

pect of every nation's foreign policy. To be sure that the true state of our nation's military capabilities are understood abroad, for example, has long been recognized as necessary in order to discourage the miscalculated use of power by the enemy. But the proper concern for prestige must be the communication of the facts of power already possessed. To pursue a bad policy in quest of greater prestige or in fear of the loss of prestige is as morally abhorrent as a policy which seeks power for its own sake.

To justify policy on the basis of "military necessity" is therefore merely an evasion of the real source of motivation, which is national pride. And the same evasion operates in the notion that the Vietnamese war is a tragedy which history has thrust upon the

United States of today and which must now be carried to its logical conclusion.

Political leaders tend to be uncomfortable with efforts to put coherent moral limits on their strivings. Former Secretary of State Dean Acheson was recently asked for his own definition of American vital interests. After citing the tautological definition that a vital interest is one without which one cannot live, he went on to declare that our vital interests are "those for which we would fight rather than yield."

Until those responsible for the grave decisions of international politics are disciplined by something less arbitrary than this attitude, the high purposes of American foreign policy will not be served.

other voices

NUCLEAR WEAPONS: SOLUTION OR MORAL BANKRUPTCY?

What follows is a translation of the greater part of a French-language article, "The Christian Conscience Relative to Nuclear Weapons," by Charles Cardinal Journet. Cardinal Journet, a Swiss professor of dogma, is one of the great theologians of the Catholic Church. The article appeared in the Geneva review Nova et Vetera edited by the Cardinal.

On April 27, 1957, the deans of six Evangelical faculties of theology of the German Democratic Republic published the following statement:

"We are completely in accord with the synod of the German Evangelical Church and the ecumenical movement in general in rejecting in principle means of massive destruction.

"They profane the gifts of God, human reason and the forces of nature.

"Man is betrayed by them, he whom God created in His image and for whom Christ died and arose from the dead.

"They outrage the goodness of the Creator Himself.

"We are warning against the temptation of allowing them to be used, or like irresponsible persons, to let oneself become indifferent and resigned.

"The world danger, which is not only threatening the present generation, but our children and grandchildren, requires that every one of us try to bring

about the outlawing and abolition of these means of annihilation."

The bishops of the churches of the German Democratic Republic adhered to this statement, as did also the heads of the Evangelical churches of the Rhineland, the Palatinate and Hesse-Nassau (in West Germany). The latter summarized their position as follows:

"It is the duty of the Christian message to warn all men that, by taking part in the manufacture and employment of the modern means of destruction, they are profaning the gifts of God, they are blaspheming the goodness of God, and are betraying the image of God."

We are borrowing these statements from the text of a lecture of Mr. Helmut Gollwitzer, professor at the Free University of Berlin, translated with the title: "Christians and Atomic Weapons." The author ends his lecture in this way:

"In case leaders who have not been alerted and inspired by the Church decide to acquire atomic weapons, the Church ought then to speak to the citizen who is called upon to manufacture or use these arms: these are precisely the weapons which make all of the reasons that I gave formerly invalid with respect to conviction and urging the citizen to

obey the call of the state. Finally, as surely as 'amen' ends the sermon, we need a conclusion to our study of the transformation of military technique: not only ought there not to be atomic war, but there will not be any, at least insofar as that depends on us Christians and Christian politicians, on you and me. Neither you nor I, the minister will say from the pulpit, shall take up these demoniacal weapons, even in case of reprisal.

"A Christian, in any case, cannot do so, since at all times he has only been permitted to take part in a just war. If the authorities ask him to prepare universal massacre—if one gets to that point, and certainly we have—the Christian will reply: "*Si omnes, ego non* (if all accept, I do not)."

On April 11, 1963, there appeared the encyclical of Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, in which one might read:

"One customarily justifies armaments by repeating that at certain times, peace is only guaranteed by the balance of armed power. But any increase in military potential at any place calls forth on the part of the other states a redoubling of efforts in the same direction. If a political community is equipped with atomic weapons, this fact causes the others to supply themselves with similar weapons and with an equal destructive power.

"And thus peoples live in continual fear, as though beneath the threat of a frightful hurricane, ready to burst at any moment. And not without reason, since the armament is constantly ready. It may seem

unbelievable that there are men in the world who would bear the responsibility of the countless massacres and ruin of war; however, one must admit that a surprise, an accident would suffice to call forth the conflagration. But let us admit that the very monstrosity of the effects caused by the use of modern weapons turns everyone away from starting war; if the experiments carried out for military reasons are not stopped, they may, one fears, have fatal consequences for life on the globe.

