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(Mrs. Eulah C. Laucks,
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"As long as politics fails to take up the nuclear issue in a determined way, it lives closer than any other activity to the lie that we have all come to live — the pretense that life lived on top of a nuclear stockpile can last. Meanwhile, we are encouraged not to tackle our predicament but to inure ourselves to it: to develop a special, enfeebled vision, which is capable of overlooking the hugely obvious; a special, sluggish nervous system, which is conditioned not to react even to the most extreme and urgent peril; and a special, constricted mode of political thinking, which is permitted to creep around the edges of the mortal crisis in the life of our species but never to meet it head on."

— Jonathan Schell

(From: The Fate of the Earth
Alfred A. Knopf, New York,
1982, p. 161.)

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The alternative, non-nuclear way to defend ourselves

Adam Roberts considers the merits of citizen armies, guerrilla resistance and changes in the laws of war

Anyone following the debate on nuclear weapons in the last couple of years—not just in this country, but in many others—could be forgiven for thinking that the issue boiled down simply to unilateralism versus multilateralism. There are many interesting variations on this theme—not least the European Nuclear Disarmament vision of a multilateral reciprocating series of unilateral moves towards disarmament. But basically disarmament is the agreed goal, and "uni" versus "multi" sets the terms of the debate.

Perhaps, however, the debate needs to be re-cast. The discussion of nuclear issues could profitably be focused around two related, and all too little discussed, questions:

1. What defence policies might states be able to adopt which would reduce their reliance on nuclear weapons, and also reduce the risk of these weapons being used?
2. Can international conflicts in the nuclear age be limited, whether through the "laws of war" or by other means, so that the risk of any escalation to the nuclear level is reduced?

This last question, on which I have been working recently, has received almost no attention in this country. One small indicator of this is that when, last year, a new treaty was signed limiting the use of certain inhumane conventional weapons, the event went unnoticed by the press.

But why is the "uni" versus "multi" debate inadequate? Both the unilateralist and multilateralist positions have great strengths—not least intellectual simplicity and clarity. But they also have certain obvious and crippling defects.

Both focus largely on the act of disarmament, but have relatively little to say on how power might be arranged, human societies defended, and conflict waged, after disarmament. To many people, and indeed to many governments, disarmament seems not just a step into the unknown, but a step into a world where the uncertainties might be so great that weapons might actually be more likely to be used.

The multilateralist position, as it is conventionally presented, is so questionable that it almost verges on the fraudulent. It is not very plausible that the many governments in the world which rely on substantial armed force for their internal order would ever agree to general and complete disarmament, even granted the provisions allowing some weapons to be retained for maintaining internal order. On top of this, there are extraordinarily difficult problems of equivalence between states, of the inspection of disarmament, and of the control of violations. These dilemmas—which have bedevilled all disarmament negotiations since the first were held in 1899—have been made harder by the advent of nuclear weapons.

Thus an official British paper in 1962, prepared in connection with disarmament talks at Geneva, concluded that between 10 and 20 per cent of existing weapons stocks could be concealed from inspection. Despite subsequent improvements in satellite detection, I have never seen this conclusion substantially challenged or supplanted. The invention of nuclear weapons, which had made disarmament very much more urgent, has also made it harder to attain.

Although governments occasionally invoke the ideal of general and complete disarmament, they do not negotiate about it very much—not even at Geneva. Their actual negotiations have mostly been about more limited and attainable goals, and these have yielded some modest results.

But the ideal of general and complete disarmament, even if it is not attained, has some definite uses. It is an almost perfect device whereby governments can claim to be trying to stop the arms race, while at the same time arming very heavily. It is always easy to put blame for failure in negotiations onto the other side—the Russians, say—and to claim that arming is necessary in order to achieve leverage in such talks. In short, the notion of multilateral disarmament can easily provide a fig leaf for the arms race.

For their part, unilateralists often describe themselves as "multilateralists who mean it." But by this they sometimes imply that unilateral disarmament by one country is likely to spur other states into negotiating disarmament seriously. To the extent that the unilateralist position is based on this belief, it may be little stronger than the multilateralist one, on which, at a certain stage, it depends.

But the unilateralist argument does have many strengths. Since states, by and large, arm unilaterally, there is a certain logic in suggesting that they should also disarm unilaterally. And if, as many believe, the arms race between east and west is increasing the risk of nuclear war, drastic action to reduce that threat is obviously justified. When the ship is on fire and about to sink, it is sensible to jump.

Despite this logic, the unilateralist position has always been vulnerable to criticism. Some critics assert—whether from blind faith in nuclear deterrence, or from sheer complacency, or for better reasons—that there is little danger of nuclear weapons being used in anger. But the more substantial criticism relates to the doubts about whether unilateral disarmament would actually improve matters. The numerous historical cases of lightly armed and/or neutral countries being attacked by well-armed ones are justifiably cited as evidence that there is no quick escape route from the perils of the arms race.

