Questions about the 'Good War'" left out one obvious question: What was good about an alliance with a monstrosity like the Bolshevik Soviet Union, which murdered 30 to 40 million of its citizens, most of whom were Christians? No one seems to want to acknowledge that this bloodthirsty regime savagely butchered the bulk of its victims immediately before World War II in Eastern Europe, the location where most of the Nazis' massacres occurred. Number-wise, the Christian-hating Soviets easily tripled the Nazis' body counts.

Adam Pace
South Bend, Indiana

Willi Graf's story [Vol. 6.2, "The White Rose Martyrs"] needs to be told accurately, because he was among the most honorable of those in the White Rose, his resistance being for moral reasons, not because of personal issues as was the case with Hans and Sophie Scholl. Willi said "No" to the Nazis because he believed they were wrong and criminal, and the more he saw of their work, the more determined he was to risk everything to stop them.

His life also demonstrates the precise quandary you wrote about, that of the devout Catholic in Nazi Germany. Willi's

father helped found the Nazi Party in the Saarland and saw no contradiction between his Catholic faith and National Socialist politics. Willi on the other hand rejected National Socialism nearly from the beginning and believed it stood in direct opposition to Catholic doctrine.

Best Regards,
Ruth Hanna Sachs
Director of Center for White Rose
Studies,
Lehi, Utah

Editors' Note:

In our last issue the article, "The White Rose Martyrs" included some inaccurate information, most notably regarding Willi Graf's imprisonment. Willi Graf and his sister Anneliese were arrested the same day as the Scholls, February 18, 1943. This erroneous statement does a tremendous disservice to Willi Graf, who of all the White Rose members, languished the longest in prison until October 12, 1943, when he was executed. We also mistakenly ran an earlier draft of the article and wish to apologize to the author, Brenna Cussen, and to our readers. The editors regret this error. Our thanks to Dr. Stephani Richards-Wilson of Marquette University and Ms. Sachs for their helpful clarifications.



Iraq and the Challenge of Peace

Though the 5th (or is it the 17th?) anniversary of the Iraq War came and went, the arguments about it continue. Amid the suffering and unholy terror of war (taking place a safe distance away), we Catholics in the US continue to argue about what it all means, and what we ought to do.

There are those of course who keep insisting that this war is a just one, because of weapons of mass destruction—no, because of 9/11—no, because of Saddam's brutality—no, because of the need to establish democracy in the Middle East—and the only thing these arguments have in common is "because," and that word is finally their substance. Why was it just to invade Iraq? Because...

Yet there are also arguments that go on among us in the Church who consider the war to be unjust, or evil, to use an unfashionable word. Recently, more and more Catholics in America who originally opposed the Iraq War have begun arguing that the occupation of Iraq must continue. They make this argument out of a concern for the good of the Iraqi people, noting that whether American forces leave or stay, the war in Iraq will continue, and hence the suffering and evil will continue, maybe not for Americans so much (except for veterans and those close to them), but certainly for Iraqis. They call upon the rest of us to assume an "ethic of responsibility" and work for a "responsible transition." The US broke it; Americans have to fix it. Thus, so this reasoning goes, the American military should remain in Iraq.

We are not convinced by these arguments. Ultimately, they pit the "ethic of responsibility" against the "ethic of Jesus," as if the latter were not the former. And we wonder: Why do we Catholics so often assume that Christ and the peace which he bequeaths to the Church are not enough at times like this? Why must Christians always be doomed to repeat the actions of the disciples and abandon the Way of the Cross at the very moment of crisis? (And yet isn't that Way a terrible one?)

We would like to counter this reliance on the policy prescriptions of the day—as if this were the Church's greatest gift to the world—with the language and practice of our faith. In so doing we wish to illustrate that the ethic of Jesus is an ethic of responsibility, and one which comes at a personal cost to each of us. The key to this ethic is the duty of solidarity. Here, our duty comes in response to the fact that our sisters and brothers in Iraq are being crucified. We cannot flee the scene, but must our solidarity come in the form of a military occupation?

It would be a serious mistake to think that the ethic of Jesus requires us to support a military commanded by leaders who have shown little but disregard for ordinary Iraqis (and ordinary Americans). If we wish to help our sisters and brothers, let us do so with acts of love, done at a personal sacrifice. We make some humble suggestions on concrete steps toward solidarity that ordinary Catholics like us can take on page 33, under the heading, "What is to be Done?" If actions such as these were undertaken with the seriousness that we in the Church give to the military, then the ethic at work in Iraq would be at once Christian and responsible.

Meanwhile, this issue will focus primarily on the 25th anniversary of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, issued in 1983. Most analyses have noted how the years after the pastoral saw an end to the Cold War. Yet we ought not forget that the US assault on the Iraqi people—which has continued for the last 17 years—began less than eight years after *The Challenge of Peace* was published. Nor has the threat of nuclear annihilation been as removed from reality as it has been from the headlines. All of this is to say that the years after the pastoral, like those in which it was written, have been full of war and rumors of war. Thus the gravity of the letter remains, and so does the gravity of the Church's task in history. We must live in the light of the great divine "Challenge" to fallen humanity: the Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection of the Son of God.

— THE EDITORS

Peace Briefs

News Compiled by the CPF Staff

Rest In Peace - Gordon Zahn 1918-2007

On December 8, 2007, Gordon Zahn died from complications related to Alzheimer's disease at St. Camillus Health Care Center in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. He was 89.

Zahn was born and raised in Milwaukee. In 1944, Zahn refused to be drafted and declared himself a conscientious objector to World War II. Instead of participating in the military, he chose to do public service, and worked with mentally handicapped children.



Gordon Zahn

After the war, Zahn applied to several Catholic colleges, identifying himself as a pacifist in his applications. He was rejected by all except St. John's, a Benedictine school in Collegeville, Minnesota. Zahn received a full scholarship

from St. John's, but only remained there for a year because of the controversy that his presence caused among veterans and former chaplains in the student body and on faculty. Zahn would complete his undergraduate work at St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Zahn moved to Washington, DC to work, but eventually chose to pursue graduate studies at Catholic University of America. There he completed a master's degree and later a doctoral degree in Sociology.

Zahn then joined the faculty of Loyola University of Chicago, and was eventually awarded tenure. After the publication of his work *German Catholics and Hitler's Wars*, which concluded that the Church had provided moral buttressing to the Nazi war effort, Zahn once again found himself in the midst of controversy.

Another of his works, though, is perhaps his most well-known. *In Solitary Witness: The Life & Death of Franz Jägerstätter*, shared the story of the Austrian Catholic martyr and conscientious objector with the Church and the world. Zahn's efforts were central to Jägerstätter's cause for beatification.

In the early 1980s, Zahn became a consultant to the US bishops' committee charged with drafting the pastoral letter, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*.

After retiring from teaching at the University of Massachusetts-Boston in 1982, Zahn ended his career as National Director of the Pax Christi USA Center on Conscience and War in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Zahn also edited a collection of Thomas Merton's essays on war and violence, and he wrote more than thirty articles and reviews for *Commonweal*, many of which were on issues related to peacemaking and conscientious objection.

The Catholic Peace Fellowship gives thanks for the life and work of the late Gordon Zahn—may he rest in peace.

Pope Urges Arms Dealers to Examine Their Consciences

In his January 1st World Day of Peace message, Pope Benedict XVI emphasized the central role of the family in teaching peace. He also condemned the international arms trade, calling it a "baneful commerce" that victimizes the poor, and urged the disarmament of nuclear weapons. In June, in an address to the new ambassador of Cameroon to the Holy See, the pope returned to the topic of arms dealing saying, "I exhort all persons involved in the sale or traffic of arms, with interests that are often extremely lucrative, to ask themselves what are the consequences engendered by their behavior."

Iraqi Student Project

The Iraqi Student Project (ISP) began in the summer of 2007 to address the critical lack of educational opportunities for Iraqis. Even during the isolation Iraqis experienced because of the sanctions from 1990 until 2003,



An Iraqi Student

the colleges and universities of Iraq struggled to maintain excellence. Now, however, after invasion, occupation and continuing violence, studies at the undergraduate level in Iraq have become nearly impossible. Iraqis who have become refugees have little access to higher learning. With Iraq's excellent higher education system in ruins, with more than four million Iraqis displaced inside and outside Iraq, and with occupation and sectarian strife continuing, the ISP seeks to make a small effort toward reconciliation and restitution. The ISP's goal is to bring qualified Iraqis to study without cost at US colleges and universities beginning in the fall of 2008.

If you think your *alma mater*, or another college near you, might be willing to accept one or more of these talented young scholars, more information on the Iraqi Student Project can be found online at: <http://www.iraqistudentproject.org/>

Members of the Marquette University Community Call the School to "Be Faithful to the Gospel" and to Cease Hosting of the Military

On March 8, 2008, Marquette University students, alumni and others gathered on the campus in

Milwaukee, Wisconsin for a nonviolent action that called for the school to close its academic Departments of the Army, Marines, Navy and Air Force. The Department of Military Science hosted by Marquette acts as a base for nine other local universities and colleges.

The protestors pointed out that the Department of Military Science teaches values that are contrary to the Gospel and the Church's teaching on the formation of Christian consciences. Those gathered also called Marquette, a Jesuit university, to follow the example of Ignatius of Loyola, a soldier who renounced the sword to follow Christ, and cease its hosting of and cooperation with a military that is currently waging an unjust war in Iraq.

US Military Veterans Speak Out at Winter Soldier

Drawing inspiration and its name from a similar event held in 1971 during the Vietnam War, Winter Soldier, sponsored by Iraq Veterans Against the War, recently took place in Washington, DC. The four-day event spanned from March 13-16 and featured testimony from US military veterans who participated in the



occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. The veterans gave those gathered at Winter Soldier an account of their experiences and a sense of what has actually been happening on the ground in those countries.

Panels of scholars, journalists, and other specialists provided context to the testimony. In addition to the talks by veterans, these panels addressed a range of topics from the history of the GI resistance movement to the fight for veterans' health benefits.

Army Suicide Attempts Quadruple

Earlier this year, *The Washington Post* and *CBS News* reported that the number of suicide attempts in the US Army has quadrupled since 2002, going from about 500 to more than 2000 last year.

In our work with the GI Rights Hotline, we frequently take calls from military servicemembers who are contemplating suicide or who have recently attempted suicide. While generally, in our experience, the Army is swift to take short-term action to protect a suicidal soldier, long-term care is sorely lacking. This is in part because those whose mild tendencies to depression are intensified by life in the Army are treated with great suspicion, since their problems are brought on by environmental factors rather than by chemical imbalance. In a variation on Joseph Heller's famous catch-22, if the Army makes you crazy, the Army says you're not crazy; if the Army doesn't make you crazy, you can be discharged for being crazy.

The problem is intensified by the growing pressure

on recruiters to meet recruiting quotas, and their increasing willingness to put the lives of others in danger in order to protect their livelihoods. We have worked directly with soldiers who were bipolar, who suffered from paranoid delusions and other forms of psychosis, and who had extensive histories of suicide attempts prior to service, who were encouraged by their recruiters to lie about their psychiatric histories in order to enlist. When the symptoms of mental illness become impossible to suppress, usually in the crucible of basic training but sometimes later, servicemembers who disclose their previous histories are usually first given a chance once again to cover up their medical histories. This time there is a coercive element, with the threat of court-martial for fraudulent enlistment hanging over the mentally ill servicemember. Only if the member is able to withstand these (uniformly empty) threats is the member afforded the psychiatric care so desperately needed.

GI Rights Hotline Update

Lately, we have heard from a number of young people who have signed up for the National Guard. These are difficult cases to deal with, as both the state and federal governments have authority over them. What is most difficult about these cases though is that they reveal the still widespread belief that people in the National Guard do not deploy to Iraq. Many young people sign up for the National Guard in the belief that they will be able to make some extra money without ever



having to go to Iraq. This is clearly false, as are other things that recruits frequently tell us their recruiters have said to them, such as, "if units from a particular state have just returned from a tour, no other units from the

state will be deployed for five years," "certain jobs absolutely guarantee that a soldier will not be deployed," "only people who volunteer for deployment go to Iraq," and so on. These are pernicious lies that truly do reap a bitter harvest in the lives they so often ruin. They cannot be combated vociferously enough.

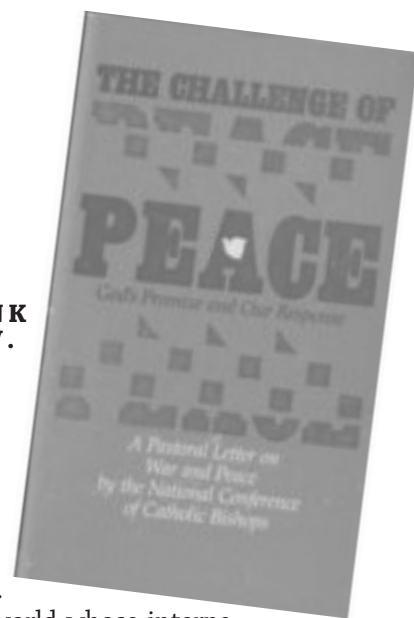
Sentence for Rahho's Killer Meets Condemnation

In May, the Iraqi government announced that an Iraqi criminal court had sentenced Ahmed Ali Ahmed to death for killing Paulos Faraj Rahho, the Chaldean Catholic Archbishop of Mosul, Iraq. Chaldean Catholic leaders in Iraq have criticized the sentence, stating that Rahho would have opposed such action. Chaldean Archbishop Louis Sako of Kirkuk, Iraq, told *AsiaNews*, "Violence must not call for more violence. We are in favor of justice but not of capital punishment." ✠

A Special Symposium

The Challenge of Peace: 25 Years Later

BY PAUL J. GRIFFITHS; RICK GRIBBLE; MOLLY RUSH; FRANK CORDARO; KATHY KELLY; DREW CHRISTIANSEN; GERARD V. BRADLEY; & TOM CORNELL



The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response marked a watershed in the history of the Catholic Church in America. Coming at a time when the threat of nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union seemed particularly grave, the document addressed the Church's hopes and fears about war. It stated clearly that the arms race was immoral; that the policy of nuclear deterrence was only acceptable as a "provisional" ethic; that the just war theory begins with a "presumption against war"; and that nonviolence and the just war theory spring up from the same, firm, Catholic soil.

It was also the first major document to be promulgated by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (now the US Conference of Catholic Bishops) that was the result of an open, consensus-based drafting process. This meant that clerics and lay people had access to drafts of the document as it was being prepared. This process, led by a committee that included then-Archbishop Joseph Bernardin and Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, meant both that *The Challenge of Peace* garnered great public attention, and that the bishops spoke with unusual authority.

It was indeed a critical moment for the Church in America; and yet many say its promise was left unfulfilled. On the 25th anniversary of the promulgation of this pastoral letter, we offer here a number of reflections on its significance by peacemakers, clerics, and scholars. Some provide a "long view" of the relative significance of the document, while others provide thoughtful reminiscences of the times during which the document was written. We hope that all will contribute to an ongoing re-reading and re-evaluation of the peace pastoral, and help us all to respond faithfully to its challenge. — THE EDITORS

A Challenge That Cannot Be Met by Paul J. Griffiths

It is a quarter of a century since the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the US issued *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*. That pastoral letter offered, among other things, an application of just war doctrine to the possession and threatened use of nuclear weapons that could render our plan-

et lifelessly radioactive.

It was composed in a world whose international politics had been largely ordered for the preceding forty years around the opposition between the USSR and the USA, an opposition that had by 1983 come to seem eternal and beyond the possibility of change.

