

TURN TOWARD JUST WAR

The Separation of Force from Policy Has Been Our Most Disastrous Illusion

Paul Ramsey

The story of the Tower of Babel can teach us a great deal about man's political life. It begins at a time before time when "the whole earth was of one language and of one speech." Then men said to one another "Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." It is sad to report what happened to that first United Nations, at a time (if we are to believe the tale) far more auspicious for the union of mankind and for the ability of peoples to understand one another. The Lord (so the report reads) confounded their language, that they might not understand one another's speech—"and they left off to build the city" (*Genesis 11:1-9*).

The political life of mankind goes on perennially under the sign of the verdict at Babel. Will not a profound student of politics today (church politics or state politics, local or national, domestic or international) be driven to conclude that all this goes on as if that verdict has not been set aside? It is as if political science gives knowledge of the life of mankind on the underside of that divine decision.

Each man calls to another, every group and nation calls to the others, as they build in every age the City of Man. Each tries to communicate to the other workers his plan for the whole edifice. They strive for vision of the whole, and for agreement on this. Excellent plans these are, some better than others. But it turns out that each thinks he is making the plan for the center of the tower, and he imagines his neighbor to be working on some less worthy part of the project. The vision every man and every nation has is "a view of the universal": it is not "a universal view." And so there arise disagreement and dissension in the best of causes. Doubtless nothing men see of truth will ever be lost. Doubtless their blood and sweat and tears have meant something. But they have all been subjected to the divine overruling.

Nothing this triumphantly secular age can do will undo that verdict—neither Politics 201, nor UNESCO, nor AFS student exchanges, nor touring ballet dancers, nor Operations Crossroads, nor the Peace

Corps. This does not mean that these things are not very good indeed, and certainly to be done. It means only that the good land we may hope to possess by them (and I will add, by the skillful use of diplomacy and by responsibility in the limited use of force) is a down-to-earth, creaturely good in the meanwhile of man's historical existence, the whole length and breadth of which is lived on the underside of that verdict at Babel. A person who practices his religion with enthusiasm should also engage in every building operation in the earthly city with somewhat less expectation than the final unification of mankind. His enthusiasms in politics will be characterized by a sense of limitation; and by an acceptance of the fact that we who build do not understand one another's speech nor do we look out upon even our common projects with the same eyes.

The New Testament tells us that the verdict that drove men into separation over the face of the whole earth was, once on a time, reversed by God's own act. On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit of God filled this world to overflowing and enabled the Apostles to speak so that men "out of every nation under heaven" exclaimed in amazement, "Behold . . . how we hear every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born" (*Acts 2:1-8*). So were the separated reunited, and foreigners made to understand one another like men of the same country. But what they heard and understood were "the wonderful works of God" (verse 11) and not, as before and elsewhere, the wonderful works of men.

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That was a decisive moment in the history of the City of God. The Spirit of God came to be with men and granted them foretaste of the heaven every man and nation lives in want of. But on that day, no less than on the day when God uttered an eternal No to man's attempt, living in his own name, to build a tower-top reaching unto heaven, politics was radically de-divinized and secularized. Political activity still goes on much as before, under its own sign. Since Jesus Christ was not the political Messiah many of the Jews expected, since his Kingdom in this world is not of it, the union of men of every race and nation which is found in Jesus Christ does not also mean their political unity or agreement. As long as the Bible contains the book of *Revelation*, it ought

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to be impossible for Christians to suppose that the political life of mankind is anything other than a realm of "patient endurance," or for us to fail in the faith that it is God who shall finally wipe away all tears from men's eyes and not earthly happenings. We live in Two Cities, and not in the one world of the City of Man under construction.

This puts politics in its place, and frees men for clear-sighted participation in it. Absolutely related to the Absolute, we should be content to be relatively involved in the relative. Then politics can be best conducted; decision and action can be what they are worth. This only *de-mythologizes* the role of politics, and men are free to think of it as highly as they ought to think, and not make unearthly demands of it.