No majority for unilateralism

Such problems in the unilateralist position may help to explain why it has never in this country managed to get majority support. The public opinion polls are clear on this. There are sometimes majorities against particular weapons systems or military bases; but not for complete renunciation of all reliance on nuclear weapons and on the NATO alliance.

The percentage of the population supporting unilateral disarmament and withdrawal from NATO now is little different from the percentage that supported pacifist policies in the 1930s. This is particularly remarkable in view of the ghastly destruction which involvement in a nuclear war could inflict on this crowded and vulnerable country, and in view of the quite widespread feeling that the United States, our principal NATO ally, is amateurish and even irresponsible in its conduct of foreign policy.

One fundamental weakness of the unilateralist position is the lack of clarity about what defence system, if any, unilateralists propose. The lack is, of course, very understandable. Trying to work out a sensible defence policy is inherently difficult, and there is little prospect of getting all unilateralists to agree on one particular approach. But the lack of clarity is also crippling. It leaves unilateralists in the position, accurately described over 20 years ago by Harold Macmillan when he was Prime Minister, of advocating a gesture, not a policy.

The inadequacy of discussing unilateralism in the abstract, without discussing alternative proposals for defence, was illustrated during the American Defence Secretary's trip to Sweden and Britain last October. Caspar Weinberger publicly praised the Swedish defence system, which is indeed impressive. Then, when he came to Britain, he uttered dire warnings against unilateral disarmament.

Sweden is of course, as Weinberger must have been aware, a neutral and also a non-nuclear state. So one might think of it as unilateralist. But Weinberger did not, because the image of unilateralism which is held by him and his like—an image which is, incidentally, very convenient for them—is of a rejection of national defence as such. All too often unilateralists have themselves helped to foster such an image.

No one is suggesting that Britain can pursue a policy exactly like Sweden—a policy which has kept that country out of war for the best part of two centuries. We are in a quite different geographical position, have different interests, and have long since lost any tradition we may have had of a militia-type military organisation.

Continued →

The Swedish example

But we could learn something from countries such as Sweden: that even in the nuclear age, a system of conventional defence may have some independent dissuasive power; that the cause of stability may be better served by a military system which is manifestly defensive, rather than by one relying on the airborne genocide of nuclear weapons; and that a defence system which is in part the outcome of public discussion, rather than being secretively conceived and run like our own, may command greater public support.

So can I put hand on heart and say exactly what system of defence I would recommend? There are numerous possibilities, and at the risk of gross simplification one can point to three basic approaches: (a) defence by civil (ie, non-violent) resistance; (b) territorial defence, based on a citizen army system, with some element of guerrilla resistance; and (c) a less nuclear role for Britain within NATO, comparable to that of Norway and Denmark, which do not have nuclear weapons on their soil.

There are objections to all these approaches. Although civil resistance is sometimes an effective means of resisting foreign occupation, there is at present little chance that the public will view it as an adequate substitute for existing defence arrangements. As for territorial defence, many people have difficulty envisaging a defensive guerrilla struggle in Britain, and the extreme vulnerability of our cities to reprisals by an adversary adds to the problems. Moreover, because our present military commitments are mostly outside the island of Britain (in two bisected territories, West Germany and Northern Ireland), a Home Guard approach seems of limited relevance.

As for a Norwegian-type role within NATO, it may be argued that the alliance can tolerate and even approve this in small, peripheral states, especially when they are very close to the Soviet Union and have long traditions of neutrality, but it expects and needs bases of various kinds in Britain.

If there is, in the next few years, any way forward amidst all these tangled arguments, it may be by looking at defence policy in a western European as much as a purely British framework. The most urgent need, and perhaps also the greatest possibility, is to get NATO strategy in Europe away from its present degree of reliance on nuclear weapons. From a long-vanished era of western nuclear superiority NATO has inherited a doctrine of possible first use of nuclear weapons in the event of a massive Warsaw Pact conventional attack. This doctrine is so patently incredible that it is a source of weakness. A surprisingly wide range of people, not least in the military, see the need to change it.

The kind of change in NATO strategy we need would not be limited to beefing up conventional forces to replace the thousands of so-called tactical nuclear weapons at present stationed in western Europe. It would also mean building up a system of defence in depth (possibly using part-time forces, and also some of the foreign troops in West Germany) to make invasion and attempted occupation much more hazardous for a potential adversary. This is not just a matter of an Englishman being prepared to die to the last German: there is some West German advocacy of such a course, and some willingness on the part of the military to consider it.