The letter certainly envisaged no change in this ordering. And yet, in the two and a half decades since the letter's promulgation, that opposition effectively ceased to exist: the Berlin wall fell; the USSR disintegrated; new states emerged in Eastern Europe; Germany, astonishingly, was reunified; the European Union grew and emerged as a political and economic force of the same order as the USA; new and violent conflicts broke out at the edges of what had been the Soviet Empire, in Central Asia and Eastern Europe; apartheid ended in South Africa; sub-Saharan Africa became increasingly violent and chaotic; radical Islamic movements began to make their presence violently felt; China, after the massacre in Tiananmen Square, became capitalist without becoming democratic; and the victory of US-style, post-Fordist, democratic capitalism over Russian- or Chinese- or Korean-style charismatic state socialism, while apparently complete, issued in a new and violent expansionism aimed at burning off cultural nuance in the name of the free flow of capital. The two nuclear giants bestriding the earth threatening destruction with nuclear firebolts became a single hydra-headed bearer of the gifts of democratic capitalism, ceaselessly at war with those who refuse those gifts. The *chiaroscuro* of the new world-order, in endlessly subtle shades of currency-green, is shot through with bolts of blood red.

These political changes, radical as they are, mean that *The Challenge of Peace* reads like a document from a different world. It is not that nuclear weapons have gone away: there are almost as many as there were in 1983. Neither is it that the letter's argument that just war theory changes its complexion in a world where the principal weapons of war can bring all life to an end has been shown to be wrong: that argument is in my judg-



ment profoundly right. But it is that the document's diagnosis and prognosis is antique, as detached from the geopolitical realities we face as would be an analysis of the European scene as though the Holy Roman Empire still existed. This is not a criticism of the work the bishops did in the early 1980s. But observing it has a number of lessons to teach, among which I'll identify two.

The first is that the Church is in the same position as everyone else with respect to geopolitical prognosis. That position is one of almost-total ignorance: there is no such thing as expertise in this. Deep-dyed Sovietologists and Kremlinologists almost to a person failed to predict the break-up of the Soviet Union; Islamologists and obsessive observers of the Islamic world failed to predict the emergence of al-Qaeda, the results of the failed Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the increasing use of murderous self-martyrdom as an instrument of political pressure, and so on and so on. The prognostic parts of *The Challenge of Peace* are not worth the paper they were written on, and they share this worthlessness with the prognostications of political and academic experts. Learning this lesson well provides a guide for thought, which, paraphrasing David Hume, may be put thus: the extent to which a document contains geopolitical prognostication is the extent to which it should be consigned to the flames.

That first lesson is skeptical, and it is important. The second lesson is quite the opposite: it is a lesson about certainty. We Catholics, because of our understanding of the brokenness of the world that cannot be repaired by us, can be quite certain that the awe-inspiringly dreadful situation (the threat of universal and certain destruction as a standard instrument of foreign policy) addressed by the 1983 letter cannot improve—not, at least, until the *parousia* and the final establishment of the peacable kingdom, whose coming is not in our power. The human world is, as it always has been, one

of blood and death, of constant war in which the poorest and least powerful suffer most directly and without cease. The prediction that this will continue is certainly true. All that changes is the texture of the arrangements that make it possible and nurture it. The blood of those violently killed saturates the earth: with every step we take it bubbles up around our feet. There is no end to it, no pause in it; there is only more of the same, of evisceration by knife, of dismemberment by explosion, of choking by the rope, of poison-produced agony.

The challenge of peace is not one we can meet. But it is one we can respond to with the only tools at our disposal: lament; prayer; fasting; and action to oppose the violent shedding of blood with the certain knowledge that such bloodshed will continue unabated no matter what we do. These responses are, in the language of the letter, fundamental moral choices. But unless they are framed by the joint skepticism and certainty I've recommended, and in that way separated from the hopelessly self-deceiving thought that we can make things better, even these responses will become sub-Christian, instrumental interventions that will contribute to the flow of blood.

Paul J. Griffiths is Warren Chair of Catholic Theology at Duke Divinity School.

From Submarines to the Seminary: Thoughts on Deterrence

By Rick Gribble, CSC

The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response first entered my life in 1985 when I was a student at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley. As an energetic seminarian, having just completed the novitiate, and hearing of the significance of this document, I decided to read it one weekend.

My initial impressions were mixed, based on my past experience of life and my present situation as one in formation for ordination to the priesthood. Having

graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1975, I had spent the next five years associated with nuclear-powered submarines and nuclear weapons. Between 1975 and 1980 I had been a "front-line soldier" in the policy of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) that dominated the United States' association with the Soviet Union since the onset of the Cold War. Not only was I an officer aboard a submarine with nuclear weapons, but I was a member of a team responsible to act should a nuclear attack be ordered by the President of the United States. Thus, I viewed the bishops' letter from a different perspective than most all of my peer seminarians. I was impressed with the boldness of the letter, including its absolute "no" to any use of nuclear weapons and its insistence that a limited nuclear war was unrealistic.

My previous experience, however, focused my attention on the letter's comments about nuclear deterrence. Having "lived" nuclear deterrence on a daily basis in my life, I was heartened to see that the bishops followed the idea of Pope John Paul II who left open the concept of nuclear deterrence so long as there was an ongoing effort to secure reduction of nuclear stockpiles. Since MAD had been so "successful" in keeping the world from nuclear disaster, it seemed only natural, especially in the environment of the administration of President Ronald Reagan, to support a policy that had kept the peace.

Since my first reading of the 1983 peace pastoral I have found "new eyes" for its interpretation. The need for Roman Catholicism in the United States, as exemplified by the words and actions of the bishops, to be a countercultural voice in our society grows stronger every day. To be countercultural requires the prevailing system to be challenged; there is a need to ask questions, especially around long-standing policies that have become a part of the fabric of American foreign policy.

Today the document can be critiqued for its lack of boldness and challenge. While the absolute no to nuclear weapons, either as a first strike or in retaliation is made clear, the bishops' idea that it is morally sound to threaten to use a weapon whose use is immoral rings somewhat hollow. Surely, the document provided some bold challenges and it was consistent with both prevailing US policy and the words of the reigning pope, but with the benefit of "20-20 hindsight" it seems the bishops could have done more; they could have gone further in their call for an abolition of nuclear deterrence and the general concept of Mutually Assured Destruction. One might ask, "Did the US bishops compromise their position and their voice, or were they going as far as one might rightly push the envelope under the circumstances of the day?" The boldness that was possible in the 1983 pastoral was made more explicit in the 1986 document, *Economic Justice for All*, where the bishops chided the United States for its failures to consider the world community in its economic policy.

It certainly can be argued that MAD has kept the

world from nuclear confrontation for over 60 years. The question remains, however, is this a policy which Jesus the peacemaker would have suggested? From this writer's perspective, the answer is no!

Fr. Rick Gribble, CSC teaches at Stonehill College outside Boston.

Memories of The Challenge of Peace and the Distant Dream of Disarmament

By Molly Rush

I was one of three women (the other two members of religious communities) who presented testimony to the committee of bishops drafting *The Challenge of Peace*. I felt inadequate to the task. Here I was, a housewife and mother, a peace activist with no scientific or theological qualifications, determined to convince the bishops that they should issue an outright condemnation of nuclear deterrence.

In 1976 in a statement to the United Nations, the Holy See said, "The arms race is one of the greatest curses on the human race... an act of aggression against the poor, and a folly which does not provide the security it promises."

But in 1982 Pope John Paul II sent another message to the UN Special Session on Disarmament.

In current conditions "deterrence" based on balance, certainly not an end in itself but as a step on the way toward a progressive disarmament, may still be judged morally acceptable. Nonetheless, in order to ensure peace, it is indispensable not to be satisfied with this minimum which is always susceptible to the real danger of explosion.

Who was I to try to convince the bishops that they set aside the pope's words? But I was determined to try. Leading up to my Plowshares 8 action I had immersed myself in study of the extreme danger posed by this policy. My argument went something like this: Deterrence requires that we maintain a credible threat in order to prevent an enemy attack. To be "credible" we must have the capability to strike the enemy's nuclear weapons before launch. We would have to strike first and destroy every missile in their silos with total precision and be ready to attack without warning so they could not retaliate.

In turn the enemy must be able to preempt such an attack or risk total destruction. This cycle of mutual escalation, a recipe for an endless arms race, greatly increased the risk of destroying the planet.

I was elated when the pastoral, a milestone, was released on May 3, 1983 but I was deeply disappointed in the weakness of the section on deterrence:

Deterrence is not an adequate strategy as a long-term basis for peace; it is a transitional strategy justifiable only in conjunction with resolute determination to pursue arms control and disarmament. (*The*

I believe this left the door open, if only a crack, for continuing a policy based on an unrealistic and unjustified hope.

Today the Soviet Union is gone, but the US continues to target Russia on 15-minute alert, putting war on a hair trigger. The US failed to honor the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to move toward total disarmament. Instead, twenty-five years later, hundreds of billions of dollars have been wasted on a fruitless quest for a fool-proof missile defense system. And we are funding a new generation of nuclear bombs.

Disarmament is a more distant dream than ever. Our military budget is greater than that of all the rest of the world combined. We are in the midst of a disastrous war.

Tragically, despite nuclear proliferation and the threat that terrorists with a bomb pose, it seems most unlikely the bishops will today respond with urgency and seriousness to these calamitous threats. I find myself yearning for Church leaders who would wrestle with these issues, however imperfectly, as was done in 1983. They laid the groundwork for those who struggle today.

Molly Rush is co-founder and staff organizer of the Thomas Merton Center in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She was one of the Plowshares 8 in 1980.

Americans or Catholics? On Then and Now

By Frank Cordaro

The 25th Anniversary of the US Catholic bishops' *The Challenge of Peace*: I can't help but feel nostalgic for those good old days. The writing of this peace pastoral marked the culmination of factors and history that pushed the Catholic Church into a rediscovery and recovery of the nonviolent, pacifist character of its founder, Jesus. The bloody wars of the 20th century, especially WWI and WWII, had a lot to do with awakening our Church's senses to the true character of modern warfare, and the US-led nuclear arms race impressed on the Church the urgency needed to address the issue. Starting with good Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in terris* and followed by the Second Vatican Council condemnation of nuclear weapons, the universal Church was turning its sights toward becoming a peace Church and away from its outdated, short sighted, unworkable, and unbiblical just war tradition.

The US Catholic bishops' *The Challenge of Peace* pastoral was the US Catholic Church's articulation of where the universal Church was headed in regard to these war and peace issues. Incorporating our own tragic lessons from the Vietnam War, taking stock of where the nuclear arms race was headed with our deployment of first-strike nuclear weapons systems, and assessing the stated US policy that justified the first-strike use of nuclear weapons along with the growing belief in a winnable nuclear war, the bishops in *The Challenge of*

Peace restated clearly the Church's condemnation of the use of nuclear weapons, first-strike or otherwise. More importantly they raised the priority and the imperative for Catholics to embrace and seek out nonviolent means to address political conflicts and to push them toward the most Christ-like, pacifist option. They restated the right of pacifist Catholics to be conscientious objectors to war and went even further when they stated that just war Catholics could be selective conscientious objectors, leaving open to Catholics in the military the option to refuse to fight in wars they deemed unjust.

For many of us in the peace movement, the statement fell far short of where we wanted it to go. But it and the economic pastoral that followed were the last consensus pastorals that the US Catholic bishops conference would write with a majority of the bishops appointed under Pope Paul VI. Once the majority of the US Catholic bishops conference was made up of Pope John Paul II appointees, the issues of war and peace were tragically set aside for what they believed to be the more pressing concerns of "Catholic Identity." The prophetic energies within the US Catholic bishops conference that once voiced the concerns of the larger Catholic social teachings (in which the war and peace issues had been a part) were replaced by the voices of bishops championing the anti-abortion cause and thus squandering the US Catholic bishops' political equity on this single-issue concern.

Twenty-five years after its writing, we find ourselves in the fifth year of the Iraq war and occupation, a war that the Vatican called "immoral, illegal, and unjust" from its beginning. The shocking realities of Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib revealed to the world a US government acting with disregard for international laws, routinely violating basic human rights, justifying its use of torture, and plunging the US reputation to its lowest point in history.

Tragically, we find ourselves celebrating the 25th anniversary of *The Challenge of Peace* amidst pastoral sleep-walking in a collective Catholic amnesia. Today a new generation of US Catholics knows nothing of this peace pastoral. They do not think as Catholics when assessing the war in Iraq and our young know little to nothing of our Church's just war tradition, the pacifist Catholic option, nor of our stated support for conscientious objection. Today, the US Catholic Church is shamefully more nationalistic than it is Roman Catholic, a spiritual state which is bad for our souls and bad for our nation.

Frank Cordaro is a member of the Des Moines Catholic Worker Community.

Taking the Bishops to School

By Kathy Kelly

In the 1980s, teaching religion at St. Ignatius College Prep, I tried to weave perspectives about peacemaking into numerous daily lesson plans. Each semester, a handful of students objected. Sometimes, an irate par-

ent would complain that Ms. Kelly used the classroom to promote her political positions. "Well, actually," the president of the school would gently respond, "she's not saying anything the bishops haven't been saying."

In 1983, the US Catholic bishops' pastoral letter gave young teachers like me a green light for teaching about nonviolence in Catholic schools. Excerpts from the letter helpfully introduced Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Dorothy Day to my students. After reading sections of the letter about nonviolence, it made sense to meet and interact with proponents of nonviolence willing to visit our classes. Together, we read essays by Karl Meyer and then visited a local Catholic Worker house (See *Karl Meyer's article on p. 32 —Ed.*). Roy Bourgeois became a beloved speaker. And students intently absorbed stirring filmed statements from Dr. Helen Caldicott, Dom Helder Camara, Dorothy Day, and César Chavez. I remain grateful, as an "itinerant" teacher today, for the many ways that this remarkable document can foster the further invention of nonviolence, so needed in our time.

Kathy Kelly helped initiate Voices in the Wilderness, a campaign to end the UN/US sanctions against Iraq. She

works with Voices for Creative Nonviolence and lives in Chicago, Illinois.

Opportunities Lost and Gained: The Harvest of The Challenge of Peace

By Drew Christiansen, SJ

Arguably *The Challenge of Peace* was the most influential social teaching document in late 20th century Catholicism, at least as important as *Pacem in terris*, Pope John XXIII's groundbreaking 1963 encyclical, which is the foundation of contemporary Catholic teaching on politics and the source of Catholic involvement in the human rights movement. The peace pastoral was discussed around the world and prompted bishops' conferences across Europe to write their own pastoral letters on the ethics of nuclear arms and the Vatican to bring bishops' conferences together to set limits to the discussion. For good and for ill, the letter taught Americans to reason and to rationalize with the just war criteria. In the years that followed, the Senate debated the Gulf War in just war terms, but the Bush 41 administration named its invasion of Panama "Operation Just Cause." Former President Jimmy

Ground Zero: A Focus on Local Peacemaking

By Shelley Douglass

The late 1970s and early 80s were a time of intense peace activity in the Puget Sound region of Washington State. Much attention was centered on Naval Submarine Base Bangor on the Kitsap Peninsula, west of Seattle. The base was of such interest because it was being upgraded to be the homeport for the Trident nuclear submarine and missile system, the cutting edge of the American first-strike nuclear arsenal.

The campaign against Trident was begun by one family, Bob and Janet Aldridge and their children. Bob helped to design the missile system, and through friends in the peace movement and his own children's questions, came to believe that his work violated his deepest beliefs as a Catholic Christian. At that point his entire family went on retreat together and committed themselves to making the lifestyle changes necessary for Bob to leave his work.

In 1975, in direct response to the challenge of Bob's action, a small group of peace activists met in Vancouver, British Columbia and formed the Pacific Life Community. That community believed that the arms race, and thus Trident, was a logical outcome of the way we live. As a consumer empire using far more than our share of the world's resources, we needed Tridents to defend ourselves.

At that initial retreat/meeting, we committed ourselves to learn (as best we could) a new, nonviolent way of living with each other in our world. Our campaign against the Trident system would be the public expression of a broader experiment in the truth of nonviolence as a way of life.