"Justice, wisdom, the meaning of humanity demand, then, stopping the arms race; they demand the parallel and simultaneous reduction of existing arms in the various countries, the proscription of atomic weapons and duly effected disarmament through common agreement and accompanied by adequate controls. Pius XII proclaimed that 'world war, with its aberrations and moral disorders, must be prevented from descending once again upon humanity.'

"But let everyone be fully convinced of this: stopping the growth of military potential, the effective reduction of armaments and—all the more so—their suppression, are things which cannot be attained or nearly so without a complete disarmament which also reaches souls; one must work unanimously and sincerely toward the removal of fear and of war psychosis. That assumes the substitution for the axiom that peace stems from a balance of armaments the principle that genuine peace can only be built in mutual trust. We believe that that end can be

"The problems posed by the threat of nuclear war are no different for the Catholic Church than they are for other Churches or for any religious community that attempts to cope with them. In its initial debate on nuclear weapons, the Vatican Council revealed sharp differences of attitude and opinion that have their parallel in communities around the world. But that debate revealed in a special public way not only the responsibility and burden religious groups must bear but the temptations and dangers to which they can so easily succumb. As the essays in this volume make clear, not every informed critic views these dangers in the same way."

from the Editor's preface in

PEACE, THE CHURCHES AND THE BOMB

A SYMPOSIUM edited by James Finn

Essays by: **Justus George Lawler** **Walter Stein**
William V. O'Brien **Theodore R. Weber**
Paul Ramsey * **John J. Wright**

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reached, because it is called for by reason as both greatly desirable, and of greatest utility.

"There is a persuasion which is gaining ground more and more in our age, namely that eventual conflicts among nations should not be regulated by recourse to arms, but by negotiation.

"It is true that ordinarily this persuasion has its origin in the terrifying power of destruction of modern weapons and in the fear of cataclysms and frightful ruin caused by the employment of these weapons. That is why it is humanly impossible to think that war, in our atomic age, may be the proper means for obtaining justice for a violation of rights."

The encyclical calls for the proscription of atomic weapons in view of disarmament effected by common agreement, but not in any view whatsoever or unconditionally. It calls for the formulation of a world political organization, but notes "that under present conditions in the human community, the organization and operation of nations, as well as the authority conferred on all governments, does not permit, one must admit, the proper promotion of the universal common good."

If modern war, atomic, biological and chemical warfare, has become unjust in itself, ought one reproach the encyclical for not having said that "no matter what happens, it is perfectly immoral and anti-Christian to use the same weapons as one's adversary to defend oneself"? Or, on the contrary, is one to believe from its silence that it allows the manufacture—and use—of A.B.C. weapons?

The problem is serious. Can it even be solved? Surely—in the perspective opened by the encyclical of a world political organization based on mutual friendship of peoples and not on force, "constituted by unanimous agreement and not imposed by force," which would alone have at its disposal armed force intervening to prevent any attempt at war.

But how can one solve the problem today, in the present state of human society? In what direction can one seek an answer?

Here—unpublished and anonymous—is one suggested to us a few years ago, after the publication of the brochure by Mr. Helmut Gollwitzer.

This problem has been harrasing me for years and I have been looking in vain for a satisfactory solution.

On the subject of the A.B.C. weapons, considered in themselves, I believe that Mr. Gollwitzer is right. A modern war may be just with respect to its objective, but it seems clear to me that even though it be just with respect to its objective, as long as it implies the employment of A.B.C. weapons, it is henceforth unjust by reason of the means it uses.

(This was already true of "total war" prior to the use of atomic weapons.)

However, do Christians have the duty of refusing to take part in it? In other words, if one considers the concrete context, is this war, which is to be rejected in itself, also to be rejected in fact? Here I am over my depth, but I notice immediately that Mr. Gollwitzer himself, who is correct in principle (although dramatizing little things which are abominable in themselves), finally has recourse at the end to sleight-of-hand.

"Not only must there be no atomic war," he said, "but there will not be any." And he adds, with all the appearance of a Pharisical alibi, "at least insofar as that depends on us, Christians and Christian politicians, on you and on me." Bravo for the Christian, but it is not his refusal which will prevent that war from taking place, with all its consequences, if some government makes a silly mistake. Thus also Mr. Gollwitzer's admission—like something he did not want to look at squarely—that the question of preventing insofar as possible such a war from taking place enters into the moral problem considered in concrete. (And it is precisely in order to prevent the outbreak of such a war that nations are manufacturing atomic weapons as deterrents.)

We are in the middle of a vicious circle and in my opinion that means that the devil has caught us in a trap. It is not an abstract condemnation pronounced in the name of morality that is going to get us out of it. The world is much more sick and much more engrossed in sin than we think.