The development of new conventional weapons and guidance sytems in the past 15 years has reinforced the case. The new precision-guided munitions (anti-tank missiles, surface-to-air missiles, guided bombs and so on) are unlikely to bring about the total transformation of warfare that their more enthusiastic advocates claim. But they may somewhat increase the power of the defensive in modern war, and they already provide at least a partial answer to the Soviet preponderance in numbers of tanks and fighter aircraft in central Europe. In short, they may help discourage any dreams of massive military attack.

The kind of policy that I am talking about would mean taking further a change in attitudes towards nuclear weapons which has been going on anyway, though with many twists and turns along the route. The change is towards viewing them purely as weapons held in reserve, in case the adversary should be mad enough to use them. This would involve, at the very least, getting rid of all the front-line tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, whose presence is particularly dangerous. It would also involve Britain in reversing its current emphasis on nuclear weaponry—an emphasis which has necessitated some cuts in conventional forces.

Admittedly, there is something tediously reformist about advocating some such change of NATO strategy away from reliance on nuclear weapons. And even a limited change such as this would inevitably be hard to agree on in NATO. The difficulty of getting 15 members to agree to anything creates very strong inertia.

But, tediously reformist as it is, the question of alternatives to endless reliance on nuclear weapons does probably begin at this point. It begins there, but it does not necessarily end there. The Alternative Defence Commission (an unofficial body, of which I am a member, which is looking at possible non-nuclear defence policies for Britain) is also considering other, and more radical, options. But if I have to say what changes in defence policy might usefully be implemented, and have some chance of being carried out within the next five or ten years, then I suspect they are likely to be along the lines I have indicated.

If it is agreed that any changes are likely to amount to a lot less than complete disarmament, and that we will have to live for some time with the terrible existence of at least some nuclear weapons, then the idea of limiting conflicts, and of reinforcing any taboos against the use of the most destructive weapons, assumes increased importance. While disarmament has traditionally been about limiting the *possession* of weapons, the laws of war are about limiting their *use*. Granted the sad failure to achieve disarmament, we may need the laws of war.

As they have been elaborately codified (and imperfectly observed) since the mid-19th century, the laws of war are largely built round the idea that human conflict is not necessarily absolute. They advance some very elementary principles, such as that prisoners of war are to have their lives spared and to be treated humanely; that military occupation of another country's territory must be regarded as provisional; that certain people and places are not legitimate targets in warfare; and that torture is wrong.

The fact that there have been four new international agreements on the laws of war in the last five years may indicate a revival of official interest in this area. Moreover, insofar as some of the new conventional weapons are more accurate than those they replace, they may offer increased possibilities for discriminating between legitimate and illegitimate targets. Thus the laws of war—to which post-1945 strategic writers have paid startlingly inadequate attention—may become more relevant than before.

It is true also that the laws of war have many weaknesses, and that the binding international agreements on the subject do not specificially address the problem of nuclear weapons at all. But the relevance of the laws of war to non-nuclear defence is evident. They are one important basis for the whole idea of prohibiting the use of certain weapons, even in wartime, even when both sides possess them.

It is noteworthy that states with defensive militia-type systems—Switzerland is the clearest example—have always been strong supporters of the development of those parts of the laws of war which relate to the choice of weapons and selection of targets, the protection of civilians from the effects of war, and the protection of inhabitants of occupied areas.

Disarmament is one of those great dreams of the 20th century which have gone rather sour. While it should not be abandoned as a goal, there is space also for considering more mundane approaches to the arms problem. The creation of a rational non-nuclear defence, and the various attempts to set limits to international conflicts, deserve more place in the public discussion than they get. "Uni" versus "multi" is by no means the only issue worth debating.

commonweal

Of several minds: *John Garvey*

NECESSARY NONVIOLENCE

IT HAS PROBLEMS, BUT WHAT DOESN'T?

IN A RECENT editorial *Commonweal*'s editors praised the many bishops who have spoken about the need to end the arms race, but dissociated *Commonweal* from the pacifist position. I don't like the word "pacifist." It implies, as it shouldn't, the willingness to let anything terrible happen without any opposition. The word "nonviolence" isn't much better. I wish we had other words, less negative ones, for what nonviolence is. The word "peace" has been used so badly that to be pro-peace doesn't mean much; both Reagan and Brezhnev would claim to be in favor of peace.

Gandhi's word was *satyagraha*, "truth force." He said that it would be better for people to stand up violently than not to stand up at all, and then came down on the side of nonviolence. There are problems with pacifism, or nonviolence, or whatever you want to call it; there are problems with everything. But there are many more problems with the acceptance — even the tentative, heavily qualified acceptance — of violence as a means to the end of securing justice, and those problems become particularly acute for Christians.