By the early 1980s the campaign had led to exciting developments. We had purchased a piece of land adjacent to the Trident base, and founded upon it the Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action. A dozen or so people moved to Kitsap County to work full-time in the campaign, which to us meant meeting and getting to know County people, living among them as part of the community, leafleting weekly at the gates of the base, speaking at coffee-and-cake meetings in people's homes, and of course, organizing and carrying out protest actions including civil disobedience, trials, and jail time. Initial hostility was intense, but over several years began to abate.

Archbishop of Seattle, Raymond Hunthausen, was an inspiration to all of us as a humble and honest person trying to live out the Gospel without counting the cost. He visited us in jail, and later as we got to know him he became a valued friend. We had the privilege of sharing our understanding of the arms race with him, and of the challenge it poses to the Gospel. The Archbishop always thought and prayed about his own response, and then acted. He became a tax refuser. He gave a major speech in which he called Trident the "Auschwitz of Puget Sound." He spoke at many a rally and meeting. And after he did controversial things he would go to those parishes most offended and listen, and try to explain. He was an exemplar of Gospel nonviolence in action. (It should also be said that when he and his chief fund-raiser became public tax refusers, the annual collections in the

Carter, a Southern Baptist, cast his opposition to the 2003 invasion of Iraq in just war terms.

The success of *The Challenge of Peace* lay in part in the public disclosure and open debate of the drafts of the document. In the end, it was accepted even by many who were critical of the bishops because the process had engaged them. A case can be made that it had greater *de facto* authority than almost any teaching precisely because it had been written with so much public discussion. That open process exhausted the bishops, and it moved some to make future drafting processes narrower.

Official Catholic teaching on nuclear weapons has continued to evolve. *The Challenge of Peace* said "No" to nuclear war, but it left open the question of deterrence, allowing for a highly conditioned acceptance of a nuclear deterrent with special emphasis on the movement toward nuclear disarmament. Since the end of the Cold War, both the Holy See and the USCCB have promoted abolition of nuclear arsenals. In their 10th anniversary peace statement *The Harvest of Justice Is Sown in Peace* (1993), the bishops, whose drafting committee was headed by the same Cardinal Joseph

Bernardin who headed the preparation of *The Challenge of Peace*, declared, "Today the moral task is to proceed with deep cuts [in nuclear weapons] and ultimately to abolish these weapons entirely." One wonders where US disarmament and non-proliferation policy would be if this judgment had been openly debated.

Finally, for the first time in more than four hundred years, *The Challenge of Peace* recognized that nonviolence was part of the Catholic tradition, signaling an opening in Catholic thought and practice that continues to bear fruit. Since then church teaching has repeatedly endorsed nonviolence, most notably in Pope John Paul II's *Centesimus annus* (1991; 23, 25, 52). In summarizing the tradition on war and peace, *The Harvest of Justice* offered as its fundamental position the proposition that, "in situations of conflict, our fundamental commitment ought to be, as far as possible, to strive to resist injustice through non-violent means." As a measure of progress in the acceptance of nonviolence in the Catholic community, in its first five-year report, *Called Together to be Peacemakers*, the Vatican-sponsored International Mennonite-Catholic Dialogue affirmed, "We hold [the] common conviction that reconciliation,

Diocese of Seattle went up.)

In the early 1980s we at Ground Zero became aware that trains were entering the Trident base carrying solid fuel propellant for the missiles, and a bit later we discovered the "White Train," which ran from Amarillo, Texas, to the base carrying nuclear weapons to be deployed on the submarines. At a weekend gathering at Ground Zero,



Protesters at Ground Zero with Hunthausen (right). Scott Takushi/The Seattle Times

people from along the tracks formed the Agape Community. Over the years of its existence the Agape Community united people along the railroad tracks between Amarillo and Bangor, so that every time a train moved weapons a praying community of nonviolence met it all along the way to its destination.

Our work against the nuclear trains put us in touch with another unusual bishop, Leroy Matthiesen of Amarillo—a bishop so sensitive to the immorality of assembling nuclear weapons that he offered to support workers who felt impelled by conscience to leave their jobs. Hunthausen and Matthiesen together led a retreat at Ground Zero that further linked our communities.

It was these bishops—and a few others like Michael Kenney of Alaska, who joined us in protesting the Alaska submarine, and of course Tom Gumbleton of Detroit—who gave us hope for the Church. We were encouraged that the body of bishops heard the concern about nuclear weapons enough to open a dialogue, and if we thought the result—*The Challenge of Peace*—was less than prophetic, at least the question had been raised as a legitimate issue for faithful discernment. From our perspective, the Church was listening to the *sensus fidei* and responding as best it could.

All in all though, our excitement was not for the pastoral, but for the workers who left their jobs, the thousands of leaflets accepted by base personnel, the hundreds who risked jail, and all those who, like our bishops, stood up against intimidation to speak the truth.

Shelley Douglass was a founding member of both Pacific Life Community and Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action. She lives and works at Mary's House Catholic Worker in Birmingham, Alabama.

non-violence and peacemaking belong to the heart of the Gospel" (179). The drafting of *The Challenge of Peace* was a unique moment in modern Catholic history. In the movement to abolish nuclear weapons, in the spread of active nonviolence and the growth of Catholic peacemaking, it continues to bear fruit.

Fr. Drew Christiansen, SJ is editor-in-chief of America: The Jesuit Weekly.

The Challenge of Peace and Evangelium Vitae

By Gerard V. Bradley

The Catholic Church's moral teaching about killing has long made a sharp distinction between public and private. No *private* person may intentionally kill anyone. But anyone at all—including private parties—could use lethal force where necessary for legitimate defense of oneself or of others. Where deadly force is to ward off unjust aggression, the intent has to be just that: to stop the aggression, and not to kill. Should the aggressor die as a result of defensive blows, his death could be accepted as a justifiable side-effect of using lethal force.

The Catholic tradition has long held, too, that intentional killing was morally permissible in three cases: just war, capital punishment, and armed rebellion against unjust government authority. Persons acting on behalf of *public* authority—soldiers, police, death row personnel—could target and really intend to kill enemy soldiers or the condemned prisoner. A related aspect of this teaching was non-combatant immunity: persons caught in the line of fire but who themselves were not aggressors must never be targeted. They must never be intentionally killed. Civilian deaths during wartime could be accepted, however, as side-effects of violence aimed at killing aggressors, so long as the civilian losses were proportionate.

The Challenge of Peace operated within this tradition of reflection. In it the bishops rightly said that "the intentional killing of innocent civilians or non-combatants is always wrong." The central concern of it was the unimaginable number of bystanders who would be killed—even if they were not targeted—in any nuclear exchange, and whether this devastation could ever be morally proportionate to any just end. In their letter the bishops did not really question whether targeting and intending to kill military personnel was morally permitted. They assumed it was.

This assumption has since been put into doubt by no less an authority than Pope John Paul II. In *Veritatis splendor*, his 1993 encyclical letter on morality, John Paul II said: "*When it is a matter of the moral norms prohibiting intrinsic evil, there are no privileges or exceptions for anyone. It makes no difference whether one is the master of the world or the 'poorest of the poor' on the face of the earth. Before the demands of morality we are all absolutely equal*" (96, emphasis in original). John Paul II said further that, "[e]ven though intentions may sometimes be good, and circumstances frequently diffi-

cult, civil authorities and particular individuals never have authority to violate the fundamental and inalienable rights of the human person" (97).

It appears from these passages that John Paul II meant to bring together what the tradition has put asunder: the ethics of lethal force. In his later encyclical letter *Evangelium vitae*, the Holy Father surely appeared to assimilate the morality of public killing to that of private killing. He applied a *unified* moral teaching to the problem of capital punishment. He concluded that the possibility of morally licit capital punishment could not be altogether excluded. But, the pope wrote, in developed societies its use should be "rare, if not practically nonexistent" (56).

In *Evangelium vitae*, capital punishment is morally excluded, save in the very few cases where it constitutes the last means of defending against aggression. "Aggression" in this understanding means an actual impending or threatened physical attack which cannot be forestalled by non-lethal means—say, where a society does not have the wherewithal to safely isolate a murderous criminal for the rest of his natural life, but must nonetheless protect society, *somehow*, from him. In other words, in *Evangelium vitae*, the ethics of *public* killing was assimilated to that of *private* lethal force: no one at all may be intentionally killed.

In this brief reflection I cannot explore the intricacies of the Pope's teaching on capital punishment. Nowhere in *Evangelium vitae* did John Paul II expressly extend his insight about the immunity of all persons from intentional destruction to the case of war. And the teaching of the Church surely needs further authoritative clarification. But it nonetheless seems to me that, years and maybe decades from now, we may look back upon *Evangelium vitae* as the beginning of an important transition within the Catholic tradition, the end point of which will, someday, be this interpretation of the Fifth Commandment: *intentionally killing any human person is always wrong*. There are no exceptions.

Gerard V. Bradley is Professor of Law at the University of Notre Dame.

The Church Needs You

By Tom Cornell

When I was program secretary for the Fellowship of Reconciliation, I often visited Washington, DC, sometimes for visits to the State Department, for peace movement consultations, and in the latter years of the Vietnam War, for demonstrations. Whenever I could, I made it a point to drop in at the bishops' office, often at lunchtime. Tom Quigley, then in charge of programs for Latin America, was a CPF member. He introduced me to Fr. Bryan Hehir and to Mr. Ed Donahue. Our conversations were casual, but substantive. The bishops took up some of my suggestions, reiterated support for SCO, pledged the good offices of the Church to the support of anyone who had a problem of any kind with military service or the draft and endorsed the CPF

draft counselor training program.

Then the FOR eliminated my position (they fired me). For three years I free-lanced as a draft counselor trainer and peace activist. Remuneration was minimal. I had to sell our home in New York's Hudson Valley and accept a job teaching eighth grade English in New Hampshire to survive. There in my "northern exile," I vainly attempted to teach the difference between *lie* and *lay*. One afternoon, as I asked the Lord, "Is this all there is?" the telephone rang. It was Ed Donahue in Washington. "The Church needs you," he said. Would I be free to come down to New Haven to consult with the five bishops who were drafting the peace pastoral? I was stunned. Of course! I will make arrangements, I told him.

There were only three representatives of the peace movement at St. Thomas More Chapel at Yale University. One was a nun. I cannot recall her name. She delivered a sermon. It was a fine sermon about the non-violent Jesus. But let me warn you, never preach to bishops unless you are asked to. Molly Rush was most personable, a middle-class wife and mother under threat of serious prison time for civil disobedience. She represented "ordinary Catholic women" who were deeply concerned about modern war and the Church's responsibility for peacemaking. I spoke about the moral

problems that nuclear deterrence poses. I started off by telling them that I did not know what they should tell the Catholic and other people of our nation. I knew what the Catholic Worker should say; I knew what the CPF should say. We had already said it. But the bishops have to say something that the people can actually hear. If the people do not follow them, then they are not leaders. They are just out for a walk. The Vatican Council unequivocally condemned mass destruction (*Gaudium et spes*, 80). Nuclear weapons are instruments of mass destruction. Nuclear deterrence is based upon the threat to use them. Morality resides in the intentional order. Either we intend to use them or we do not and are lying. If we intend to use them, then we are already guilty. And on the other hand, the Church has always had a problem with lying. So where do we go?

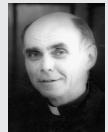
Where we went and where we have to go is the subject of other essays in this issue of *The Sign of Peace*. What remains is, when will the pastoral be implemented? How? Who will bring about the consciousness, the pressure to do it? You, dear reader. "The Church needs you."

Tom Cornell co-founded CPF in 1964. He is a deacon and Catholic Worker who lives on Peter Maurin Farm in Marlboro, New York. ✠

Two Voices from the Drafting Committee

The CPF was fortunate enough to get brief comments on *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response* from two members of the letter's drafting committee, Fr. Bryan Hehir and Bishop Thomas Gumbleton.

Fr. Hehir, following a talk at the University of Notre Dame's Kroc Institute, discussed military reactions to the drafting of *The Challenge of Peace*. "Interestingly enough," he noted, "There were some moves that were made. In the 1980s the Air Force adopted a new standard. Obviously, when you enter the military you take an oath to the commander-in-chief, you take an oath to the Constitution and to follow the orders of the commander-in-chief. Things became so uncertain about people's views on nuclear weapons that the Air Force instituted a second test: that if you were going to go into a nuclear silo you had to sign a paper saying that you had no objection to using nuclear weapons. So there was a kind of uncertainty about what [Catholics] were thinking."



Fr. Hehir continued, "I remember in the parish I lived in, in Virginia, I used to say the seven o'clock Mass all of the time. And one of the people who came to the seven o'clock Mass all the time was a really terrific guy who was a Navy Admiral. He never said a word to me all during the writing of the pastoral. The week after the letter was passed, he stuck his head in the door and he said to me, 'I'll tell you how this letter will work. When you get to my level of the military there are 25 of us for every job that is available.' And he said, 'If there begins to be doubts that Catholics can't handle nuclear weapons, nobody will ever say anything, but it will have an effect on promotions.'"

Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton, Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of Detroit observed, "We have not followed the letter's judgment... No genuine steps have been taken in the last 25 years toward disarmament. In fact, recent developments by the United States include major steps toward a position of world dominance by moving its nuclear weapons into space—an extraordinarily more dangerous situation for our planet and every person who lives on this planet."



Bishop Gumbleton reminded us that, "the promise was proclaimed by Jesus to his disciples: 'My peace I give you; my peace I leave with you...' The promise is still there, waiting to be accepted and celebrated. But the response is lacking."

Faithful Discipleship and the Bishops' Pastoral Letter Shepherding in a Time of Crisis

BY THE STAFF OF THE CATHOLIC PEACE FELLOWSHIP

With all that happened during the past two presidential elections, it is a commonplace to note that Catholics in the United States are divided along political lines. Political candidates and their operatives take opinion polls, crunch numbers, produce analyses, and devise strategies designed to work Catholic opinion to their political advantage. Still Catholics seem to split according to party preference, Democrat or Republican, more than find common ground based on the truths of our faith. In an effort to overcome these divisions, the US Catholic bishops have published once again a *Faithful Citizenship* document to clarify the many complex issues involved in our political life. Whether or not their efforts at unity will be very fruitful in the upcoming presidential election, they should still be commended for attempting to give their flock some kind of direction on thorny issues of public life.

This is not the first time the US Catholic bishops have sought to address a divisive and contentious political atmosphere. Twenty-five years ago they issued *The Challenge of Peace*, a pastoral letter on war and peace that focused especially on the issue of nuclear war. Their efforts to bring clarity to the issues met with mixed results. The pastoral letter did little to overcome the divisions in their flock; it may even have solidified them. Nevertheless, they made a sincere attempt at good shepherding. We think it important to recall this moment in the Church's history, to try to capture the energy and enthusiasm that accompanied *The Challenge of Peace*, and also to make sense out of the divisions that emerged during its

preparation and after it was finally promulgated.

Reactions to the letter can be divided into four groups. First, there were those who supported the pastoral letter as a positive, indeed momentous, contribution by the bishops in the national debate on US policy on war and nuclear weapons. Second, there were those who denounced the letter as misguided in its attempt to intervene in the sphere of politics and irresponsible in its tendency to downplay the Soviet threat. Third, there were those who faulted the pastoral letter for doctrinal error in deeming nuclear deterrence strategy morally acceptable. Fourth, there were those who commended the letter for taking up the serious issue of war but criticized it for not fully embracing the teaching and example of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. This article addresses all four groups, from a perspective in line with the latter two. As we explain in due course about these latter two reactions, both traditional Catholic moral theology and Gospel-based pacifism share a crucial skepticism toward the war-making enterprises of the modern nation-state. We should also note that what follows also addresses a fifth group: those who are too young to recall the pastoral letter or were not alive when it was promulgated, and who therefore do not understand its significance, then and now.

