

expenditures will in time lead to a larger role for Western Europe and Japan. America has borne a heavy and lonely burden since 1945. What is required is a rational effort to reduce the American role simultaneously with an enhanced Western European and Japanese effort, as contrasted with a premature cutback in the United States' presence. This is obviously more easily said than done, and the effort is complicated by the real domestic needs of this nation and the emotional and destructive forces referred to above. In a way it can be said that President Nixon faces the same requirement in overall American foreign policy as he does in Vietnam: a premature withdrawal would have very adverse if not disastrous consequences in both cases. And the President is confronted with Communist sophistry and American emotionalism as he attempts to handle both the general and the specific situations. Hopefully, the Administration will be able to succeed and thereby refute de Tocqueville's pessimistic prediction about the lack of democratic persistence and rationality "in spite of serious obstacles."

It should be pointed out that even if America manages these difficult feats, it is likely that nuclear pro-

liferation will accompany a reduction in the U.S. presence. And a multipolar military as well as political world could prove even more unstable and dangerous than the bipolar military system which has existed ever since the second world war. A smaller American effort may well result in a larger amount of insecurity. But this country can no more have its cake and eat it than can any other nation under the sun. In any event, this nation is going to have a large burden in foreign policy in the coming decade, barring an irrational retreat to neo-isolationism. Thomas Bailey is harshly critical of the American role in Vietnam. But he says in the epilogue of the latest edition of his text, *A Diplomatic History of the American People* (1969): "Many Americans do not have the patience to sustain a long-range program in foreign affairs, and the Communists are counting on this weakness. The ordinary American wearies quickly of well doing; he is too willing to appease or to postpone the evil day. The American people must gird themselves for a long campaign and learn to live with chronic crisis." Perhaps it was premature to pat ourselves on the back for having disproved de Tocqueville's gloomy forecast. The returns aren't in yet.

books

THE DISCRIMINATING REALISM OF PAUL RAMSEY

Joseph L. Allen

In a revealing passage midway through this volume, Paul Ramsey offers what I believe is the key to the intent of his recent writings. In all that he has written about the morality of war, Ramsey says, he has sought "to propose an extension within the realism of Reinhold Niebuhr," that extension being the principle of discrimination in the use of military force. Ramsey implies two things here. The first is that he seeks to work *within* Niebuhr's Christian realism. He fundamentally affirms it, though in a way that goes far beyond mere repetition, but plumbs to its basic insight and expresses the insight creatively in his own way for problems about which Niebuhr never wrote.

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The second implication is that Niebuhr worked with a single principle in his moral reflection about politics — the principle of proportion, the idea that amid the ambiguous moral alternatives of politics one must always seek to produce the greater good (or the lesser evil). That principle is necessary but insufficient, Ramsey says; thus the extension.

The Just War: Force and Political Responsibility
by Paul Ramsey. Scribner's. 554 pp. \$12.50.

The chief concerns of this volume are at these two points. In both of them Ramsey today finds himself beleaguered among Christian ethicists commenting on war; not alone, certainly, but definitely in the minority of vocal Christian opinion. The articles collected here were therefore for the most part written in bat-

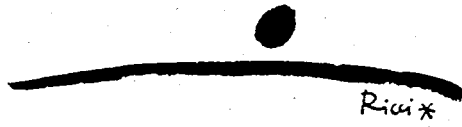
tle with his fellow Christian ethicists over these two points, though a few chapters arose out of the battle on his second front, with the secular specialists in national security policy, insofar as they too are ethicists. There is scarcely a chapter in which Ramsey is not either initiating an attack upon the inadequacies of some recent statement about war by Christians, or defending and clarifying his views against the criticisms of other Christian ethicists. The 24 chapters include every major work Ramsey has written on the morality of war since he published *War and the Christian Conscience* in 1961, except for his discussions of the subject in *Who Speaks for the Church?* (1967). Together they constitute a major contribution to the ethics of international politics and war, with discussions of the nature and purpose of politics, the relation of power and purpose in international politics, the proper limits upon the use of force, the appropriate role of churchmen speaking upon political issues, and all this as related to both nuclear deterrence and insurgency-counterinsurgency war. The book is rich with moral wisdom, though if one would mine it he must be willing to follow Ramsey through arguments that are often intricate, sometimes elusive, though always purposeful.

Ramsey had expected that Niebuhr's political realism would be a more lasting contribution, at least in its properly restrained form. Ramsey's own restatements of it partake of that restraint. So the will to power is always a possible motive, he believes, but not the only possible one; political relations must always "be controlled *also* by force" (p. 71), but not only by force; men in this eon are always sinful, but they are not merely sinful; power, and possibly force, is of the *esse* of politics, but no government pursues its goals only by coercion. Yet even this restrained realism has largely lost its voice among churchmen today, Ramsey laments.

Those who have forgotten the wisdom of realism, Ramsey says, are very often the religious (and non-religious) liberals (who abuse "that great word"). They believe some or all of the following: that force can be banished as an instrument of national policy, at least sometimes; that negotiation is always an option and always preferable to "an arbitrament of arms"; that in international politics love can be effective directly rather than through structures; that one scarcely need have recourse to a doctrine of sin to explain international disorder; and that nations should give up the right and duty to use force even before there is any world public authority. Ramsey is baffled and frustrated that the memories of churchmen

should be so short — their memories both of Christian realism and of political events. The ultimate irony of the whole situation, though, is that "Reinhold Niebuhr himself can be quoted in support of the liberal consensus!" "Even Reinhold Niebuhr signs petitions or editorials as if Reinhold Niebuhr never existed!" So political wisdom now resides, not with the leading theologians, but among secular political analysts like Robert E. Osgood and Robert W. Tucker. The deepest need of current Christian commentary upon matters international is more Christian realism, Ramsey affirms, not less.