The assumption made by defenders of violence is that nonviolent resistance is impractical and doesn't work, which implies that violence does, or at least that it is ordinarily more effective. Nonviolent resistance has its victories, however, and the history of warlike solutions is hardly a history of stunning successes. Would the independence of India have been more firmly secured if violent rather than nonviolent means had been employed? Would violent resistance to Nazism by the Danes have saved more Jews than the remarkably effective nonviolent resistance which, in fact, saved nearly all of Denmark's Jews from extermination?

The reason nonviolence is not seriously urged on us by any of the various institutions responsible for educating us is, I suspect, that the refusal involved in nonviolence is too profoundly threatening to too many cherished institutions, most of all the state. Nonviolent resistance assumes that an individual has not only a right but sometimes even a duty to refuse obedience or allegiance to someone, or some institution, which claims authority over him. Violence between nations helps to preserve the belief that we are made safe by an identification with the state, which is seen as our security. And the perverse moralism which is an inevitable part of war allows us to assume that our side is virtuous while their side is evil. We are good, or at least represent good, while their side is evil, or at least a representative of evil. The state insists that we divide the world into an *us* and a *them*.

But isn't our system better than theirs? Americans are certainly more free than most people have been in history; almost any "them" will suffer by comparison. But two things must be said here. One is that we should not thank the state for our freedom. In a recent *New Yorker* article Jane Kramer wrote of resistance to the Hungarian government, "Dissidents say, simply, that it is humiliating for a man or a woman to be grateful to the state for whatever liberty the state allows." That is true here as well. Our governmental system tries in many of its laws to embody the traditions of freedom from authoritarian interference which go back to the Magna Carta and beyond, but we should not therefore be grateful to the state; we should instead be watchful, to make sure that the state doesn't try to limit or remove those freedoms. There is something craven and dishonest in the argument that the state protects my right to dissent, and therefore I should not dissent. My right to dissent matters more than the existence of the state, and I should not be grateful when the state refrains from suppressing dissent, any more than I should be grateful to my neighbor for not abusing my children.

The other thing which must be said is that while we are more free than most nations, within our borders, the government supports regimes which crush the freedom of other people. To protest the suppression of freedom in Poland is correct — but we must be equally outraged over the suppression of freedom in South Africa, Argentina, and El Salvador. Many more people have died at the hands of a regime which our government supports in El Salvador than have died in Poland; torture is a common tactic for many of our allies. But the state is always selectively indignant, because it must make alliances, and the enemy's enemy is always a friend, however evil.

Christians can't buy into this morality. Whatever is done to the least human being is done to Christ. This is as true in El Salvador as it is in Poland. We can't allow any government to include us in its "us." Apart from the fact that my enemy must be as much Christ to me as my neighbor is, there is another problem with what war demands. No government's army can allow its orders to be seriously questioned. A soldier must sur-

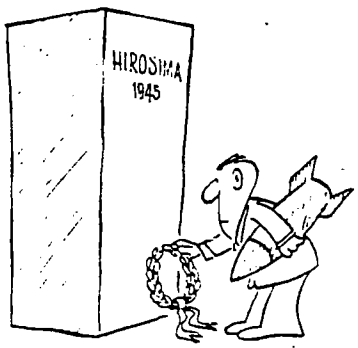
render moral judgment to his superiors. The one recognized exception is the case of the obvious war crime; but here a soldier must hope that his refusal to obey will be vindicated by higher authorities, and he may not question the direction of the war itself. I don't believe that anyone can surrender conscience to that extent.

The arms race and the near-certainty of eventual nuclear war put the burden of proof on non-pacifists. True, mutually assured destruction or even the risk of a more limited nuclear war may frighten our leaders into sanity or at least restraint; but the odds are against that. The history of war is a history of miscalculations made by leaders who were very sure of themselves, just as ours are. The beginning of sanity is to be found in the rejection of their logic. We have to view this issue as the abolitionists viewed slavery: a limited nuclear defense is no more acceptable than a little slavery. The reality of nuclear war will be Hiroshima and Nagasaki multiplied next time by many more cities, many millions of burned children, tens of millions of slow deaths. In a recent *Newsweek* column George Will, chiding the Catholic bishops for their opposition to the arms race, compared what might happen in a limited nuclear war to what happened at Dresden and said that, awful as it was, the firebombing of Dresden wasn't really the end of everything. But maybe in a sense it was: when you can accept the massive destruction of civilian life as a legitimate tactic you have passed an important and terrible barrier. *Anything* is permitted now. And of course a limited nuclear war would not stop at what happened to Dresden or Hiroshima. We cannot yet imagine what the limits of a nuclear war might be. It ought to be clear that if Japan had had the atomic bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki would have been followed by Seattle and Portland.

Wars today cannot be limited to the battlefield, and in any serious confrontation the temptation to use nuclear weapons will be great. We do not yet have the courage to imagine what the result will be if the temptation becomes overwhelming.