Most of the symbols in which modern men express their political faith are also in need of being *de-mythologized*. For example, in one of the great halls at the United Nations building in New York, behind the speaker's dais, there is a great mural representing two different myths about human history, one super-imposed upon the other; and both of which are entirely alien to Christian beliefs. There is the figure of the phoenix being reborn every 500 years out of its own ashes. This hope in cyclical recurrence is not ours.

Behind this is represented a linear view of man's history: at the bottom, ages past out of which our present civilization has arisen; in the middle, the present with its struggles and perils; and at the top—running off the top, as it were—the uncompleted future. The artist did not know what the future holds, and so he did not picture it fully; but he believed he knew what it would be like, and so the bottom is somber and dark, the present in lighter colors, and the future brighter still. This hope in a progressively better future is not ours; but it is the *mythos* of the modern age. And the *mythos* lives on. "Obviously," wrote Adlai E. Stevenson in a getting-down-to-brass-tacks article in *The New York Times*, "we need not expect to attain this well-nigh Utopian goal ('general and complete disarmament') easily or quickly. That would be like seeking to reach heaven at a single bound."

Who can stand before the bell at the United Nations dedicated to "absolute peace" (a gift of the Japanese people) and not—if his mind has been formed by the Bible—feel the urge to prophesy, in the words of St. Paul (in Athens, the cultural center of the ancient world): Ye men of New York and of the modern age, I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious . . . Whom you ignorantly worship at this altar to the unknown god, him I declare unto you (*Acts 17:22, 23*).

This but means that "peace" is not something men or nations "race" for. Jesus better said: Blessed are the peace *makers*. To the end of the earthly city of

patient endurance, and of wars and rumors of war, blessed are the peace *makers*. Only on the underside of this verdict, as on the underside of the verdict at Babel, can we grasp rightly the nature of politics. Then can we see that the United Nations is what it is, to its great credit and for the justifiable if limited hopes of mankind—a community of porcupines gingerly attempting to draw close to one another for the warmth each needs in winter time; or (to change the figure) workers on the foundations of some City of Man who will get along better if they do not presume to hope fully to understand one another; or (to say it politically) a babbling if erudite assemblage of the representatives of nations, whose common interests and agreements are perilously poised over diverse particular concerns none will or should give up entirely. It is idle to suppose that the threat of nuclear war has changed the nature of porcupines, nations or politics, when we know that none of God's mighty acts, or his past verdicts in judgment and for the saving of mankind, has changed this. Christians no more believe in the determination of history by the "means of destruction" than they believe, with the Marxists, in the determination of history by the "means of production." The very nature of politics requires us to turn toward just war.

The weapons in existence today have made the "unjust" conduct of war (present but peripheral in all wars of the past) into the central war. This requires us to search again into the wisdom contained in this distinction between just and unjust war, to see what light it can throw upon the path along which statesmen today must walk.

The just war doctrine provides the clue to a sound analysis of why massive deterrence is wrong and won't work. It is the factor that is missing in discussions of weapons procurement. And it will be the regulative doctrine of policy decisions if ever we emerge from a multinational world into a world governed by international organization and courts of justice. These three points can be only briefly explored here.

A great power today needs to probe, more deeply than the American people and their leaders have yet done, the almost irremediable contradictions between *deterrence* and effective *defense*, between *deterrence* and the use of force in the effectuation of national policy.

We ought not to listen to what our statesmen and military planners *say* when they are only trying to bolster the credibility of deterrence upon the *mind* of an enemy, if we want to find out what are our actual fight-the-war plans. Whether the public is or can be made aware of this or not, our military planners know very well the distinction between discriminate and indiscriminate conduct in war; and all

their writings assume that this distinction can still be made today in actual warfare. Still, what it may be reasonable to *say* in order to deter war has not been clearly enough separated from what it may be reasonable to *do* in order ever to fight a war. By keeping a potential enemy confused about what we are actually going to do if he resorts to arms, we confuse mainly ourselves. We jumble together what we suppose to be reasonable deterrence with proper means for the actual conduct of war and we conclude from this that there might be conditions under which massive nuclear retaliation would be justified. A first step toward grasping the need to turn national policy in the direction of "just war" is the realization that such plans already exist but that we are sheltered from them by the supposed requirements of deterrence.