"A Moment of Supreme Crisis"

Before looking at the pastoral letter itself, it is important to recount the events leading up to it in order to explain the sense of crisis that pervaded the nation in the early Eighties and that set the stage for the intense debates surrounding its

promulgation. From an historical perspective, the primary event, of course, was the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, marking the end of the Second World War and also the beginning of the Cold War. Within weeks, the United States and the Soviet Union, uneasily allied against the Axis powers, were engaged in a clandestine contest to develop more powerful atomic weapons. The first post-war tests of atomic bombs were conducted by the United States, two explosions in 1946 and three in 1948. In 1949, the Soviet Union conducted its first test. In 1951, the United States conducted sixteen tests, and the Soviet Union, two. The year 1952 saw an increase not only in the number of tests, but also in the magnitude of the weapons when, on November 1 (All Saints' Day), the United States detonated a hydrogen bomb. In 1953, the Soviet Union detonated its own hydrogen bomb. Over the next decade, H-bomb tests grew more frequent and the H-bombs themselves grew more powerful. In 1963, the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty outlawed atmospheric testing, but the two superpowers continued underground testing. Moreover, by that time France and China had acquired nuclear capacity and did not comply with the ban. Throughout the 1970s the nations of the "nuclear club" continued adding to their arsenals, so that by 1980 the total number of stockpiled nuclear weapons was 55,246. With no end to the Cold War in sight, the situation looked ominous.

Several political developments in the early 1980s made the situation look even more ominous. For one, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, spurring President

Carter to reinstitute draft registration, withdraw the US Olympic Team from that year's games in Moscow, and consider strategies in which the United States would prevail in nuclear war. For another, Ronald Reagan was elected president. Upon taking office, he referred to the Soviet Union as an "evil empire," scrapped all talk of arms control, and asserted that the best way to end the Cold War was to win it.

And then, in keeping with this assertion, there was the overall shift in US policy that threatened to destabilize the balance of power that had remained relatively intact for the prior two decades. Up to that time, US nuclear policy was governed by a strategy of Mutually Assured Destruction. The idea was that the best way to prevent the use of nuclear weapons is to assure the other side that a first strike missile launch on their part would be met with a devastating retaliatory strike on their population centers; this assurance would then deter the other side from launching a first strike. While it was nerve-wracking to think of the damage to be wrought if this deterrence strategy were to fail, proponents argued that it had worked for several decades.

But Reagan called for the development of a Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) in which the United States would be able to defend itself from nuclear attack by intercepting incoming missiles, thus creating a situation in which it could launch nuclear weapons without fear of a devastating counter-attack. According to critics, this "Star Wars" strategy, as it was called, threatened to upset the precarious arrangement that had worked up to that time and set off a chain of events that could lead to worldwide nuclear catastrophe. The fear during these years was pervasive and palpable.

All of this gave credence to the opening sentence of *The Challenge of Peace*, that "the whole human race faces a moment of supreme crisis in its advance toward maturity." This statement was taken from *Gaudium et spes* (77), the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World issued by the Second Vatican Council. In placing it at the beginning of their letter, the bishops signaled that they were writing in union with the whole Church. At the same time, they made it clear that they were writing on behalf of one particular local church, in the United States of America, whose members were living in terror of a

possible nuclear war and were responsible to try to prevent it. But how could it be prevented from happening? This became the central issue taken up in the letter. However, before looking at how the bishops tackled that question, it is important to review the various resources, perspectives and pressures bearing upon the bishops as they set about their self-appointed task.

The Church

Catholic teaching during the Cold War consistently warned against the use of nuclear weapons. Grounded in natural law principles, the core of this teaching affirmed the right of nations to self-defense by military force if necessary. At the same time it condemned any intentional taking of the lives of the innocent during war. Applied correctly, this teaching condemned the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, although this was not widely understood and acknowledged by Catholics in the United States after World War II. More importantly, Catholic teaching in the Cold War era condemned the use of nuclear weapons on population centers, which was the stated intention of both the United States and the Soviet Union. Moreover, members of the Catholic hierarchy as well as ecclesiastical authorities began asking whether or not nuclear weapons could be justifiably used at all, given that the limited use of "tactical" weapons could spark an all-out nuclear war. Cardinal Ottaviani, a Vatican official often (mistakenly) described as a "conservative," suggested that nuclear weapons had made just war theory obsolete. Pope John XXIII, in *Pacem in terris*, his farewell encyclical issued in 1963, expressed similar concerns about nuclear war and called for increased openness and understanding between East and West. And then the Second Vatican Council stated in its clearest and strongest language that "Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities of exten-



Ronald Reagan delivering the March 23, 1983 speech initiating SDI.

sive areas along with their population is a crime against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation" (*Gaudium et spes*, 80). Church teaching had not changed, but changing relations in the Cold War entailed a shift in the Church's posture toward nuclear weapons and the possibility of nuclear war. A clear and consistent voice of criticism, indeed protest, was emerging from Rome.

In this country, similar protests emerged from several quarters in the Church. There were implicit criticisms on the part of Catholic moral philosophers, there were protests emerging from the Catholic Worker, and there were those taking a more moderate approach, employing traditional just war principles to conclude that participation in modern war, and certainly in nuclear war, is impermissible. In addition, there was a host of younger Catholics whose work for peace was forged during the Vietnam War. With the help of a handful of peace organizations, such as the Catholic Peace Fellowship, the Community for Creative Non-Violence, and Pax Christi, a relatively broad base of Catholics had been initiated into the Church's "fresh new appraisal of war" (*Gaudium et spes*, 80). By the early Eighties, it was common to speak of a Catholic peace movement, which, in addition to focusing on the situation in El Salvador and Latin America more generally, was concerned with the arms race and the prospect of nuclear war.

This is not to say that most Catholics were calling for unilateral disarmament on the part of the United States—not by a long shot. Many Catholics, perhaps even a majority, still looked at US foreign policy in terms of the conservative narrative of Cold War. In the mid-Fifties, a small, talented, and politically powerful group of conservatives began generating an intellectually formidable account of their position. The leader here was William F. Buckley, Jr., who put forth a viewpoint that was spelled out each month in the journal he

founded, the *National Review*. Vehemently anti-communist and strongly supportive of the Vietnam War, Buckley and the other contributors to the *National Review* consistently maintained that a strong nuclear arsenal was the only sure defense against world domination by the Soviet Union. After watching the rise of what they called the secular liberal establishment in the sixties and seventies, they saw their work come to political fruition when Reagan was swept into office in 1980, heralding a "conservative revolution."

And there was a strong Catholic contingent to this so-called "conservative revolution." There was Buckley himself, of course, but also an entire company of strong-willed Catholics, the most prominent of whom was Michael Novak. When Reagan declared that Soviet military might would be met with military might, Buckley, Novak and other Catholic neo-conservatives provided energetic intellectual support, including well-developed reasons why Catholics and other religiously-minded people have a deep stake in backing the United States in its efforts to defend the heritage of the West.

All these influences and pressures—Vatican II's condemnation of using nuclear weapons, the witness of the Catholic peace movement, the upsurge of Catholic conservatism—were at play when the Catholic bishops in the United States began work on their pastoral letter on nuclear weapons. They shaped not only the content of the letter but the process by which it was composed. It is to the process of composing the letter that we now turn.

The Process

The idea for a pastoral letter on war and peace originated with P. Francis Murphy, an Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore, who intro-

When Reagan declared that Soviet military might would be met with military might, Buckley, Novak and other Catholic neo-conservatives provided energetic intellectual support.

duced it under "new business" in advance of the November 1980 meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB). In his proposed new business item (or *varium*, in the parlance of the NCCB), Murphy explained that he was moved by the story of Franz Jägerstätter, the words of Pope Paul VI, and the repentance of Father George Zabelka, the chaplain who prayed with and blessed the men carrying out the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The proposed *varium* was accepted. The plan was to issue a concise summary of Church teaching on war and peace.

But between the proposed *varium* in August and the November meeting, Reagan was elected president. In response, Murphy caucused with other bishops, so that at the November meeting, several bishops rose and called for a more substantial statement on the part of the Conference. The most memorable intervention was that of Thomas Gumbleton, Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit. Gumbleton cited Pope John Paul II's World Day of Peace statement, calling for a renewed commitment to nonviolence, for studying "nonviolent civil defense" and "nonviolent alternatives to war." The ensuing applause was long and loud, clearly indicating that Gumbleton had struck a chord. The matter was turned over to a committee to consider further action.

The following January (1981), the president of the Conference, Archbishop John Roach of St. Paul-Minneapolis, announced the creation of an *ad hoc* committee on war and peace whose task would be drafting a statement to be consid-

ered and debated by the full body of the US bishops at a subsequent meeting. The committee was headed up by Archbishop Joseph Bernardin of Cincinnati, known for his consensus building ability, and was comprised of Gumbleton, Auxiliary Bishop John J. O'Connor, head of the military vicariate, Bishop Daniel Reilly of Norwich, Connecticut, and Bishop George Fulcher, auxiliary of Columbus, Ohio. In the ensuing months, two members were added to represent the religious orders of men and women in the United States: Father Richard Warner, provincial of the Indiana Province of the Congregation of Holy Cross and Sister Juliana Casey, head of the Immaculate Heart of Mary sisters in the Detroit area. A priest was appointed to coordinate the process, J. Bryan Hehir, of the Archdiocese of Boston and associate secretary of the United States Catholic Conference on Justice and Peace.

The committee's work was longer and more involved than initially envisioned. It met more than a dozen times over the course of two and a half years. In an attempt to build consensus amid the diverse positions held by committee members as well as the bishops as a whole who would have to approve a pastoral letter, Bernardin urged that proposed drafts be circulated and comments be solicited. He also arranged for the committee to meet with theologians, philosophers, politicians, and policymakers, so as to learn some of the technical issues at stake and draw on their expertise. Committee members met more than a dozen times and they had plenty of homework to do in between.

Meanwhile, the letter became the subject of national and international debate. At one point, officials from the Reagan Administration asked to talk with the committee. At another point, some members of the committee were summoned to Rome to consult with Vatican officials and the bishops from European

countries who also had a stake in the outcome of the process. All in all, the process was remarkable in the way it drew Catholics together to debate the implications of their faith.

At the same time, the final version of the pastoral letter marked, not so much the beginning of an era in which Catholic teaching on war and peace would exert a decisive impact on the public policy of the United States, as many had hoped; rather, it reflected the confusion of the post-conciliar era when Catholicism in the United States suffered from a lack of consensus on basic points of doctrine due to deep divisions along liberal / conservative lines, divisions that have remained intact in the quarter century since, and indeed have become more intractable. But before getting into its ambiguous legacy, it would be helpful to summarize the letter itself.

The Pastoral Letter: A Summary

As already noted, the bishops begin the pastoral letter by describing the present situation as "a moment of supreme crisis." Then they identify themselves as bishops and pastors speaking on behalf of their flock, and also as Americans and citizens of the nation that first produced nuclear weapons, used them, and "which today is one of the handful of nations capable of decisively influencing the course of the nuclear age," for which reason "we have grave human, moral, and political responsibilities to see that a 'conscious choice' is made to save humanity." The pastoral letter thus serves as "an invitation and a challenge to Catholics in the United States to join with others in shaping the conscious choices and deliberate policies required in this 'moment of supreme crisis'" (*The Challenge of Peace*, 4).

This agenda of influencing the policies of the nation shapes the

rest of the letter, which comes in four parts.

Part One, "Peace in the Modern World: Religious Perspectives and Principles" identifies two audiences to be addressed in the pastoral: "the Catholic faithful, formed by the premises of the gospel and the principles of Catholic moral teaching," and "the wider civil community of Christians, Jews, Moslems, other religious communities, and all people of good will who also make up our [that is, the US] polity" (16). These two audiences require two styles of teaching, according to the bishops, one based on faith and the specific beliefs of Catholics, the other based on reason and the principles of natural law, which are available to all people. But because these two styles of teachings are seen as complementary, the bishops can move without a problem from (a) the biblical vision of peace to (b) the theology underlying the just-war theory to (c) a moral assessment of the issues today to (d) an assessment of the political and personal tasks facing everyone.

Entitled "Peace and the Kingdom," the exposition of the biblical vision of peace moves from the Old Testament traditions of war, peace, and the covenant, to the New Testament vision of peace as exemplified in the teaching and example of Jesus and the life and witness of the community of believers. To its credit, the letter notes that no notion of a warrior God is

All in all, the process was remarkable in the way it drew Catholics together to debate the implications of their faith.

found in the New Testament and that all military imagery is gathered into an overriding vision of God's peace reaching out to the ends of the earth and calling for reconciliation among all peoples "so that God's purpose, 'a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in

him' (Eph. 1:10), will be fulfilled." But then the letter concludes this biblical exposition with this remarkable claim: "Even a brief examination of war and peace in the scriptures makes it clear that they do not provide us with detailed answers to the specifics of the questions which we face today. They do not speak specifically of nuclear war or nuclear weapons, for these were beyond the imagination of the communities in which the scriptures were formed. The sacred texts do, however, provide us with urgent direction when we look at today's concrete realities" (55). This notion of the Bible providing a direction but not a concrete solution to the nuclear arms race is deeply debatable; it allows them, in spite of their protestations to the contrary, to place the biblical witness of peace in the future, as a hope reserved for the "kingdom"; the reality of here and now is placed under a separate category, namely, "history." Hence the title of the next subsection, "Kingdom and History."

While "Kingdom," for the bishops, serves as a placeholder for the biblical witness of peace, "History" is the name of the realm where sin still prevails, and thus where war is sometimes necessary. "It is within this tension of kingdom and history," the bishops write, "that Catholic teaching has addressed the problem of war." Thus the bishops refer to the "moral choices for the kingdom," choices that carry a presump-

tion against violence but which at the same time affirm "legitimate self-defense." The term "legitimate" here is defined by "the just-war criteria," which they list in accord with the traditional division between criteria determining why and when it is permissible to wage war (*jus ad bellum*) and what specific operations are permissible in waging war (*jus in bello*). The *jus ad bellum* criteria determine that war may be waged (1) for a just cause, (2) by a competent authority, (3) for comparative and not absolute justice, (4) with an intention for pursuing peace, (5) as a last resort, (6) with a probability of success, and (7) when the good expected exceeds the damage anticipated. The *jus in bello* criteria determine that operations within a war must be (1) proportionate, i.e., the damage expected must not outweigh the good sought, and must be (2) discriminate, i.e., must not intentionally target non-combatants (civilians). These *jus in bello* criteria, the bishops state, "have special significance today precisely because of the destructive capability of modern technological warfare." After affirming the value of nonviolence as an option and witness for individuals (more on this below), the bishops apply these criteria to the present situation.

Part Two, entitled "War and Peace in the Modern World," reiterates the dire situation of the world under the nuclear threat, affirms

the importance of religious leadership in forming national policy, and then submits several specific judgments on nuclear weapons. These judgments are: nuclear weapons may not be used on civilian populations, they may not be used as a first-strike, they may not be used even in a limited manner, and they may be used in deterrence strategy only as a means of disarmament. This last judgment the bishops call a "strictly conditioned moral acceptance of nuclear deterrence" (186) and these conditions reject policies based on prevailing in nuclear war, reject the quest for nuclear superiority, and affirm deterrence only as a step toward progressive disarmament. More specifically, these conditions preclude deploying first-strike weapons and using nuclear weapons to ward off conventional attack, and they call for "immediate, bilateral, verifiable agreements to halt the testing, production, and deployment of new nuclear weapons systems" (191). The bishops do not want their moral acceptance of deterrence strategy to be seen as approval of the present situation. Rather, they see it as a call, indeed a prophetic challenge, to move beyond it and to take "resolute steps to actual bilateral disarmament and peacemaking" (198). They expand on this vision in the next section.

In Part Three, entitled "The Promotion of Peace: Proposals and Policies," the bishops place their moral judgments and policy recommendations in a broader set of positive goals for peace. First, they urge accelerated work on arms control, more controls on the sale of arms, prohibitions of chemical and biological warfare, further efforts to develop nonviolent conflict resolution, and protection of the rights of conscientious objectors and selective conscientious objectors. From there, they offer a conception of world order and international relations that affirms the importance of national sovereignty but at the same time appeals to a deeper interdependence, one that can, if heeded,



Swords into Plowshares: In September 1980, the Plowshares Eight snuck into the GE nuclear munitions plant in King of Prussia, PA and took hammers to several warheads.

inject a sense of mutual self-interest and harmony among nations. Citing recent papal encyclicals and public statements, they conclude that humanity possesses the ability to provide for its own security, safety, and welfare, but must also have the will to do it.