There are problems, of course, with nonviolence. Would it be right, for example, to refrain from assassinating a Hitler? Assassination makes more sense than war, after all; it goes right to the heart of the problem. (Mention this and a lot of people laugh nervously, as if assassination were more shocking than war. The mythology which sustains war is so strong that it bothers people less to contemplate the slaughter of a generation than the killing of the leader who sent that generation out to die. The people who make war are the safest people in the world, and they should not be.) All of us can imagine situations in which violence seems to be less evil than its alternative. However, even the violence which might rid the world of a Hitler or an Idi Amin involves evil. To kill another is never a good thing; the one who dies would not exist if he had not been loved from before the beginning of time. If Hitler violated the image of God in himself, it was nevertheless real; no one has the power to cancel that reality, and any murder, even of an evil man, involves the killer in a mystery of evil. And perhaps such involvements may prove to be compelling. Bonhoeffer found it necessary to involve himself in just such an attempt, and I cannot say that he was wrong to have done so. His action was better than the interpretation of nonviolence which would leave a Hitler in power, facing no resistance. The purity which allows a Hitler to reign isn't pure at all; it is better to involve oneself in the mystery of evil, in fear and trembling.

But this is a long way from the spirit of the sort of moral theology many of us grew up on, which found extenuating circumstances for nearly every warlike action and waved away the notion that a person ought to feel contaminated even by necessary violence. What we need is a defense of the idea of necessary evil:



some things may be both necessary, and truly evil. Some early church canons seem to have had something like this idea in mind. They said that a person who shed blood, even in self-defense, had to refrain from the Eucharist for a period of several years. This spirit is a long way from the one found in Cardinal Cooke's message to the chaplains, which finds the state's preparation for the destruction of whole civilian populations acceptable, so long as it is agreed that the government will never really do it. (We're only trying to scare you, Russia; just kidding.)

One of the best things about the anti-arms race statements of the bishops is that they are not at all legalistic. They are clearly pastoral, and come from prayer and personal experience, from visiting anti-war people in jail, and from considering the presence of large war-related industries in the towns the bishops have been called to serve. This absence of legalism is refreshing and important. I have known Catholic pacifists who say that service in the army should simply be declared a sin. Though it would be a sin for me, that sort of statement, applied to anything — even where it is as objectively terrible as killing — seems wrong to me, and I realized why when I met a young Amish woman whose husband was doing alternative service during the war in Vietnam. When I told her that I was a conscientious objector she was baffled. Her husband was doing what he was doing only because his religion demanded it, and they found it a damned nuisance. She said she couldn't understand why a Catholic would ever bother with it. For her the refusal to be part of an army was not at all a reflection of the spirit of the Gospel, but a bit of irritating obedience to churchly legislation. I am sure that this is not the way it is for all of the Amish, but the encounter helped me to see that legalism does kill the spirit, and that the truths you try to live by must be discovered personally, and cannot be imposed. It is wonderful to see that a number of our bishops are responding to their own discoveries in a way which is of such benefit to all of us; it is one of the things bishops are for, and it is encouraging, in the richest sense of the word.

JOHN GARVEY

Vital Speeches of the Day

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Separation of Church and State

RELIGION AND POLITICS

By JOHN R. ROACH, *Archbishop of St. Paul and Minneapolis and President of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops*

Delivered to the General Meeting of Bishops, Washington, D.C., November 17, 1981

AFTER a year of serving as your President I am even more grateful to you for this privilege than I was when I accepted a year ago. In honesty, however, I must tell you that if you think that Archbishop John Quinn was radiant a year ago when he completed his term, wait until you see me two years from now. I am so grateful to Bishop Kelly and his staff and to all of you for the cooperation and support which I have felt each day during this past year.

As a rule of thumb for keeping friends, "never discuss religion or politics" has a long history in our culture. It has received the status of the secular commandment. At times it is even taken as a corollary of the constitutional principle of separation of church and state.

I agree fully with the principle of separation of church and state. I do not agree that absence of dialogue about and between religion and politics serves either the church or the state. Three complementary considerations support the proposition that we should reverse cultural custom and initiate an explicit, public, systematic dialogue about the relationship of religious communities and the political process in the United States.

The first case can be drawn from the content of existing public policy discussion in the land. Whether we like it or not, a whole range of policy choices are permeated by moral and religious themes today: from the debate on abortion to decision making about Poland; from care of the terminally ill to the fairness of budget cuts, the direction our society takes must include an assessment of how moral and religious convictions relate to the technical dimensions of policy.

The second case is based on the content of the religious traditions as they are understood and expressed today. Our own faith community is an example but not an isolated instance of how the social vision of faith increasingly calls the Church to a public theology and public witness on political questions.