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Are we in the presence of moral bankruptcy? Presume that atomic war ought to be condemned purely and simply and that the Pope neglects to do so and leaves Christians free to carry on such a war: moral bankruptcy.

Presume, on the contrary, that he condemns it purely and simply and orders Christians to refuse to cooperate. 1) He will be obeyed only by a very small number; 2) Even if all Christians obeyed him, that would not prevent the outbreak of this war or its threat of succeeding—on the contrary. The attitude of Christians is not going to have the least influence in Russia, and either the Soviets could take advantage of the disorder caused by the Christians' refusal in the non-Communist bloc in order to launch the war under favorable conditions, or else the Christians might succeed in imposing unilateral disarmament, and the Soviets, with the threat of war, would be the masters of the world. Hence, here again is moral bankruptcy.

I wonder if the really concrete moral solution is not to be sought from the direction of the least evil. But I see no explanation by the moralists that might help us in that.

Then—this I propose as an hypothesis—one must return to the principle of the least evil. And since it offers a positive chance for avoiding war (while preparing for it), it is the second of the two positions mentioned above which, despite all of the frightfulness it implies, represents the least evil.

Now, an action which aims at the least evil may be good in itself. (St. Louis acted well under the conditions of his time by taking steps to allow prostitution.) It is true that in all the cases under consideration, the point is to allow the least evil, not to perpetrate it.

But have the moralists ever discussed the question of knowing whether a man, under certain circumstances, may only have the choice between two things which are in themselves sinful, and whether, therefore, he may not have the duty of selecting to commit a lesser evil? Is this a choice which will be good if the man is not responsible for the circumstances in question?

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Example: A surgeon has made an operation upon the brain of a man the result of which is to render certain impulses absolutely irresistible. The victim of this operation finds himself irresistibly impelled to murder, or—if he causes a deviation in his impulse—to a frightful debauch. Does he not do right, at the time he feels this impulse approaching, to throw himself into debauch rather than to commit a murder? Here, there is no question of doing evil in order to obtain a greater good (which is always forbidden), but of doing evil in order to avoid a greater evil which would otherwise be inevitable.

In the case of nations, the sins which created circumstances wherein some evil is inevitable lie in the past. If a nation, caught thus in the trap of history, decides to do a certain evil (manufacture atomic weapons) as being a lesser evil, this act, if one considers the country in question as one with all its history, is sinful in its origin (past). No state has clean hands. But the statesman living today is not guilty of the former sin. That is why we are not here in the same case as that of a conscience made invincibly erroneous through the fault of the agent. The statesman is not in the least responsible for the historical faults and sins accumulated by his country. Thus he may act well in prescribing the least evil involved, upon the condition of really doing everything possible to avoid war, and first of all, to

reach an international agreement prohibiting the manufacture of these devilish weapons.

And now, concerning the simple citizens, it seems to me that they are also caught in the same trap as their state and have to choose a lesser evil. (Again, all of this is only an hypothesis for study.) What would be really sinful for them, for example, would be to obey the state through pure servility and without thought of good and evil, or to neglect whatever they can do to reach an international agreement to do away with A.B.C. weapons or to get ready for a world government in the future. But to take part in the manufacture and, in case of war, in the use of these weapons (which are bad) would not be a bad act on their part if they believe that their country is acting according to the norms that I mentioned above. It seems to me that these individuals are not committing a moral error.

And those who (wrongly in my opinion) take the opposite side and refuse to manufacture these weapons or to use them are not committing a moral error either. That also is a kind of lesser evil (evil because in the small measure of their individual action they deprive the civilized world of what it needs in order not to fail in its duties). But the danger for the cause of civilization is not great because these heroes of conscientious objection will never be large in number and, moreover, it is good, even for people who are in error, to give testimony to the highest principles which the cynicism of many forgets. One excess compensates for the other.

I just said "wrongly in my opinion." This refers to absolute conscientious objectors like Mr. Gollwitzer (really, it is more politically than morally, given the special circumstances in Germany in these years, that his thesis has practical value). I think that men who would refuse, not to take part in war in general, but to use certain weapons themselves, and who would be ready to die if forced to do so, would be genuine heroes.

I realize that I have formulated as badly as possible thoughts of which I am not at all sure (although I see no other way out) and toward which I am only groping.

What remains is that, in my opinion, morality is running the risk of seeing its authority over minds ruined if the moralists hold to condemnations which, though just in themselves, are abstract, and if they are incapable of descending to concrete cases.

Today humanity is in the presence of this alternative: either permanent peace or a serious risk of total destruction. The problem of a durable and permanent peace is nothing more than the problem of a genuinely political organization of the world.