Glen H. Snyder's book *Deterrence and Defense*, for example, clearly shows that cool-headed military analysis is quite aware of the inherent contradictions between deterrence and defense. The more deterrence you "buy," the less defense; and vice versa. This book shows also that, in calculating the alternatives for policy, distinctions can be made between "all-out *countercity* retaliation" and "all-out *counterforce* retaliation," and also between (and this is discussed at greater length) "*limited countercity* retaliation as a bargaining tactic" and "*limited counterforce* retaliation" (italics added). There is a distinction expected to be made between destroying *cities* and destroying *forces*, and between unlimited and limited warfare (and this distinction has to be and can be made even when the former of these pairs of alternatives is chosen).

Yet religious leaders of SANE persuasion often select their military experts from among those who hold the most horrendous military opinions. They declare roundly that all war must now be total, or that it will escalate by *necessary* connection into total war. These religious leaders often tell statesmen and the military that the distinction between limited or unlimited *countercity* retaliation and limited or unlimited *counterforce* retaliation *cannot* be made. It seems almost as if they mean to say that this separation *ought* not to be attempted. They seem resolved to keep war total in order to hope that in that shape it can be proscribed, and are provoked most of all by proposals for the limitation of conflict. This seems to them like saving war when it was just about to be abolished. Instead, it should be the answer of the American people, or at least the churches, that these choices between various weapons systems and various war plans are not reducible merely to how much defense and how much deterrence you want to "buy"; but that at stake in these decisions are moral values as well, the justice of war, and the just conduct both of warfare and of politics between nations.

Not only religious people but statesmen and war planners as well suffer from the same grand illusions.

They dream of perfection in deterrence. For them, technology may now do what religion never could, namely, banish the use of force from human history. Preparation is made for the war that cannot be waged and not for war that can be (in the hope that hereby no war will ever have to be) waged. The greatest powers are vastly more interested in unusable force than in usable force.

• A recent illustration of confusion in high places was the remarks of Franz Josef Strauss, West German Defense Minister, upon the idea that, if hostilities break out in Europe, a "pause" should be sought before nuclear weapons are ever used in the hope that before the fighting reached an upper "threshold" some settlement could be reached. "I am neither a criminal nor a fool," said Herr Strauss, "I am not against a pause or a nuclear threshold" in actual war plans. But he said he was against any discussion of these things, because such discussion would have "the inevitable outcome that the credibility of the deterrent is weakened." Herr Strauss necessarily made reference to the "natural justice" of warfare by equating "criminal" political and military policy with utterly "foolish" policy. He also asserted that "our whole Bundeswehr [armed forces] concept, training and education is based on the necessity of fighting a conventional war to a certain limit." We may, therefore, ask whether his reluctance (while he was discussing them) to have those limits discussed exhibited only that necessary ambiguity that must be maintained about what a commander intends to do with fight-the-war weapons in order that these may also serve to deter-the-war.

The answer to this question must be negative. There was more at work here than a military commander's need has to keep uncertain what he is going to do with his fight-the-war weapons in order that these same weapons may serve to deter. Strauss' statement shows that an entire gulf has opened up between fighting a war and deterring war, and/or between force and policy. He went on to say: "I am a firm believer in the strategy of the deterrent . . . I do not want to contribute to weapons of war once again becoming a means of national policy. And if we do not have a deterrent that is credible, the only alternative is war as an element of policy." If saying loud enough and thinking hard enough that it is so can make it so, then the only useful force in human history is unusable force. This force would be both criminal and foolish ever to use—except in non-use, which can be maintained if we declare often enough that we are, of course, going to use it you can't tell when.