The third case is drawn from existing social attitudes in our country. Recently the Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company sponsored a survey on "American Values in the 1980's." The report concludes: OUR FINDINGS SUGGEST THAT THE INCREASING IMPACT OF RELIGION ON OUR SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS MAY BE ONLY THE BEGINNING OF A TREND THAT COULD CHANGE THE FACE OF AMERICA. This conclusion is based on data showing that people with strong religious convictions influence the political process out of proportion to their numerical strength. This fact can be evaluated in different ways. History teaches vividly that the expression of religious conviction through the political process is not necessarily a blessing to a society. The key question is how religious belief is related to political practice. This is the question which requires that a systematic discussion of religion and politics take place within our religious organizations and in the public arena where people of all faiths and no religious faith are called as citizens to set the direction of our society.

A systematic discussion from a Catholic perspective involves two themes: The Church's own understanding of her role in society; and the expression of that role in regard to specific public issues.

I. Religion in Politics: The Institutional Questions

There are two questions which shape our role in society. The theological question and the constitutional question. The theological question is the way the Church has articulated the content of its social ministry. When the United States Catholic Conference addresses El Salvador or the impact of budget cuts on the poor, when bishops speak on the arms race, when Catholics individually or collectively oppose abortion and capital punishment in defending the

(Continued)

sanctity of life, then it must be made clear that these actions are rooted in, directed by, in fulfillment of a theologically grounded conception of the Church's ministry.

That ministry in the socio-political order is shaped by two themes. The first is the religious conviction about the dignity of the human person and the spectrum of obligations and rights through which human dignity is preserved and promoted in the political process. These concepts have been key ideas in the Catholic tradition from the first social encyclical, Leo XIII "On the Condition of Labor," to John Paul II's "On Human Work." In the intervening years of the 20th Century, each of the social encyclicals has defended the dignity of the person in the face of diverse and changing threats to human dignity and human rights.

The moral vision of the social ministry was qualitatively strengthened by a second theme: the ecclesiology of Vatican II in "The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World." The decisive contribution of the Pastoral Constitution is the way it defined the protection of human dignity and the promotion of human rights as properly ecclesial tasks, an integral part of the Church's ministry. This marriage of the moral vision and the ecclesial vision provides the basis of the social ministry. In the language of the Council, the task of the Church in the political order is to stand as the sign and safeguard of the dignity of the person.

To fulfill this role in a political context, requires that the Church not only teach the moral truths about the person, it must also join the public debate where policies are shaped, programs developed and decisions taken which directly touch the rights of the person, locally, nationally and internationally. This is precisely what John Paul II was talking about in speaking to American Catholics in his homily at Yankee Stadium: WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF YOUR NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND IN COOPERATION WITH ALL YOUR COMPATRIOTS, YOU WILL ALSO WANT TO SEEK OUT THE STRUCTURAL REASONS WHICH FOSTER OR CAUSE THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF POVERTY IN THE WORLD AND IN YOUR OWN COUNTRY, SO THAT YOU CAN APPLY THE PROPER REMEDIES.

When the Church responds to this theological imperative, the constitutional question arises: how should it fulfill its social role in the context of the American and political tradition? Specifically, can the Church play an active role without violating separation of church and state?

In answering that question it is essential to recognize the distinction between state and society. The Western Constitutional tradition embodies the judgment that the state is a part of society, and not to be identified with all of society. Beyond the state is a realm of free political activity where individuals and groups act to give content to the fabric of social life.

On the basis of this distinction between state and society, a two-fold affirmation can be made about the Church's role in society. On the one hand, Catholic theology can and should support and defend the separation of church and state, the principle that religious organizations should expect neither favoritism nor discrimination because they are religious. On the other hand, we should not accept or allow the separation of church and state to be used to separate the church from society. To accept this would be to reduce the Church, or any religious organization to a purely private role. This, in turn, would prevent the Church from fulfilling an essential dimension of its ministry: preaching the Gospel truth about every dimension of existence, personal and social, public and private, individual and institutional moral questions. At the constitutional level, there is no conflict between the theological vision which calls the Church to active engagement in the social arena and the American political tradition which provides for religious organizations to participate in shaping society as voluntary associations imbued with the needed moral and religious vision. The concept of religious devisiveness is not only ill-founded in relation to our constitutional tradition: it is noxious when it is used to inhibit this participation.

The theological and constitutional questions shape our understanding of the Church's role in society. They set the foundation for engaging the issues which are the heart of social ministry.

II. Religion and Politics: The Issues and the Institutions

Before examining specific issues it is appropriate to deal with a current, highly visible instance of these general principles. A focal point in the debate about religion and politics has been the role played by the Moral Majority. In my judgment two points should be made.