Part Four, "The Pastoral Challenge and Response," moves from the realm of public policy to the practical steps toward peace to be taken by those in the Church. Taking these steps, the bishops note, is part of Christian discipleship and may require Christians to separate themselves from all attachments that impede their hearing and following Christ and could involve persecution and even martyrdom. The first steps involve educational programs in the formation of conscience, instilling in all Catholics a deep reverence for life, including the lives of the unborn, and practices of prayer and penance such as voluntary fasting and abstaining from meat. Then the bishops call on various members of the Catholic Church in the United States to bring the issue of nuclear weapons to bear on their work. Priests, deacons, religious, pastoral ministers, parents, youth, people in the military, in defense industries, and in the media, scientists, public officials, and citizens—they all are called on to contribute to the wider civil community so as to reverse the arms race and to secure world peace.

In conclusion, citing Pope John Paul II's words that "we need a 'moral about face,'" the bishops reiterate their claim that "the whole world must summon the moral courage and technical means to say 'no' to nuclear conflict; 'no' to weapons of mass destruction; 'no' to an arms race which robs the poor and vulnerable; and 'no' to the moral danger of a nuclear age which places before humankind indefensible choices of constant terror or surrender" (333). They call for an international governmental body with the structures, supervisory capacities, and the political authority to reverse the arms race. "Obviously

the creation of such a sophisticated instrumentality is a gigantic task," the bishops concede, "but is it hoping for too much to believe that the genius of humanity, aided by the grace and guidance of God, is able to accomplish it? To create it may take decades of unrelenting daily toil by the world's best minds and most devoted hearts, but it shall never come into existence unless we make a beginning now." Thus they turn to the United States, "our own government," and "beg it to propose to the United Nations that it begin this work immediately..." (336). Their hope, they insist, is rooted in their "belief in the risen Christ which sustains us in confronting the awesome challenge of the arms race... We believe his grace will never fail us. We offer this letter to the Church and to all who can draw strength and wisdom from it in the conviction that we must not fail him." And they do so in light of the promise of the kingdom set forth in the Book of Revelation, "Behold, I make all things new" (339).

To sum up: *The Challenge of Peace* called upon the nations of the world to begin the hard work nuclear disarmament. Writing as teachers of the faith and citizens of one of the two superpowers, the bishops pointed to the natural law and the principles of just war theory to mount a serious challenge to the arms race, and in particular to US nuclear policy. They rejected the use of nuclear weapons as a first-strike, as a retaliatory strike, or as a limited or "tactical" strike. They accepted deterrence strategy under strict conditions, not as a valid policy in itself but only as a step on the way to disarmament. Acknowledging that human history is marked by sin and division, but pointing to the promises of Christ and the coming of the kingdom of God, the bishops expressed confidence in humanity's

Acknowledging that human history is marked by sin and division, but pointing to the promises of Christ and the coming of the kingdom of God, the bishops expressed confidence in humanity's capacity to meet the challenge of peace.

capacity to meet the challenge of peace.

The pastoral letter was clearly intended as an intervention in world events. And for the two and a half years it was being written, and in the wake of its promulgation, many expected it to have a far reaching impact on the nuclear policy of the United States and other nations. But many others contended that the letter was mistaken in its theoretical assumptions and misguided in its criticism of US policy. Indeed, in 1982, as the leading emphasis of the letter was taking shape, a group of Catholics drafted a document of their own that criticized the direction the bishops were taking.

The Conservative Critique

The document in question was called *Moral Clarity in the Nuclear Age*. It was written by Michael Novak, author, speaker, and religion editor for the *National Review*, and was signed by scores of high-profile Catholics, including William F. Buckley, Jr., William Bennett, Clare Boothe Luce, Peter Grace, Philip Lawler, James Schall, SJ, and Henry Hyde (the US Representative from Illinois). The document took a conservative position, leading many to dismiss it as politically and ideologically driven. But a fair reading of the document shows that this group of conservative, or neo-conservative Catholics, began with many of the same principles as the bishops. The difference was that they applied them differently.

In *Moral Clarity in the Nuclear Age*, Novak and company (we refer to him as the author of this document, though this includes all the signatories as well) delineate three spheres of Gospel teaching in human life. The first sphere concerns the spiritual realm and the things of eternity. The second concerns the temporal realm and the things of life in this world, including the principles by which life in society should be guided, as presented in Catholic social teaching. The third has to do with applying those principles in particular circumstances, which involves interpreting concrete matters using prudential judgment. Novak maintains that when it comes to the first two spheres—the spiritual realm and social principles—he has no major disagreement with the bishops. The disagreement comes up with the third concern, applying the principles of Catholic teaching to the particulars of US nuclear policy. Here Novak takes issue with a host of issues about the bishops' prudential judgment.

Basically, he argues that the best way to avoid nuclear warfare is for the United States to maintain a sufficient nuclear defense; not a superior defense, he points out, but a sufficient one; and this means keeping in place all the elements of US deterrence strategy. More specifically, it means not renouncing first-strike policy, not renouncing a counterpopulation retaliatory strike, and not tying the validity of deterrence strategy to successful negotiations on arms reduction with the Soviet Union. This last point highlights a crucial element in making sound prudential judgments, according to Novak, for the Soviet Union espouses an ideology and pursues a policy that is dead set against the personal, political, economic, and religious freedoms protected by the United States and its allies. In short, the Soviet Union is the enemy of freedom, and as such also the enemy of the Church and its teachings on the social order.

Thus, for Novak, carrying out the

Vatican II mandate of “reading the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel” requires seeing the Soviet Union as the primary threat to world peace. He argues against any notion of moral equivalency between the two superpowers and criticizes the bishops on this point (or at least some of them) for being naïve.

At one key section in *Moral Clarity in the Nuclear Age*, Novak focuses on the issue of deterrence strategy. He acknowledges that deterrence strategy creates moral problems inasmuch as it entails expressing the evil intention of a retaliatory strike on a civilian population or, as military strategists put it, a counter-value target. But he contends that this evil is outweighed by the greater evil of a Soviet superiority in the arms race. If that were to happen, the Soviet Union could hold the rest of the world hostage and the United States and its allies could actually lose the Cold War. In making his case, Novak posits a distinction between an intention to attack a civilian population and a threat to do so. It is not that the United States intends to carry out an attack on civilians; rather, it threatens to carry out such an attack; and this threat is necessary to prevent such an attack in the first place. Novak concedes that this threat is an evil, but he argues that it is a lesser evil than the evil of a Soviet domination of the world, that this threat is a secondary intention to the United States' primary intention of making deterrence work so as to avoid nuclear war. In other words, US policy has two effects: a primary effect of averting nuclear war and a secondary effect of maintaining the threat of a retaliatory strike on population centers. This secondary effect is unintended, he argues, and he embeds this intention within the United States' “objective political intention.” Writing on behalf of all

the signatories of the statement, Novak sums up his argument in a passage that is worth quoting in full:

In short, given the nature of Soviet leadership, its ideology, and its political culture, and recognizing the configuration of its nuclear forces, we see no completely satisfactory position: neither abandonment of the deterrent, nor a deterrent strategy

Novak posits a distinction between an intention to attack a civilian population and a threat to do so. He concedes that this threat is an evil, but he argues that it is a lesser evil than the evil of a Soviet domination of the world.

based on counterforce, nor a deterrent based on countervalue. Among these, we judge the best of the ambiguous but morally good options to reside in a combination counterforce and countervalue deterrence. We uphold the fundamental intention of deterrence that no nuclear weapon ever be used. We uphold the secondary intention of being ready to use the deterrent within the narrowest feasible limits, as indispensable to making deterrence work. We reject the policy of national bluff which permits possession but does not permit its essential secondary intention. We discern no other way to defend the Constitution of the United States, to protect its institutions of liberty, and to prevent the most awful aggression against innocent peoples here and elsewhere. It would hardly be better for us if some other people bore this burden, but in any case there is none who can lift it from us. In due course, the Soviet Union may learn to prefer ways of peace abroad and ways of liberty at home—in which case, peace among nations may be possible. For this we labor and pray (pp. 66-67).

Setting aside (for a moment) the reference to the US Constitution and its institutions of liberty, one can discern in this passage a logic that is well known in the discourse of moral theology. It is called “proportionalism,” and it is highly controversial. Indeed, it was (and is) sharply criticized by traditional Catholic moral theologians, and by one in particular, namely, Germain Grisez.

The Grisez Critique

Throughout his career, Grisez, a just war thinker in the Anscombe-Ford tradition (see our Winter 2007 issue), has opposed the use of proportionalist logic in a number of key moral matters. The most controversial matter had to do with contraception. Serving on the committee overseen by Pope Paul VI, he argued

For Grisez, if the West must be protected by committing the mortal sin of threatening to use nuclear weapons on innocent civilians, then Christians must learn to divest themselves of their attachment to the West, which is not, after all, coterminous with the kingdom of God.

that the Church should hold to its absolute prohibition of contraception. The committee’s majority, who urged a relaxation of the prohibition, argued on proportionalist grounds that, tragically and through no fault of the moral agent, some circumstances allow only a range of evil options and that one may then opt for the lesser evil; thus the “evil” of contraception may be allowed in order to forestall a greater evil, such as a potentially life-endangering pregnancy. Grisez argued to the contrary, that some acts are intrinsically evil, evil in themselves, regardless of the tragic circumstances or the good intentions of the moral agent, that these acts are never morally permissible, and that one such intrinsic evil is contraception. After considering the issues, Pope Paul VI decided in favor of Grisez’s position and reiterated the

Church’s absolute prohibition on contraception in the encyclical *Humanae vitae*. Needless to say, the issues here are very complex, but the operative principle can be readily grasped: no evil may be done that good may come of it (cf. Romans 3:8). And this principle applies to a range of actions in addition to contraception: abortion for example, and euthanasia—and intentionally taking the lives of innocent non-combatants in war.

Accordingly, Grisez has long been a critic of Allied bombing policies toward the end of World War II. He has also been a consistent critic of US deterrence strategy for being grounded on the intention of carrying out the evil of a counter-population retaliatory strike. Accordingly, when it became clear in the second draft of their pastoral letter that the

bishops were considering giving conditional approval of deterrence strategy, Grisez intervened by writing a letter to every bishop in the United States warning

them that they would be approving a policy at variance with Catholic teaching. He also published an article stating that it is logically incoherent to claim that one must tolerate an evil that one is at the same time intending to do; it would indicate a divided will or a deception that is morally suspect.

This is the argument that Novak tries to refute in *Moral Clarity in the Nuclear Age* when he (Novak) argues that U.S. deterrence strategy rests not on an *intention* to do this evil, but on the *threat* to do it, which is needed to forestall a Soviet takeover by means of nuclear war. Grisez’s thought on this matter is memorable. At one point in his article, he addresses the “Better dead than red” mentality by countering, “Better anything than mortal sin.” And he elaborates on this quip in a book co-authored with John Finnis and

Joseph Boyle, *Nuclear Deterrence, Morality, and Realism* (Oxford University Press, 1988) by arguing that if the West must be protected by committing the mortal sin of threatening to use nuclear weapons on innocent civilians, then Christians (and others) who wish to adhere to the commandments must learn to divest themselves of their attachment to the West, which is not, after all, coterminous with the kingdom of God. It may well be that this renunciation will lead to persecution, suffering, and even death, but such is the lot of the followers of Christ.

We have gone into Grisez’s argument at some length because it reveals several important features of the debate in the early eighties over nuclear war and what the bishops would say about it in their pastoral letter. First, it reveals the extent to which both the bishops and their conservative critics held that deterrence strategy is morally acceptable. Second, it reveals the extent to which their acceptance of deterrence strategy is grounded in a non-negotiable commitment to protect the principles and values of the United States. Third, it reveals that the reasoning at work in their acceptance of deterrence strategy, even with conditions attached and distinctions posited to justify it, is highly questionable from the perspective of traditional Catholic teaching on absolute moral prohibitions of intrinsically evil acts. Fourth, it reveals that the morally problematic policy of deterrence can be rejected if, and only if, the value of protecting and preserving the United States and Western Civilization is *relativized* so as not to override an absolute moral prohibition for the sake of “the lesser evil.” This, in turn, reveals a fifth feature of the debate about what the pastoral letter should say about war and peace and nuclear weapons: that Grisez’s refusal to set aside the law of God for the sake of defending the United States and Western Civilization from Soviet attack is in key ways logically parallel to the

pacifist refusal to do so. Both Grisez and the pacifists maintain that the moral law (rather than the need to protect the US) is absolute. Both contend that adhering to this absolute entails a readiness to set aside the purposes of the United States. And both rely on God's providence to give their stance logical sense, or better yet, theological sense. In the face of possible destruction, we must bow humbly and cast our cares upon God, Who cares for us (Cf. I Peter 5:6-8).

In the debate about the pastoral letter on war and peace, then, we find similar lines of thought between those taking a traditional Catholic stand against doing evil that good may come of it, such as Grisez, and those taking a pacifist stand against war based on the teaching and example of Christ. By looking at it through these two lenses, we now offer our own thoughts on *The Challenge of Peace*.

Our Reading

Without a doubt, the writing of *The Challenge of Peace* was a positive development in the efforts of the Catholic Church to contribute to public policymaking in the United States. Never before had so much attention been drawn to the Church's teaching on war and peace. Never before had government officials felt compelled to justify their policies so explicitly in terms of just-war principles. Thus the writing of the letter was effective, in one sense.

But in another sense, it was not very effective at all. US nuclear policy in the period after the pastoral was promulgated remained unchanged; in fact, it became less conciliatory, more aggressive. When the Cold War ended with the revolutions of 1989, conservative Catholics felt vindicated, attributing the fall of the Communist Bloc to the twin causes of President Reagan's hard-line stand and Pope John Paul II's robust shepherding. Soon there was talk of only one superpower in the world and how it was now the responsibility of the

United States to provide security and democratic freedoms to nations in the Middle East.

In 1991, the United States, with support from the United Nations, launched Operation Desert Storm, staving off an invasion of Iraq into Kuwait and establishing a military presence in the region to impose an economic embargo and no-fly zones on Iraq. These actions were given conditional approval by the US Catholic bishops, so long as they were carried out, of course, in accord with just war principles. But conservative Catholics pointed out that determining the justice of these actions was not a matter of principle but of prudential judgment. On this point, they were correct, conceptually speaking, but on the actual judgments they consistently invoked a new crisis scenario, not the Cold-War scenario of struggle with the Soviet Union but a new struggle with the rising tide of pan-Arab nationalism.

With 9/11, the rhetoric intensified. The implacable foe became "Islamic extremism," the "axis of evil" or "Islamofascism." Shortly thereafter, the Bush Administration prepared for a full-scale invasion of Iraq, the rationale for which shifted from needing to impose a "regime change" to preempting an attack with "weapons of mass destruction" to providing "freedom for the Iraqi people." The Holy See warned against an invasion of Iraq, as did the US bishops. But President Bush forged ahead, with neo-conservative Catholics invoking the "prudential judgment" argument to neutralize any criticism coming from Church authorities.

A Self-Defeating Agenda

All of which is to say that the harvest sown by *The Challenge of Peace* has brought forth a marginal yield. It could hardly be otherwise, as we see it, for the agenda of the letter—to call the United States to conform its nuclear poli-

cies to natural law principles—was a self-defeating agenda. The United States provides many advantages and freedoms to its citizens, certainly more than the former Soviet Union. But the United States is a nation-state, and like all nation-states, those advantages and freedoms are protected by means of national security, the purposes of which unavoidably will, at one point or another, come into conflict with the principles of the natural law. The bishops were confronted with this reality when they tried to tackle the vexing issue of deterrence strategy. They did not—indeed could not—resolve the conflict between targeting population centers and the just war principle of not intentionally taking innocent lives. They could have done so only by relaxing the aim of national security, as Grisez urged ("Better anything than mortal sin"); and they simply refused.