Yet surely the only exception to be taken to Clausewitz's famous dictum that war is the continuation of politics by other means is to the implication that

may be drawn from this (or may have been contained in it) that it is entirely *indifferent* whether a nation's basic policies gain expression or effectuation by peaceful or by warlike means. Many conditions of peace are better than war in the best of causes; and since this is true, it very much matters whether arms or other forms of power and influence are chosen to defend or to effect political policy.

But a complete separation between force and policy has been the most disastrous illusion of men in the modern period. This, and not an ordinary need to keep ambiguous what one is going to do with the arms he has, is the fundamental question today.

So we have the spectacle of great powers absurdly attempting *always* to act politically with only peaceful means as the instrument of their purposes, while these same powers accept total nuclear war as a possible instrument of policy. And each of these claims is accompanied by *ideological* statements that *this* is the sole posture.

Today or tomorrow in the multi-national world in this nuclear age there must come a "turn toward the just conduct of war." If anyone asserts, in view of how horrendous even just war would be today, that this requires instead a radical "turn toward peace," he need only take one more look to see that this "turn" is with some confidence believed to have been already taken. It is impacted, in fact, at the heart of the system of deterrence. Massive deterrence lives by this unearthly confidence that total peace can be insured by means of weapons that have no other purpose; and by virtue of a complete separation between force and policy.

For nations cannot sunder force from policy before war comes without also institutionalizing the same separation after war comes. They cannot act by a belief in the total injustice of war as such, before it occurs, without also, after it happens, conducting war with total injustice and with no discernible connection with any national purpose, not even survival. Renouncing all resort to arms as a matter of policy requires the adoption of war plans which promise, before war comes, to prevent the policies of any nation from ever taking up arms, and, after war occurs, to prevent arms from ever taking on any purposeful policy.

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The perfectionistic goal of banishing force from human history as the main justifying ground for having weapons (deterrence) means that *technically* there not only *is* not any purpose governing their use but also that there *cannot* and *need not* and *should not* be. The political objectives of the nations are supposed to be pursued by legitimate political means only, under the umbrella of a self-fulfilling renunciation of the use of force. This is the high-flying aspiration of deterrence. It claims to outlaw

war. But the system can credibly claim this only if it is also the case that, if the system fails and has to be used, we have provided in advance for fighting the war unlimitedly and to none of the ends of national policy. Thus a theory of "immaculate," total aggression has been read into our instruments, because the attempt is being made, by those instruments themselves, to banish any future use of them as instruments of war.

Thus, massive deterrence seems a sensible policy while we contemplate the beauties of the contrivance for completely separating force from policy and banishing the use of force from the world where policies are effected. But to do this, the system *has* to be planned to break down into completely purposeless warfare. Deterrence is a legitimate military posture with a totally illegitimate and offensive *arrière pensée*. It may even work better (because more credible) if it is perfected to possess this totally offensive *arrière* mechanically, without any *pensée*. If total nuclear war ever occurs, this we will not be able to understand unless we understand that it *had* a purpose, a totally non-political, limitless purpose, namely the banishment of force from human history and the outlawing of war. You cannot separate force from policy before the war without justifying the separation of force from policy in the course of the war, i.e. without justifying intrinsically purposeless war.

We do not immorally adopt different standards for a time of peace and for the time of war. We do not say that in war the end justifies any means, while in peacetime ends and means must both be morally acceptable. Instead, the ethics of peace and the ethics of war depend upon the same categorical imperative: that resort to force be forever banished. Not just any end justifies any sort of means to attain it: this we know well enough in peace or in war. But this single supreme end, the exorcism of policies extensible to the use of force, justifies any means that seem technically most likely to attain it.

It is not because of immorality or amorality in politics, or by adopting a double standard, that we have given over to technical military reason the sole determination of the conduct of war. We have done this because of the conviction, as Robert W. Tucker writes in *The Just War*, that "only technical questions remain to be solved." The rejection of force as a matter of policy has already certified any indispensable military means to attain this. Our moral certainty that it is right to separate force from policy in peacetime, and always wrong to connect them, continues to operate in time of war. A "good," "virtuous" and "rational" system is the one that promises to afford us all-out peace in time of peace and all-out war in time of war.