First, some have argued that the Moral Majority's role is an example of why religion and politics should be kept absolutely separate, and religious organizations should be silent on political questions. I reject this contention while defending the right, in the terms defined above, of the Moral Majority or any religious organization to address the public issues of the day. The right of religious organizations, of varying views, to speak must be defended by all who understand the meaning of religious liberty and the social role of religion. But religious organizations should be subjected to the same standards of rational, rigorous presentation of their views as any other participant in the public debate. Moreover, religious organizations, which address the moral dimensions of public issues, are to be judged by the standards of competent moral analysis. Particularly relevant are the issues of "how one defines a moral issue" and the consistency with which moral principles are defended across a range of moral issues.

These same standards of discourse are the ones by which our position should be tested. Neither the rigor of reasonable argument nor the controversy which surrounds the role of religion and politics should make us timid about stating and defending public positions and key issues. Allow me to indicate the direction of a consistent moral vision rooted in Catholic social thought.

On a global scale, the most dangerous moral issue in the public order today is the nuclear arms race. The Church in the United States has a special responsibility to address this question, a responsibility underscored by Pope John Paul in his remarks at the White House in 1979. The United States Catholic Conference has addressed the issue often, most notably in Cardinal Krol's testimony in the Salt II agreements.

It is an unhappy fact that strategic arms control discussions are presently stalemated, even as the technological and strategic dynamics of the arms race proceeds. It is perhaps the convergence of these two themes which has moved a number of American bishops to address the arms race recently in terms that are both prophetic and profoundly important.

(Continued)

Certainly the sense of moral urgency about the arms race is what stands behind the establishment of our Committee on War and Peace about which Archbishop Bernardin, its chairman, will speak at this meeting. Without prejudging the complex work of that committee as it sets our future direction on the arms race, it is useful to say clearly what we already know from Catholic teaching. The Church needs to say "no" clearly and decisively to the use of nuclear weapons. This is surely the direction of Vatican II teachings on the arms race and its condemnation of attacks on civilian centers. The no we utter should shape our policy advice and our pastoral guidance of Catholics.

It is not useful to blur the line of moral argument about the use of nucelar weapons at a time when the secular debate is openly discussing the use of limited nuclear weapons and winable nuclear wars.

Second, the abortion issue: the horrors of nucelar war, though hardly fantasies, are possibilities at present. But the horror of legalized permissive abortion is tragically real. The destruction of unborn life now occurs in the nation at the staggering rate of one and one-half million abortions annually.

Nearly nine years after the Supreme Court decision of 1973 initiated this carnage, who can doubt that it is time to say, enough! Human dignity and human rights are mocked by this scandal. The concept of just law is mocked by the evasions used to create and continue it.

There is, thank God, some reason for encouragement at present. Our elected representatives increasingly recognize the need to correct the situation. As you know, Senate Hearings are now taking place on proposals for this purpose. Our Conference has recently given its support to one of these, a realistic constitutional remedy which holds out hope for undoing the damage done by the abortion decision. I call upon all pro-life people to unite at this crucial moment.

Law, of course, is not the total solution to the evil of abortion. We remain committed to the proclamation of the Gospel message concerning sanctity of human life, and to the practical steps and programs required to eradicate the conditions which cause some to turn to abortion as a solution to personal or social problems. But we also recognize the need for a remedy in law, in order to undo the harm done under the guise of law. Without this, "the sanctity of human life" can only be a hollow phrase.

Third, the poor among us. Papal statements on the arms race have consistently condemned it because of the misallocation of scarce resources it entails. These statements have typically referred to the global level of the issue, but at a time of scarce resources here they take on meaning in a domestic debate on social policy. The proposed expenditure of 1.5 trillion dollars for defense over the next five years stands in stark contrast to budget cuts which threaten the food, the health care and the education of the poor. In the past it was presumed in the United States that we could spend whatever we decided for defense and still be a compassionate society. That assumption is today denied in fact; what is spent for guns directly reduces what is available for the quality of care and life for the least among us.

In the past few years we have often heard from the Church in Latin America the pastoral principle of "the option for the poor." Implementing that principle in our more complex economy faces different challenges. But the principle also has meaning for us. It means that while we are concerned about the larger "macro" questions of the economy, we will give specific weight to how any overall solution touches the poor.

We are called to this role of advocacy for the poor not only by our social teachings but also by our experience in the Campaign for Human Development and Catholic Charities across the country. This ministry with and for the poor confirms the moral vision of our teaching. The Old Testament prophets were right: the quality of our faith is tested by the character of justice among us.

We know from experience the impossible choices the poor face in our society, not between guns and butter, but between bread and rent, between money for heating oil and the need to pay for health care for children. We know also that private agencies of the nation cannot fill the gap created by recent cuts. We have neither the resources nor, I suppose, even the mandate to do this. We will do our part, but our own social teaching calls upon the state to do its part.