Such are the vexing problems of maintaining security in the modern nation-state system. And the problems pertain not only to deterrence, but to a wide range of wartime realities: the advantages of preemptive attack, the inevitability of civilian casualties, the necessity of public deception, and the utility of torture, to name a few. Given these realities, the practitioners of modern statecraft are inevitably drawn to compromise between waging modern war effectively and adhering to moral principles come what may. This was true during World War II, the Cold War, and the present War on Terror, as can be readily seen in newspaper and magazine articles and in books on the US invasion of Iraq. The problem is not so much with specific policymakers, though there are better and worse policies. The problem is with the exigencies

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of the modern nation-state, which has consistently proven itself incapable of adhering to the principles of the natural law, not to mention the evangelical counsels set forth in the Gospel. In taking as their primary agenda the reform of national policy, the US Catholic bishops failed to comprehend the impossible nature of their task.

Still, drafting and promulgating *The Challenge of Peace* was a powerful and good moment for the Catholic Church in the United States, and the pastoral letter itself has two strengths that remain important for Catholics in this time of war. In conclusion, we want to point out these two crucial strengths to the letter.

First, there is the section of the pastoral letter titled "Elements of a Pastoral Response" (279-329). Here, the bishops turned from the difficult questions of public policy to what average Catholics can actually do in response to the nuclear crisis. They emphasized prayer, a genuine reverence for life, and educational programs focused on the formation of conscience. To their credit, many bishops started such programs in their dioceses.

Meanwhile, there were murmurings of Catholics in the military not getting promotions because of membership in a Church that encourages conscientious discernment as to whether or not, or to what extent, they can participate in the waging of war. We hope that such practices grow among Catholics working in various settings: in the military of course, but also in defense-related industries, Catholic college and university research programs, high schools, parishes, and so on. The bishops also recommended bringing back Friday abstinence from meat as a penance and a sacrifice for peace.

The second strength of the letter is that it gives more substance and weight to the pacifist tradition in the Church. The scriptural exposition in the early sections makes it clear that in the apostolic age and the early centuries of the Church, nonviolence was the norm for Christians. The bishops relativize the importance of this norm by placing scripture within the confines of "kingdom" and undercutting its concrete relevance in "history." But this division between kingdom and history is conceptually misleading, in that the doctrine of the incarnation locates the kingdom within history; as Jesus says, "the kingdom of God is among you" (Lk 17:21).

Later in the pastoral, the bishops commend witnesses to nonviolence such as Dorothy Day, but they reserve this witness for individuals. This too is conceptually misleading, in that morality is always located within communal settings in Catholic belief and practice; as Paul says, we are members of a body (cf. I Cor. 12:27). A more proper conception of pacifism comes near the end of the pastoral, where the bishops write that "a response to the call of Jesus is both personal and demanding. As believers we can identify rather easily with the early Church as a company of witnesses engaged in a difficult mission... To set out on the road to discipleship is to dispose oneself for a share in the cross (cf. Jn 16:20). To be a Christian, according to the New Testament, is not simply to believe with one's mind, but also to become a doer of the word, a wayfarer with and a witness to Jesus. This means, of course, that we never expect complete success within history and that we must regard as normal even the path of persecution

and the possibility of martyrdom" (276).

The "Crisis" Reconsidered

It is easy enough to speak of persecution in the United States of course, where even the boldest Christians do not risk martyrdom. But the bishops were speaking, it should be remembered, in that "moment of supreme crisis" when the fate of America, Western Civilization, and perhaps humanity itself seemed to hang in the balance. While the bishops ultimately did not actually promote the path of martyrdom (their response to Grisez's "Better anything than mortal sin" was after all something of a heartfelt and anguished sigh), they at least acknowledged its unimpeachable and even primary place in the Christian life.

But what is the supreme crisis?

The one Crisis in the Christian life happens not before the face of the Soviet Union or "Islamofascists," but before the awe-inspiring countenance of the Lord.

In the Christian life, there is only one Crisis, if we take the Greek meaning of the word *krisis*, which is Judgment, or Investigation. The one Crisis in the Christian life happens not before the face of the Soviet Union or "Islamofascists," but before the awe-inspiring countenance of the Lord. It is His judgment which is the crisis, His investigation which is ongoing throughout the many passing crises of history. And it is by attending to His law of mercy, and not the laws of any political institution or arrangement, no matter how orderly, that we come to live in His kingdom, which exists even now, in history. For the Lord God is also the Lord of history. ✠

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The Pastor and Pantex



BY LEROY T. MATTHIESEN, BISHOP EMERITUS OF AMARILLO

The road to Chicago, where the Catholic bishops of the United States, I among them, gathered in 1983, to finalize the peace pastoral letter, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, had been a long one, sometimes tortuous, often exhilarating.

The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union was nearing the midnight hour on the doomsday clock. The two superpowers were each armed with 25,000 nuclear warheads on trigger alert atop intercontinental ballistic missiles, aboard submarines under the high seas, and on transcontinental bombers, each ready to eradicate the other from the face of the earth, each restrained tenuously by the apocalyptic horror of mutually assured destruction.

Twenty-five years later, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, we have yet to accept the admonition of Pope Paul VI: "If you want peace, work for justice." Nor have we accepted Pope John Paul II's addendum: "There will be no justice without forgiveness." We, the Catholic Church, have yet to respond fully to God's promise of peace by formally declaring ourselves a peace church.

My own journey, from the time I was the proud possessor at the age of 12 of a single-shot .22 caliber rifle on our family farm in Central West Texas, to the time I joined the call for the abolition of nuclear weapons, was a gradual one.

Ordained a priest for the Diocese of Amarillo in Texas a year after we dropped the nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, I recall only relief that Japan then surrendered. To me it meant my brother, already stationed in Germany, would not be sent on to the Pacific Theater to invade Japan.

But our relief was short-lived as the nuclear arms race got under way. I raised some concern in Christmas sermons, but no more than that. That is, until I was appointed pastor of St. Francis Parish, fifteen miles east of Amarillo, in 1971. Pantex, the final assembly plant for all nuclear warheads produced in the United States, lay within the territorial boundaries of the parish of which I was now pastor. A large sign outside the plant described it as a research and development division of Sandia National Laboratories.

As parishioners who worked for Pantex learned more about nuclear weapons, some would come and question me about the morality of working at the plant. I referred inquirers to the bishop. But then, in 1980, I became the Bishop of Amarillo. It became much harder to evade their questions.

Following my consecration as bishop, a number of events came in rapid sequence. First came the arrest and conviction of the Pantex Six who had scaled the plant's outer security fence and waited for guards to arrest them, not daring to touch the inner fence. It was so electrified they could hear it crackle and smell its odor. Among the six was an Oblate of Mary Immaculate, Father Larry Rosebaugh, whom they sent to the Potter County Detention Center. I went to see him, expecting to find a bearded, long-haired radical. Instead, I found a gentle, humble man. Next came a question from a permanent deacon asking if it was moral for him to work at Pantex. Then, in June, Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen of Seattle characterized the Trident submarine base near Seattle as "the Auschwitz of Puget Sound." The nuclear warheads atop the intercontinental missiles in the bellies of the submarines were assembled at Pantex, in my diocese.

Finally, in August, 1981, President Ronald Reagan approved the assembly of the "enhanced radiation warhead" previously halted by President Jimmy Carter. The destructive power of that warhead, commonly called the neutron bomb, was enhanced by placing a shield around the pit, the core of the bomb, resulting in the rays rebounding, mingling with others, and compounding its destructive power. The neutron bomb was designed to kill men, women, children, babies, and infants in the womb, indiscriminately. When I learned that this bomb was to be assembled at Pantex, there was no possible moral judgment to make but to condemn its production, assembly, possession, and use. Even the willingness to use such a weapon is immoral.

Since ordination I had prayed the Liturgy of the Hours daily, and Psalm 33 appearing regularly. I had prayed it hundreds of times, first in Latin, then in English. But it was only now that I grasped the import of a stanza that read: "A vain hope for safety is the horse. Despite its power it cannot save." In the context of the psalm, the horse is a war horse. Now, almost unconsciously, I read it differently: "A vain hope for safety is the nuclear bomb. Despite its power it cannot save."

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I issued a statement (see "A Bishop Calls for Arms Workers to Resign," below) calling on workers in nuclear weapons plants to consider the moral implications of what they were doing, to resign from such activities, and to engage in peaceful pursuits.

The statement ignited controversy, condemnation, and commendation, and brought national and international media to the Texas Panhandle.

Meanwhile, the bishops had begun examining the question of the morality of possessing nuclear arms even before 1980. Now they decided to give it a full-fledged, broad examination prior to publishing a pastoral letter on peace. After two years of nation-wide consultation we gathered in Chicago in May, 1983.

We debated the final draft of the letter over a period of three days. Under the floor leadership of Archbishop John Quinn of San Francisco, since retired, the majority of us voted on the second day for a total condemnation. On the third day we were reminded that the Vatican, wary of the threat of Soviet Communism, had given a conditioned moral acceptance of the possession of nuclear weapons as a deterrent. The conditions ruled

out their use and called for their gradual reduction and eventual abolition.

The final draft of the pastoral letter, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, was approved with an understanding that its moral judgment would be reviewed every five years thereafter.

The Soviet threat was still in place in 1988, so no change was made. By 1993, the Soviet Union had collapsed. Many of us then called for a total condemnation of nuclear weapons, but to no avail. The bishops were grappling with other issues.

Since then, efforts to get the nuclear weapons question on the agenda of the general assembly of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have failed, the issue referred to the Committee on International Policy. Although our stockpile of nuclear warheads is being reduced, some are being refurbished, and more efficient ones are being assembled at Pantex, still in the Diocese of Amarillo, Texas.

The hand on the doomsday clock has moved a couple notches back from the midnight hour, but the fate of the planet continues to hang in the balance. ✠

A Bishop Calls for Arms Workers to Resign

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The announcement of the decision to produce and stockpile neutron warheads is the latest in a series of tragic anti-life positions taken by our government. This latest decision allegedly comes as a response to the possibility of a Soviet tank attack in central Europe. The current administration says the production and stockpiling of neutron bombs is a logical step in a process begun in 1978 under the previous administration. Thus both the Democratic and Republican administrations seem convinced that in accelerating the arms race they are carrying out the wishes of the American people. The matter is of immediate concern to us who live next door to Pantex, the nation's final assembly point for nuclear weapons, including the neutron bomb.

It is clear now that the military can—perhaps must—think in only one way. Each enemy advance in arms technology and capability must be met with a further advance on our part. No matter that the enemy must then, perforce, respond with a further advance of its own. No matter that we already have the capability of destroying each other many times over, and that soon other nations of this imperiled planet will possess the same awesome power.

God's gifts may be used for evil or good, for war or peace. The God of Israel warned the people of ancient times that the military use of the horse is "a vain hope for safety. Despite its power it cannot save" (Psalm 33). Is not the military use of nuclear energy likewise a vain hope for safety? Despite its incredible power it cannot save.

Enough of this greater and greater destructive capability. Let us stop this madness. Let us turn our attention and our energies to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, for the production of food, fiber, clothing, shelter, transportation.

We beg our administration to stop accelerating the arms race.

We beg our military to use common sense and moderation in our defense posture.

We urge individuals involved in the production and stockpiling of nuclear bombs to consider what they are doing, to resign from such activities, and to seek employment in peaceful pursuits.

Let us educate ourselves on nuclear armaments. Let us support those who are calling for an end to the arms race. Let us join men and women everywhere in prayer that peace may come.

Bishop Leroy T. Matthiesen
Bishop of Amarillo

The Moral Implications of a Nuclear Deterrent

BY GERMAIN GRISEZ

The following piece is excerpted with permission of the author from an article that appeared in the Center Journal, Vol. 2 (1982) pp. 9–24. Grisez challenges the proportionalist thinking that was eventually embraced by the bishops in the pastoral letter on peace as doctrinally flawed, for it deems nuclear deterrence strategy morally acceptable. — THE EDITORS

The problem about the nuclear deterrent is not that it involves death-dealing weapons, nor that these are nuclear, nor that they are used to deter. The problem, rather, is the precise intent to kill included in the present United States deterrent threat.

To choose to kill the innocent is always wrong. The reason for this is that human life is an intrinsic good of persons, and a choice to kill persons is a will closed to this good. But a morally good will must be open to the full-being of persons. Thus, the specific, antilife will which is present in the choice to kill an innocent person cannot be morally upright.

Why do I limit the norm to choices to kill the innocent, and what is meant by “innocent” here? Most Jews and Christians have thought that certain choices to kill are divinely authorized and hence justified. Among these are choices to execute certain types of criminals and to kill enemy soldiers in a justifiable war. For my present purpose, it is unnecessary to deal with these types of killing. Therefore, I set them aside by limiting the norm I state to the choice to kill the innocent.

“Innocent” here does not refer to the personal moral condition of those whose killing is excluded. Rather, it refers to those who are harmless, in contrast to the criminals and enemy soldiers who are involved in socially harmful, objectively unjust, violent behavior. Thus, the norm means that it is wrong to choose to kill anyone who neither has been nor is engaged in such behavior.

Limited to the innocent, the norm which forbids the choice to kill persons has the support of the entire Christian moral tradition. It is the bare minimum which

Christian teaching demands by way of reverence for human life.

The will to kill under conditions not in one’s own power has the same moral quality as the will to kill unconditionally, even though one might never carry out one’s murderous intent. For example, a terrorist armed with a bomb and prepared to kill both himself and others if his demands are not met is morally a murderer, even though he hopes his threat will gain his ends and no one will get killed. Of course, in maintaining the deterrent we wish that it not be used. We will execute the threat only very reluctantly and only if we must. Yet this condition does not limit our willingness to kill. It only limits our execution of this willingness.

The threat which constitutes our nuclear deterrent has been expressed in various ways. During World War II, the United States engaged in terroristic obliteration bombing of both Germany and Japan, culminating in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The early form of the deterrent threat was that we would retaliate massively against an enemy aggressor at a time and place of our own choosing, to do again what we had done to Japan. Later, as the USSR acquired nuclear capability of its own, our threat was reformulated. (Around the time he completed his service as Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara published a book, *The Essence of Security: Reflections in Office* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), summarizing in simple language the main aspects of United States military policy. With respect to nuclear deterrence, he wrote (pp. 52–53):

One must begin with precise definitions. The cornerstone of our strategic policy continues to be to deter deliberate nuclear attack upon the United States or its allies. We do this maintaining a highly reliable ability to inflict unacceptable damage upon any single aggressor or combination of aggressors at any time during the course of a strategic nuclear exchange, even after absorbing a surprise first strike. This can be defined as our *assured-destruction capability*.

It is important to understand that assured destruction is the very essence of the whole deterrence

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concept. We must possess an actual assured-destruction capability, and that capability also must be credible. The point is that a potential aggressor must believe that our assured-destruction capability is in fact unwavering. The conclusion, then, is clear: if the United States is to deter a nuclear attack on itself or its allies, it must possess an actual and a credible assured-destruction capability.

When calculating the force required, we must be conservative in all our estimates of both a potential aggressor's capabilities and his intentions. Security depends on assuming a worst plausible case, and having the ability to cope with it. In that eventuality we must be able to absorb the total weight of nuclear attack on our country—on our retaliatory forces, on our command and control apparatus, on our industrial capacity, on our cities, and on our population—and still be capable of damaging the aggressor to the point that his society would be simply no longer viable in twentieth-century terms. That is what deterrence of nuclear aggression means. It means the certainty of suicide to the aggressor, not merely to his military forces, but to his society as a whole). [End MacNamara quote-Ed.]