We devised a "war" to prevent all war. God may let us have it, just as he let Adam have the chaos he

asked for. In the American ethos, there used to be an oscillation in different periods of time between all-out peace and all-out war. Deterrence-systems can only claim to have secured both these things at once in one timeless scheme. Deterrence is the final product of this ethos in which all-out peace and all-out war go so well together. It is simply the result of our conviction that anyone who ever goes to war for any purpose deserves capital punishment. Weapons technology has only given us the capacity to carry out the sentence. Weapons had little to do with our judgment that this verdict pronounced upon a whole nation is right. Such is the result of placing the supreme goal of banishing force in the center of the military system. In peacetime, there can be no other goals to compare with this; in wartime there can be no controls beside this, because there still are no other goals than a "peace" in which politics and men and nations alike have been put to death.

Since no link between policy and force can be found before war comes, none can be found after it occurs. There is no possibility of forging a connection between force and policy after war has begun without going back and reestablishing this connection during the period before war's start. This is why it will be hazardous business for the nations of the world (who have already turned toward peace with a vengeance) to "turn toward just war."

A nation, and especially a great power, needs a settled and accepted doctrine of the use of armed force (sometimes); it needs a doctrine of the limitation of such force and the proper conduct of war; and it needs armament and weapons systems that *can be used*, if need be, in subordination to the fulfillment of policy. This brings up the question of the weapons we are procuring for ourselves. How far the citizens and political leaders of the United States are from even asking the pertinent question about our weapons can be illustrated from the recent debate about the Air Force's B-70 bomber, or its RS-70 (reconnaissance strike) version. In this prolonged dispute, there was public discussion about inter-service rivalry, about the rivalry between Carl Vinson's Armed Services Committee and the appropriations committees of the House, about whether the Congress has constitutional power to "direct" the President to procure 250 of these bombers by 1967 or whether it has only the recourse of impeaching the President if he does not spend the funds appropriated by Congress for this purpose, and about whether this "last of the manned bombers" may be necessary before our missile delivery systems are completed later in this decade or whether to the contrary the B-70 will be obsolete before it can be produced in any numbers. But we hear only in-

cidental reference to the choice between "limited" or "general" war as an instrument of national policy that may be at stake in this decision (one such reference is to be found in Jack Raymond's "News of the Week" article in *The New York Times*, March 11, 1962). We hear no full scale discussion about whether the manned bomber may not be more *accurate* for attack on legitimate military targets than missiles can ever be. We hear no debate about the weapons needed in a possibly justifiable fight-the-war-with-some-purpose policy, in contrast to terror weapons by means of which it is hoped to deter all war.

Yet Col. John Glenn has recently spoken eloquently of the need for a man at the controls of ships in the exploration of outer space. Do we not need as much human discrimination when we target in on an enemy's forces or his people? Is it enough to say that several missiles on an area are a less expensive way to destroy the target? Moreover, among the reasons given for the resumption of nuclear testing in the atmosphere was the judgment that it may be possible for an enemy to shower a whole area with electronic forces that will render missiles inoperative even when they are hardened underground, and there was in any case the great need to study actual nuclear effects to see how missiles are going to operate in a "post-attack" environment. Meantime, crucial political decisions are being made with no focus on the criteria of just, limited and legitimate conduct in war, and these decisions about weapons procurement may commit this nation to more rather than less indiscriminate means.

Modern war first became total when the British RAF adopted a policy of obliteration bombing during World War II; and there is reason to believe that they need not, and perhaps would not, have done this if they had had ships. The totality of war was, in part, determined by procurement decisions made years before. In the meantime, also, the churches, whose tradition calls for precisely the limitation of weapons to be debated, engage in a "race for peace"—a kind of sack race in some macabre carnival mood apart from the real decisions that are shaping man's political destiny at this very hour. And no churchman can condemn, with good conscience, the present reliance of the U.S. on massive weapons, unless he confesses also that, during the period we began to develop it, a general Christian pacifism (and perhaps the lobbying of the social action agency of his own church) contributed to this reliance by a sweeping opposition to a more equitable and universal military service.