Religion and politics always come back to the person, to the way society respects or fails to respect a person. The Church must raise its voice clearly about justice, because choices now before us as a nation can erode the conditions which support human dignity. Today those of us who visibly represent a religious vision must be clear about our task. We must carry forward the debate about religion and politics, because both have a central contribution to make to preserving all that is valuable in the life of each person and the lives of all the people who constitute this society. To serve the person is to honor the Creator. We are called to reverence both in our ministry.

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Hunthausen's moral gesture

By DANIEL BERRIGAN

RECENTLY I SPENT an evening with a Russian scholar exiled in West Germany. He recounted to a group of us his efforts to save the lives of the Sakharovs during their recent hunger strike. When he finished speaking, objections came thick and fast. The politics of the Sakharovs were questionable; they were Zionists, they had supported Latin American juntas, etc. The Russian, however, had the last word; he said softly: "Ah, politics come and go. But it is the moral gesture that counts."

A phrase worth remembering, I thought; the moral gesture counts. It counts, no matter what the outcome. It counts, no matter how received; whether it be emulated, derided, ignored, honored, condemned. Indeed it is in the nature of a moral gesture, rightly understood, that such outcomes befall. Let the fallout begin; it is the moral gesture that counts.

For what does it count? What might such a gesture as Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen's tax resistance bring to pass? What reflections does it set in motion? Let me try a few.

The gesture signals a certain relief from alienation. I mean this in two senses, one of vastly greater import than the other. In the first place, the end of our alienation from a sturdy, biblical self-understanding. For a matter of centuries, we American Catholics had not considered ourselves alienated from Christ on the question of killing. One need not go over that well traveled ground again; how we reconciled, with good faith, our reading of the Testament and our marching orders in America. Now someone, not the first, and God grant not the last, has called out: halt!

Catholics also suffer by and large from a serious civic alienation wrought by war. Now the nuclear question raises anew an old question. Who are Catholics in America? And how are these two realities, American and Catholic, to be both reconciled and separated out, to the point where the one does not dissolve, lay claim, Lord it over, absorb, induct, corrupt, gainsay, the other?

The question is by no means new. But before the nuclear impasse, it has not been posed with such seriousness nor from so potentially divisive a basis. When it was raised some 20 years ago by Father John Courtney Murray, the question swam about in a wash of Kennedy euphoria. At such a time it could be examined with a measure of detachment, as though its clues lay in medieval social philosophy and natural law. The kingdom? It was an eventuality beyond our grasp, it could not bear down on us or speak up for us. It was commonly supposed that the gospel could shed no light on our social calling. It was not a message *to* the church *concerning* the world; rather, a message to the church about the church.

Meantime, we were honoring other mentors. Had we not already "come of age"? Were we not "building the noosphere"? It was this curse of secondary sources, and our inattention to the Only Source, that wrought our alienation.

The noosphere is vanished, a child's bubble. It its place, we are loosing a nuclear *shekinah*, an umbrella of doom. As for the famous coming of age, a breakneck technology of death has brought about enormously rapid moral regression, a slavery of technique, a faster way of going backward. Today we are at the mercy of those whom Bertolt Brecht once called, in a similar situation, a "race of inventive dwarfs." One encounters their noisome morality, cut loose from a consonance of means and ends, at the Pentagon, the think tanks, the corporate piracy headquarters, the bunkers and bases and factories and board rooms where a whole people is blindly slaving away at its own destruction.

But something else has happened, of civic import as of sacred. A bishop is walking toward a new center, creating as he goes. It is a center of understanding. From it we may see ourselves anew — in church and in society. How strange it seems, and yet how fitting, that it should be a Catholic who is demonstrating that our true history is wrought anew by conscientious resistance against unjust laws!

Hunthausen may perhaps take comfort. History will some day see him (as some of us see him now) hand in hand with all those who have wrought our true vision; who stood somewhere, made their moral gesture, and paid up. Whether these be the saints; Francis rebuilding the tottering church, Ignatius laying down his sword, Mohandas Gandhi marching to the sea, or in America, Martin Luther King in Birmingham jail — or whether these be the fashioners of civic vision; the Boston tea party (hosts and guests), the abolitionists and ex-slaves, the labor organizers, the fighters for women's rights, the resisters against war.

In any case, the bishop's moral gesture is linked to theirs; and together these stand in contrast to those who claim our history and disclaim our morality; the robber barons, the politicians, the racists, the entrepreneurs, the war makers and profiteers.

And now an American bishop joins with the modern visionaries of our history. Can we speak of many bishops? We shall have to see, we are only at the beginning.

Meantime, it is the moral gesture that counts. Or as they say, a little courage goes a long way. It may yet be that the courage of a few will turn peacemaking from a cottage industry into a fire storm of the spirit.

Reading Hunthausen's words, and grateful for his courage, I thought of a woman whose long loneliness was in fact a long and life-giving series of just such gestures. In her light we shall see the light. Dorothy Day, pray for us.

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