But the constant feature in United States nuclear deterrence policy has been the threat that, no matter what damage an aggressor might inflict upon us, we are ready, willing and able to respond by inflicting unacceptable damage—for example, the destruction of 20,000,000 Soviet citizens or the destruction of 25% of the population of the USSR and 50% of its industrial capacity. The current official *United States Military Posture* statement issues the threat which constitutes the deterrent in the following terms:

The prime objective of US strategic forces and supporting C3 [command, control, and communications] is deterrence of Soviet nuclear attack on the US and its allies. Deterrence depends on the assured capability and manifest will to inflict damage on the Soviet Union disproportionate to any goals that rational Soviet leaders might hope to achieve. Any US strategic retaliation must be controlled by and responsive to the NCA [National Command Authority], tailored to the nature of the Soviet attack, focused on Soviet values, and inevitably effective.

The word "values" here is used in a technical sense, familiar to readers of works on nuclear deterrence, to refer to persons and property as distinct from military forces.

This official document and others like it constitute national policy by virtue of Congress's reliance upon them in enacting the legislation which authorizes and funds the activities of the Department of Defense.

Thus, in this and similar documents the United States issues the threat, which includes the choice, to kill persons innocent in the relevant sense under conditions not in our control. Hence, our choice of this policy is morally unjustifiable. The intent—that is, the manifest will—essential to the nuclear deterrent is murderous.

Someone might object that present United States policy does not include a clear and unambiguous threat to target cities. It seems to me that the phrase, "focused on Soviet values" is a clear threat to target cities as such. But even if all our nuclear weapons were targeted on military objectives, it would not follow that the intent included in the deterrent does not encompass the death of millions of innocents.

The object of our policy choice is deterrence, and the deaths of the millions of innocents are an essential part of the threatened harm. Hence, these deaths are included in what we choose; they are not merely an accepted side-effect. When destruction which is a side-effect of one's outward behavior is essential to the attainment of one's purpose, such destruction is included in what one morally does. Hence, targeting is not the issue. The issue is the will to kill the innocent which is included in any real threat to bring about their deaths.

Some have tried to argue that the millions whose lives we threaten with our deterrent are not really innocent. They are part of a totalitarian society which is engaging in total war against us. Thus, the argument goes, those threatened are somehow participants in the unjust activities of their nation. This argument fails. In its traditional sense, as I have explained, "innocent" refers to those who have not been and are not involved in criminal or military activity. The deterrent threatens many small children, elderly persons, and others who by no stretch of the imagination can be considered participants in any unjust harm. Indeed, the Soviet peoples as a whole are oppressed peoples; they probably share far less in what their leaders are doing than we share in what our leaders are doing.

What is even more important, the deterrent threat does not bear upon anyone insofar as he or she is engaged in unjust, harmful action. It bears upon a mass of persons indiscriminately just insofar as their lives are values—that is, are of some importance to their leaders—and their deaths disproportionate to any goals which these leaders, if they are rational, might hope to achieve. Even those who might have been justly killed in

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a battle will be unjustly killed if the deterrent is carried out, for they will be killed, not as agents of unjust violence, but as victims of an unjustifiable exchange of hostages.

If the deterrent fails and the time comes to carry out the threat we have been making, perhaps those in authority will not do so. Indeed, perhaps even now President Reagan and a few of those close to him have made up their minds that under no circumstances would they ever give the order to carry out the threat of the deterrent. Such a decision would make sense, for if the time ever comes to execute the deterrent, there will be nothing to gain by doing so.

If our leaders have made such a secret decision, their making it is to their personal moral credit. However, the deterrent effect of nuclear weapons is only as credible as the apparent resolve to carry out the threat if deterrence fails. Deterrence

Not “Better red than dead,” but “Better anything than mortal sin.”

requires not only assured capability but manifest will. Therefore, our public policy must remain a firm commitment to kill millions of innocent persons if the deterrent fails. Even if most of us were to reject and morally dissociate ourselves

from this policy, as we can and should do, the public act of deterrence and the personal acts of those who sustain the public act will continue to include the murderous intent which alone makes the deterrent effective.

One sometimes hears the suggestion that, even if our present deterrent includes murderous intent, one can conceive a deterrent without such intent. A nation might have nuclear weapons, neither intend nor threaten to make any immoral use of them, yet by their potential alone frighten an unprincipled adversary who would assume that no other nation would respect any moral boundary.

This suggestion might have been helpful had it been offered before the present deterrent policy was adopted. But we are at present committed to an explicit deterrent including murderous intent. If the suggestion that some other, morally justifiable deterrent might be possible is to be anything more than idle speculation about what might have been, those who make this suggestion must explain how the United States can exchange its present deterrent for one free of murderous intent.

If their explanation is to square with the Catholic moral tradition, they will have to project a deterrent whose threat could be carried out in a just war. Such a deterrent would be part of a capability to fight and win a large-scale nuclear war. Personally, I do not think the United States can acquire such a capacity, if at all, only through an all-out arms race. Both the war it would make possible and the arms race would need to be justified.

Some will argue that our persistence in the deterrent, even though it includes murderous intent, somehow is justified by the equally murderous intent of our adversaries. But this line of argument is mere rationalization. Two wrongs do not make a right. Rather, in the willingness to be as murderous as our adversaries, we abandon any claim to moral justification in our struggle against them.

Notice that I am not arguing: “Better red than dead.” In the first place, the disvalues in the alternatives are noncommensurable; there is no common scale on which to weigh being red against being dead. In the second place, I believe that domination of the world by the USSR and its Marxist ideology would be a frightful evil, and that to prevent it some persons—those able to help in the common defense—ought to be prepared to suffer death. But, in the third place, the issue is not our readiness to suffer evil, but rather our willingness to do it. The murderous intent of the deterrent is a moral evil which simply is unjustifiable. Not “Better red than dead,” but “Better anything than mortal sin.” (If we were to dismantle our strategic deterrent, I do not doubt that the USSR would reduce us and other Western nations to puppet status. The USSR surely also would take the steps necessary, even including wars of terrible destruction, to dominate both present and potential competitors, such as China. But what then? The Soviet leadership would be confronted with an unprecedented management problem. Without its antithesis, the inadequacy of Marxism would become apparent; it no longer would have any excuse for its inability to create heaven on earth. The US and other powerful opponents provide the USSR with the excuses without which its promises and aims for the world would be totally implausible).

Many people find it hard to accept such a position. They are convinced that every problem one encounters in this world must have some acceptable solution, and that if one cannot solve a problem without doing evil, then one somehow becomes entitled to do it.

However, the Christian injunction that we not answer evil with evil but rather with good is not an arbitrary and idealistic divine demand. Rather, it is wise and realistic advice for salvaging human good possible in our fallen world.

If we use the evil of our adversaries as an excuse for our own murderous intent, we continue to expand and aggravate evil, mutilating ourselves first of all. For this reason, Plato also recognized that it is better to suffer evil than to do it. Thus, the injunction to respond to evil with good is neither a mere counsel for especially holy individuals nor otherworldly advice for the private lives of Christians. The refusal to match others in evil is the only way for fallen humankind, individuals and societies alike, to stop compounding human misery and begin emerging into the light of decent human life and communion. ✠

Augustine and the Presumption Against War

BY MICHAEL SCHORSCH

Families crumble, innocent people die, the potential of the young is wasted, peoples are displaced, the hopeful despair, the kind succumb to hatred, the gentle learn to kill. These are the realities of war as it actually happens in human history. These are the realities of every war, whether people call it just or unjust. The Church is right when it calls war, again and again, the ancient scourge of humankind. Before the Fall there was no war, and after Christ comes in glory there will be no war.

I begin with these observations because so frequently, in the kind of discussion I am about to undertake, they are forgotten. War is so often treated as simply one more manifestation of politics, one more form of human interaction to be debated, one more idea among many ideas to be discussed. But war is much more than an idea.

And yet we need to have discussions about war, and in so doing we need to “talk ideas.” When it comes to these ideas, we especially need to confront the incorrect ones. Given the horror of war, so very real, idea-talk can seem impotent and insulting. But the hope is that in confronting the incorrect ideas, the bad ideas, we can aid in the struggle against war, which, since it results from sin, is the enemy of all humankind. The ideas I will confront here are ones that have been proposed by the Catholic intellectual George Weigel. My piece begins with a summary of Weigel’s position, then moves into an analysis of the writings of St. Augustine, which Weigel uses for support. I then will consider how Augustine’s historical context helps make sense of what he wrote, and draw some parallels to contemporary times.

A Bad Idea

George Weigel, biographer of Pope John Paul II and defender of the Iraq War, has argued that Catholics should not begin their thinking about war with a “presumption against war.” It is his assertion that those “who claim that the [Catholic] just war tradition ‘begins’ with a ‘presumption against war’ or a ‘presumption against violence’ are quite simply mistaken. It does not

begin there, and it never did begin there.” Thus he wrote in a seminal essay published in the January 2003 issue of *First Things* entitled “Moral Clarity in a Time of War.”

In making this assertion, Weigel is taking aim at a formulation of the US Catholic Bishops in their pastoral letter *The Challenge of Peace*, a document discussed at length elsewhere in this issue. There, the bishops wrote, “The moral theory of the ‘just-war’ or ‘limited-war’ doctrine begins with the presumption that binds all Christians: we should do no harm to our neighbors” (*The Challenge of Peace*, 80). They added that the decision to go to war “requires extraordinarily strong reasons for overriding the presumption *in favor of peace and against war*” (83). The bishops furthermore stated that the just war theory and nonviolence “diverge on some specific conclusions, but they share a common presumption against the use of force as a means of settling disputes” (120).

Weigel, following the philosopher James Turner Johnson, disagrees with this assessment of the similarities between just war thinking and nonviolence. According to Weigel, this idea of “presumption against war” is in fact a novelty which did not exist throughout most of Catholic tradition; the presumption against war represents a break with tradition, and it must be rejected. Why does Weigel believe this?

Weigel holds that war has a “moral texture” which is unique to it, and which differentiates it from other forms of violence. As he wrote in the same article cited above, when a person who is trying to reason about the morality of a war begins with a presumption against war, “... warfare is stripped of its distinctive moral texture. Indeed, among many American religious leaders today, the very notion of warfare as having a ‘moral texture’ seems to have been forgotten.” In other words, the US bishops and others who have promoted the idea that the presumption against war is essential to just war thinking have made the mistake of identifying war as just one more kind of killing. Weigel wants to treat war as inherently different from other kinds of killing.

He has firm ground in Catholic tradition for doing this, he argues. In fact, he claims, the traditional or “classic” form of the just war theory, as propounded by Augustine, Aquinas, and others down to the 17th century, distinguishes war from other types of killing. In

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Latin, this distinction is summed up by two words: *duellum*, which signifies killing done by private individuals, and *bellum*, which signifies killing done by the public authorities. While discussing the concept of *bellum*, Weigel argues, “The classic just war tradition does not regard armed force as inherently suspect morally; rather, classic just war thinking treats armed force as an instrument that can be used for good or for evil, depending on who is using it, for what ends, and how.” To put it in clearer terms, according to Weigel, Catholic tradition says that killing people is a morally neutral activity, as long as it happens during a war. The simple fact that war necessarily involves killing is not enough for Catholics to be suspicious of the morality of war, according to Weigel. It is only the circumstances of a particular war that can make that war and the killing within it morally suspicious.

Augustine on War

But is this really the only message that the classic, Catholic just war tradition gives us? A re-reading of relevant sections of the work of St. Augustine shows us that, although some of what the saint said does seem to bolster Weigel’s claim, Augustine’s final reflections on

**“Those wars are now
past history; and yet the
misery of these evils is
not yet ended.”**

war undercut Weigel’s position. In fact, although Augustine never uses a phrase like “presumption against war,” his discussion of the violence in war suggests that, for us, just such a presumption flows necessarily from his thought.

If one were to pick one work by St. Augustine that offered the most support to Weigel’s argument, his treatise against Faustus the Manichean would be a likely candidate. The following is from Book 22 of *Contra Faustum*, written during the reign of the Christian emperor Theodosius:

What is the evil in war? Is it the death of some who will soon die in any case, that others may live in peaceful subjection? This is mere cowardly dislike, not any religious feeling. The real evils in war are love of violence, revengeful cruelty, fierce and implacable enmity, wild rebelliousness, and the lust of power, and such like; and it is generally to punish these things, when force is required to inflict the punishment, that, in obedience to God or some lawful authority, good men undertake wars.

Here, Augustine’s thought and Weigel’s seem to be in lock-step. A war cannot be judged evil simply because people die in war; indeed, the death of a person is in itself not a terrible evil, since all will die any way. Therefore, according to this line of thought, it is not the killing in war that makes a particular war evil, but rather *the way the war is approached*. When war is waged

out of obedience or to punish evil, it is just; when it is waged out of cruelty, rebelliousness, or the lust for power, it is unjust. In this way the killing in war (*bellum*) seems to be treated as a morally neutral phenomenon, which can only be made unjust by circumstance.

However, other statements of Augustine contradict this position. Take, for example, Book XIX of his *City of God*. Chapter 7 of this book, one of the longer passages on war in Augustine’s works, reveals a profound sensitivity to the evils that all wars spring from, and that even just wars can cause. In the following passage, Augustine discusses the Roman Empire’s historical wars of expansion:

I shall be told that the Imperial City has been at pains to impose on conquered peoples not only her yoke but her language also, as a bond of peace and fellowship...True; but think of the cost of this achievement! Consider the scale of those wars, with all that slaughter of human beings, all the human blood that was shed! Those wars are now past history; and yet the misery of these evils is not yet ended.

Here, although Augustine does not call into question the possibility that war can be just (indeed, a few sentences later he describes how the just are necessarily driven to war by the injustice of the wicked), he also does not say that the killing in war is entirely unworthy of moral suspicion. After all, Augustine focuses his attention on decrying “all that slaughter.” If he did not conceive of killing as some kind of evil, he could not adduce “all that slaughter” as a reason to impute the goodness of the imperial wars. He would instead have to focus on something like the wicked intentions the Roman rulers had in waging wars. But he does not focus on the circumstances of the wars. He focuses on killing itself.

This is important. It means that there are grounds in the classic just war tradition for conceiving of the “texture” of war as being marked by the misery and horror that are inherent to killing, no matter the context in which that killing takes place. And if therefore, as Augustine apparently believed, killing is itself an evil—some kind of evil—then Christians must approach war with moral suspicion, for the very simple reason that generally Christians should not visit evils upon other people. They cannot treat a phenomenon whose texture (according to Augustine in the same chapter) is marked by “misery,” “horror,” and “cruelty,” purely as morally neutral.

Augustine’s Shifting Stance

This discussion leads us to yet more questions about Augustine, and by extension the just war tradition as a whole. Why did he shift his stance, apparently, about the nature of killing? In *Contra Faustum*, Augustine hardly considered it an evil, but in *City of God*, killing is

SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES

Everything enhances, everything
gives glory—everything!

Between bark and bite
Judge Salus's undermined soul
betrays him, mutters
very alleluias.

The iron cells—
row on row of rose trellised
mansions, bridal chambers!

Curses, vans, keys, guards—behold
the imperial lions of our vast acres!

And when hammers come down
and our years are tossed to the four winds—

why, flowers blind the eye, the saints
pelt us with flowers!

For every hour
scant with discomfort
(the mastiff's baleful eye,
the bailiff's mastery)—

see, the Lord's hands heap
eon upon eon,
like fruit bowls at a feast.

- DANIEL BERRIGAN, S.J.

a source of misery. And if Augustine saw killing as an evil, as a tragic occasion, even (sometimes) when justified, how could he insist that “the just man will wage war”?

A way toward an answer to the first question is provided by the great scholar of Augustine's intellectual life, R. A. Markus. Markus placed these two documents in the context of other simultaneous developments in Augustine's conception of history. Augustine wrote *Contra Faustum*, among other reasons, to refute the part of the Manichean heresy that said that the Old Testament contradicts the New Testament and therefore must be disregarded. At the time that Augustine was writing this work, the emperor was Theodosius, an orthodox Christian who began a policy of strict religious coercion. Like many educated Christians at the time, Augustine saw the hand of God directly at work in history, fulfilling Old Testament prophecies about the God of Israel “trampling down his foes.” And as these

prophecies were being fulfilled, Augustine became convinced that his own times, the “Christian times” of Christian Empire, were a unique epoch in the history of salvation, the time when all people would be converted to Christ.