If ever our multi-national world becomes a world ruled by law and by institutions for effectively and equitably resolving international disputes, the guidelines for it will have been provided by the just war doctrine. This becomes clear when we remember that

the peace, order, and justice achieved within the domestic life of nations simply puts into practice the criteria of justice in the ends and means of proper political conduct that define the justice of civilized military conduct. These are *limited* means and ends, and are our unavoidable responsibility for seeking and defending the justice to be dispensed between contending parties.

In the way a police force performs when choice must be made between one life and another, it can be seen that domestic political enforcement discriminates between the bearer of hostile force who must be stopped and the "innocent" bystander (or non-combatant). It is never just to "enlarge the target" and deliberately and directly kill any number in a crowd of people as a means of preventing some criminal from injurious action. The police fire with discrimination. They make a modest and limited defense. We do not allow them the right to get a criminal's children into their power as hostages and to threaten to kill them in order to "deter" him.

Yet the source of the justice of this limited use of force is evidently to be found in "social charity." This is clear from the fact that a man, who legitimately could even be killed if that were the only way to save life, would himself be saved at grave risk to the lives of firemen and police, if he alone is in need of rescue because he has gone off his rocker and is threatening to jump from the ledge of a building twenty stories up.

What is missing from international relations are simply the ways domestic society defines the just cause among men. The justice of, and limitations upon, human conduct or upon the legitimate means to be used, are the same. It is always disheartening to hear Christian people say that the norms governing the domestic use of force do not apply between nations. International relations are a moral jungle, it seems to them; and, *non sequitur par excellence*, only "peace and non-violence" can be applied there. The truth is simply that within nations the moral control of the use of armed force has attained legal definition, just as human rights are also legal rights in civil society. Our multi-national world is characterized only by the absence of legal status for the guarantee of human rights, the absence of judicial resolution of conflict, and the absence of legal institutionalization of the moral distinction between legitimate and illegitimate use of force to be found in the proper objectives of restraint and repression in the conduct of war.

Whoever agrees that this is the problem agrees also that there must take place a turn toward "just war" in the political relations of nations. For there can be no hope that our multi-national world can move toward international justice upon the premise that, unless and until the rule of positive world-law defines and produces justice, there is no distinction to be made between the just use of armed force and an unjust resort to purposeless and wholly indiscriminate violence.

books

When Christians Confront Nuclear War

Nuclear Weapons and the Conflict of Conscience by John C. Bennett, Charles Scribner's Sons, \$3.95.

by John K. Moriarty

Nuclear Weapons and the Conflict of Conscience is a symposium by seven well-known American Protestant scholars and theologians on the subject of the moral dilemmas posed by nuclear warfare. In general approach it parallels a similar symposium by

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American Catholics published almost two years ago under the title of *Morality and Modern Warfare*. Like the earlier Catholic volume, this book opens with a chapter assessing the international political situation (by John H. Herz), it proceeds then to the scientific, technological and strategic background (David R. Inglis and Kenneth Thompson), and then devotes most of the remainder of the discussion to the moral and social aspects of the problem (by Dr. Bennett, Erich Fromm, Paul Ramsey, and Roger Shinn).

The current book appears to this reviewer to represent a significant step forward beyond the pioneering Catholic effort—though

the intervening two years of additional debate on nuclear strategy have undoubtedly assisted the later writers in both the quality of their information and the conceptual clarity of their arguments. Where the Catholic symposium contained a rather wide spectrum of views, with little real consensus, the Protestant volume manages to attain somewhat greater unity. This is not to say, of course, that Dr. Bennett's contributors all agree (they frankly argue with each other, in some cases), but merely that the range of disagreement is narrower, the positive thrust of the argument a little more pronounced, and the explicit recognition of military