As Augustine wrote in another work of the time, *De consensu evangelistarum*, “Now the God of Israel is himself destroying the idols of the heathen... Through Christ the king he has subjugated the Roman Empire to the worship of his name; and he has converted it to the defense and service of the Christian faith.” Because Augustine thought he could clearly understand how the Old Testament prophecies were being fulfilled, he could equate the wars of his day with the wars of the Old Testament. And since the wars waged in the Old Testament were ordered by God, certainly the killing that took place in such similar wars as happened during his own life could not be an evil.

All this had changed by the time Augustine wrote the *City of God*, however. Augustine came to reject the illusion that his own time had such a special significance in salvation history. Augustine came to understand that “Christian times” were not inaugurated by the ascendancy of a particular ruler, or by particular military activities, but rather by the Incarnation. As Markus wrote in *Saeculum*, his study of the saint, by the time Augustine wrote the *City of God*, “he had ceased to attach any positive meaning to the Theodosian settlement” of Christian Empire. Augustine had come to understand how inscrutable God's role in shaping history truly was. In this context, a context of realistic cynicism about the inherent goodness of any particular political regime, Augustine was freed to see killing in light of the misery it brought upon all who were touched by it.

And yet Augustine still felt that killing in war was sometimes necessary. One can see that he thought this necessity was a tragic one, as the sections of the *City of God* that deal with killing (executions, war, etc.) make clear. But Augustine died soon after writing that work, and his thinking was not allowed to develop further.

It is left to us then to ask and to think. The US bishops did a service when they explicitly identified the presumption against war that is inherent, though latent, in the traditional Catholic just war doctrine. However, to acknowledge this explicitly does introduce a tension into the just war tradition, which George Weigel has identified: how can something which is an evil in and of itself ever be justified? And if it is not an evil, why should we presume against it? Weigel's attempt to resolve this tension however, by arguing that the killing in war is distinct from other forms of killing and therefore morally neutral, does justice neither to Augustine nor to the fundamental Christian intuition about killing. This intuition is best expressed in the ancient saying of the Church: *ecclesia abhorret a sanguine*. The Church abhors bloodshed; and if the Church abhors bloodshed, it must certainly abhor war. ¶

In Response to "The Good War"

Nonviolence and the Problem of Hitler

BY KARL MEYER

Among those who responded to our last issue, on World War II, one response stood out. Long-time Catholic Worker and peace activist Karl Meyer wrote, "As long as people believe that total war was the only practical way to defend Europe and the world against the brutal expansionism of the German military, we won't be able to convince them that the governments have to follow the norms of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas in situations they regard as similar. Did warmakers follow those norms even in their time? We may convince many people that World War II wasn't a 'good war,' but we won't convince many that it wasn't necessary, unless we present a comprehensive alternative vision."

In order to present one such "alternative vision" of what a nonviolent response to Hitler might have looked like, we present here an article that Meyer wrote in 1992. He wrote it after reflecting how the idea of the "good war," World War II, lived on as people used it to justify the invasion of Iraq. Here one of our most stalwart voices for peace gives us an imaginative view of what large-scale nonviolent resistance to evil would entail. — THE EDITORS

Anyone who has ever talked to other people about nonviolence or pacifism knows that one must very soon address the problem of Hitler. A well informed person may convince most people that the war in Vietnam or the recent war against Iraq were unnecessary. The goals of the US policy were unclear and questionable to the public. Any goals that seemed valid might have been achieved by better means than war.

On the other hand, most people see the war against Nazi Germany as a necessary war, even a "good war" in spite of its immense cost in innocent lives. The loss of life in Europe in World War II can be estimated on the order of 40 million dead. It is hard to conceive of any nonviolent scenario, without war, which could lead to such death and destruction.

Yet it is hard to convince most people that the problem of Hitler and German aggression could have been dealt with in any other way.

I believe there could have been a better way, based on nonviolent national strategies. If I am to address the

problem of Hitler, you must grant me the power to discuss an alternative national defense policy for Germany's European neighbors for several years before the war, at least for the years following 1933 when Hitler came to power and the military threat to his neighbors began to become apparent.

Of course, if I were to discuss alternative, nonviolent policies for all of the Allied Powers after World War I, had they been implemented, Hitler might never have come to power at all. These nations' policies toward Germany helped to create the context of economic and political stress that opened the door to Hitler's appeal as a demagogue.

Demagogues as blatant as Hitler tend to achieve power only in situations of severe economic and political stress, when they succeed in appealing to the masses by blaming their problems on foreign enemies and domestic scapegoats. The United States and the European democracies were vulnerable, under the unusual economic stress of the Great Depression of the 1930s. Germany was suffering under greater stress than most, because of the extra economic burden of reparations imposed by the victorious allies after World War I, and other economic dislocations in a defeated country. Hitler played on this to gain political support in Germany.

Nevertheless, he did not come to power by a majority vote. The Nazi party received only 32% of the popular vote in the 1932 elections. Most of their opponents were bitterly opposed to them. However, Hitler managed to engineer a coalition which persuaded President Hindenberg to appoint him as chancellor.

Hindenberg did this with extreme reluctance. After he got control of the government, Hitler was able to manipulate it to increase and consolidate his control over all sources of power in German society.

To understand my analysis it is important to understand that Hitler came to power as a minority chancellor, against bitter opposition within his own country. Like other dictators and political leaders across history, he knew how to use hatred and fear of foreign and domestic enemies to eliminate his opponents, increase his popularity and consolidate the country behind his leadership.

In a pacifist analysis, the governments of Germany's neighbors played into the hand of Hitler's demagoguery. They agreed to play the role of enemies by massive rear-

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mament and preparations for war.

In 1933, as soon as he came to power, Hitler began to rail against the foreign enemies surrounding Germany, and to rally the German people for a massive military program to restore Germany's power against them.

The Nonviolent Alternative

If pacifists could set the policies of his neighbors at this point, this is what we could have done:

We would openly refuse his designated role as enemies of the German people. We would refuse to engage in an arms race. We would clearly declare our determination not to be sucked into war with Germany.

We would organize a radio network all around the perimeter of Germany to refute Hitler's political distortions. We would broadcast our policies and intentions directly to all the German people. We would begin a universal program to educate all our school children and adult population to fluency in the German language for the express purpose of enabling every citizen to communicate effectively with German soldiers in case they invaded our countries. We would initiate a program of exchange vacations and invite Germans to visit our countries as guests at our expense. We would begin a program of training for a large core of our population in the principles and tactics of nonviolent organization to deal with the possibility of aggression. We would begin a media program to educate all of our people in the principles of nonviolent communication, conciliation, mediation and nonviolent resistance. We would constantly broadcast to the German people an explanation of our policies. We would open our borders to any and all refugees from political persecution in Germany. We would invite them to participate in our preparations for receiving the German armies in case of invasion. Throughout this process we would announce that if German armies invaded our countries, we would receive them as guests and welcome them into our homes. No one would shoot at them or attempt any physical harm to them. However, we would refuse to serve the purposes

of the German government in invading any country. We would not participate in economic activity that could make an occupation profitable for them. We would talk to the German soldiers unceasingly about the reality that we are not their enemies. We would also show them that they have more to fear from their own commanders and government. We would suggest that they go back to their own country and remove their dictators from power, so that all of us could live in peace and prosperity together. We would begin the liberation of our own imperial colonies.

On this premise we would positively invite Hitler to send his armies into our countries as soon as possible so that we could begin the process of dialogue and mutual education. The closer you can get to people the better your opportunity to communicate with them effectively. No dictator would dare send his armies into the kind of educational environment I have just described.

Instead of this, what did the governments of Europe do? They played into Hitler's hand by being the kind of enemies he described. They armed heavily to prepare for war. They themselves held colonies in imperialist subjugation all over the world; yet they responded to German expansion by declaring war. They met German armies with deadly force, even when it was totally inadequate to stop invasions. Most people were not able to speak the language of the invaders and could not persuade them effectively. They organized violent underground resistance, which aroused the fear and anger of the invaders by assassinating them in unpredictable situations. The surviving governments fueled the anger of the invaders by bombing their homes and families behind the lines, creating firestorms that killed thousands of civilians. They demanded unconditional surrender of the German armies. No wonder that Hitler, with dominant control of most means of communication to his own people, could manipulate them to fight to the death, rather than turning against him as the cause of it all. ✂

What is to be Done?

What can we do? This question, asked in hindsight about "stopping Hitler" is still asked today. In our editorial on Iraq (page 3) we respond to those who continue to think military solutions are the only "real" solutions and that we as civilians and Catholics can do little. So here we reference just a few small, perhaps tedious but certainly concrete, works of love that we can do today... Iraqis are in need of many mundane but necessary things. We can support Saint Raphael Hospital in Baghdad which is operated by the Dominican Sisters. The Catholic Near-East Welfare Association and the Pontifical Mission to the Middle East need assistance with helping the Chaldean Catholic Patriarchate to support Iraq's priests and parish communities, which are besieged by violence. Those organizations are also attempting to help to keep open Baghdad's Babel College for Philosophy and Theology, which educates Iraq's seminarians, and has been forced to relocate to Arbil. In order to meet the needs of Iraq's Syriac Catholic Church, Archbishop Casmoussa has opened St. Ephrem Seminary in Qaraqosh. Our support is needed. Christian Peacemaker Teams are at work in Kurdish communities and Catholic Relief Services/Caritas Iraq is working to provide care for vulnerable children and their mothers, the elderly, disabled, the orphaned, and the displaced. Art by Amal Alwan, an Iraqi mother of 4 who is currently a refugee in Amman, Jordan can be purchased through the Hartford Catholic Worker; all proceeds will go directly to Amal and her family. Involvement in the Iraqi Student Project (see Peace Briefs), the GI Rights Network, Conscientious Objector counseling, and educating the faithful on Church Teaching on war, conscience and discipleship are other actions that can be undertaken. Finally, let us not forget the importance of prayer. — THE EDITORS

Benedict XVI On Conscience

BY JONATHAN D. LACE



The short, 82-page book, *On Conscience* by Pope Benedict XVI and published by Ignatius Press, is actually a collection of two addresses the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger gave to workshops for the US Bishops organized by the then Pope John XXIII Medical-Moral Research and Education Center (now the National Catholic Bioethics Center) in 1984 and 1991. The pope's first address in 1984 dealt with the relationship between the bishop and theologian, while the second dealt with the relationship between conscience and truth. Because it is presented first in the book, I will treat the latter of the two addresses first.

Conscience and Truth

The Pope begins his treatment of conscience by asserting that the contemporary debate in moral theology is framed by two contrasting viewpoints: "morality of conscience and morality of authority, as two opposing models, appear to be locked in struggle with each other" (pg. 12). In describing these two notions of conscience, Benedict claims that popular Catholic notions of morality, based on a post-Enlightenment concept of absolute autonomy see the authority of the Magisterium as negative at worst and advisory at best; simply providing the "material" for the deliberation of the conscience, which alone can determine the morality of any given act. He rightly acknowledges that the *form* ("do good, avoid evil") of conscience is infallible, but questions whether the *material* ("this is good, that is evil") is equally so. To illustrate this, the Pope relates comments from one of his colleagues about the possibility of subjectively moral Nazi SS officers, acting out of duty and sincere conviction. The tension that this scenario generates is precisely the reason why the material of conscience is *not* infallible.

An exegesis of Psalm 19:12-13 and the example of Cardinal John Henry Newman provide the central theme of the Pope's reflections in this address: "...the centrality of the concept of conscience...is linked to the prior centrality of the concept of truth, and can only be understood from this vantage point" (24). Conscience is therefore not the same *kind* of thing as taste or personal wish, nor is it the mere consensus of society at any given time in history. It is rather both a remembering (*anamnesis*) of the image of God and a given judgment

(*conscientia*) based on knowledge of that image. It is an *event* realized in action of the human person, not an unchangeable quality. Therefore, a person's will can decisively enhance or degrade conscience in both aspects. There is a moral imperative to make sure that one's conscience is properly formed. To this end, the Petrine office serves to elucidate and defend the "Christian memory" which is vindicated in mission "when those addressed recognize in the encounter with the word of the gospel that this indeed is what they have been waiting for" (33).

Bishops, Theologians and Morality

In the last half of the book, Benedict examines the relationship between bishops and theologians in terms of the larger ecclesial context of conscience. Before reaching this specific question, he gives four sources of morality: reality (or objective truth), conscience (or "knowing" that reality "with" God), the wisdom of tradition (the *mores* of the community) and the will of God (the ultimate arbiter of good and evil) and claims that conscience "...is an organ, not an oracle... because it is an organ, it requires growth, training and practice" (61). As such it can become deformed and provide false information as to what constitutes the good. Because of this, the Church bears responsibility for correct formation. Morality requires a "witness"; the bishop teaches the "wisdom of faith." The theologian begins his/her work within the community-customs of the Church; "...he goes before it [the Magisterium] noticing new questions, gathering knowledge of their objective content and preparing answers" (74). Criticism of the Magisterium by theologians is helpful "...when it fills in a lack of information, clarifies shortcomings of the linguistic or conceptual presentation, and at the same time deepens the insight into the limits and range of the particular teaching" (75).

This book is a concise and helpful guide to the elements of Benedict's understanding of the nature and role of conscience in relation to truth and that of both the bishop and theologian. I found his initial treatment of conscience as remembering refreshing and encouraging. His discussion of the role of conscientious dissent by theologians left some unresolved questions relating to the development of Church teaching on war and non-violence, among other issues. Overall, however, his thesis of the necessity of objective truth in conscience is a welcome remedy to the "dictatorship of relativism" as witnessed in the ambiguous American Catholic response to violence in a post-9/11 world. ✠

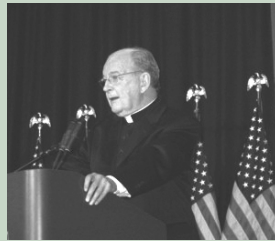
Jonathan Lace teaches Theology at Seton Hall Preparatory school in New Jersey. An Air Force veteran, he was honorably discharged for conscientious objection.

To Our Readers

Each issue of *First Things* concludes with “The Public Square,” a lengthy, often insightful, at times funny, at other times snarky set of observations and opinions of the editor, Richard John Neuhaus. In the May 2008 issue, Neuhaus reports on a manifesto calling for an end to nuclear weapons, issued by an unlikely gang of four. This is what he writes:

“Let’s get rid of all the nuclear weapons in the world.” So what’s this? Another crackpot idea from lefty pacifists? Hardly. The statement in support of a nuclear-free world was issued in January 2007 by George P. Schultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger, and Sam Nunn—two former secretaries of state, a former secretary of defense, and a famously hardnosed former senator and expert on security. The Catholic Peace Fellowship or Evangelicals for Social Action this is not.

Neuhaus goes on to express his usual skepticism about a world without nuclear weapons, but what caught our attention was that he mentions the Catholic Peace Fellowship. We can’t speak for Evangelicals for Social Action, but as for CPF, we are pleased that Neuhaus feels compelled to contrast us with Schultz, Perry, Kissinger, and Nunn—a veritable rogues gallery of 20th Century war-makers, and in one case, according to Christopher Hitchens (who is still right about some things), a war criminal. Neuhaus & Company churn out reams of rhetoric at an astonishing rate, thanks to a host of benefactors who support their efforts with Big Bucks. By contrast, CPF disseminates its vision at a more modest pace, in part due to its much more modest means. With more financial support, we can do more in our peace and CO-support work, and also, perhaps, draw more snarky comments from the likes of Neuhaus & Company. So, please help us with your financial support.



Richard John Neuhaus speaking... not at a CPF conference.

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