The "religious liberals" Ramsey has in mind have been little moved by his criticisms as these articles have appeared over the past decade. "Realism" is more a boast than a philosophy, John Bennett suggests (*Christianity and Crisis*, August 5, 1968). "After all, who would admit that his position was unrealistic?" One rebuttal they bring to arguments like Ramsey's is that the question of realism is a matter of emphasis. Niebuhr's Christian realism was appropriate in the 1940's, when he emphasized human sin, spoke of the pride and pretenses of power, and called for balancing power with power. What is needed now, however, they continue, is emphasis on human possibilities and hopes, not human sin; or even confidence in the morality of one's cause, rather than self-consciousness about its pretenses (see Harvey Cox's comments in the same issue of *Christianity and Crisis*). Furthermore, one must be willing to change political strategies in a different time. Those who opposed Hitler in the 1940's need not necessarily oppose the Viet Cong.



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In Ramsey's view this kind of argument misses the point. Certainly political policies will vary, and there is no special Christian wisdom that will settle the question of what is the prudent policy. But realism is not simply a tactic with which to balance the wrong emphases of one's times. It is primarily an effort to perceive those characteristics always and everywhere present in politics, including possibilities for good and for evil. Certainly both kinds of possibilities are present in any human situation. As Ramsey sees it, though, the religious liberals make political judgments as though pride of power were no longer a universal political possibility, as though international politics might achieve peace or justice through rea-

sonableness and without the exercise of force, and as though evil in international politics could be localized in that side that seeks to use force to preserve order. "The presence or absence of Christian realism is shown in the premises, not in the conclusions," Ramsey writes (p. 484), and the premises of the religious liberals incline them not merely to openness and hope, but to a doctrinaire utopianism.

But the religious liberals might push their case somewhat further. Is not Ramsey's brand of "realism" inherently conservative, they ask, inherently on the side of order and resistant to change? Ramsey is quite aware of this question. It is one that will understandably be raised today about one who argues, as he does, that a policy of nuclear deterrence is not necessarily immoral, or that many of the ways the United States pursues its counterinsurgency strategy in Vietnam are not necessarily immoral (though that does not settle the question of their wisdom), or that a nation such as ours "cannot renounce its initiative in keeping the world 'safe for diversity.'"

Ramsey meets this criticism, not by his conclusions, but by his method, his way of doing ethics. He understands his office to be that of Christian ethicist, not maker of specific policy. As such, it is not his place to pass final judgment on which policy should be adopted, but to speak about the moral limits within which any policy should move and the moral considerations that should influence one as he decides upon a policy. (One of Ramsey's deepest disagreements is with those churchmen who confuse these offices as they issue church pronouncements.) Because he understands the doing of Christian ethics this way, his judgments about specific issues tend to follow a certain pattern. Once he has wrestled with the issues about which a Christian ethicist might have some special competence, and once he has sought to rule out what is morally prohibited, he refrains from offering a final judgment about matters of prudence, matters in which Christians work on the same basis with non-Christians. This procedure in effect leaves options open (within morally permissible limits) to both the conservative, the liberal, and the revolutionary, provided they can justify their positions on the available evidence and within the bounds of moral responsibility.

On no account, however, will Ramsey grant that he means to side always against revolution. What he does intend is "always to side with the doctrine of justifiable revolution" (p. 460). He means to hold the revolutionary to the same criteria for the justifiable use of force that were developed in just war theory more generally. The revolutionary must meet more than the criterion of a just cause; he must also

have serious chance of success, the evil avoided must outweigh the evil brought about, and the means must be both proportionate and morally discriminating. Ramsey has only scorn for those who believe that God does only revolution in the world and who believe that every revolutionary movement is justified. They are simply the Crusaders of a later century. In one moment they believe that force can be banished from international politics; and, nurtured by that illusion, in the next moment they believe that, because their cause is "just," the force they use need not be restrained.

So does Ramsey seek to uphold Christian realism in a day when it is most lacking. He and it deserve a more careful hearing than they get among Christians who speak about international politics.

The extension Ramsey wishes to add to Niebuhrian realism is the principle of discrimination. It is not enough in war, he writes, merely to calculate consequences and opt for the lesser total evil. Insofar as war is ever just, and therefore "barely human," its very purpose demands more than this. The objective of combat, Ramsey repeatedly explains, is to incapacitate the combatant, to prevent him from doing unjust harm. The objective is not even the death of the combatant as an end in itself, though his death may be necessary in order to incapacitate him. Nor is war's just objective ever the death of noncombatants. Their deaths often occur unintentionally in the process of an attack upon a military target, Ramsey explains, but noncombatants may never justly be attacked directly and intentionally. To do so constitutes murder. In war the effort to kill combatants is permitted when it is the lesser evil — when it is proportional to a just purpose; but murder is no more permitted in war than anytime else. So the Christian seeks to shape even the barely human activity of war-making to the demands of love.

The point is clear, but it is widely misunderstood and frequently rejected. Ramsey is repeatedly forced to explain and defend it — against pacifists who see no distinction between killing and murder; against those who see no significance in the distinction between killing noncombatants directly and intentionally, and killing them as the indirect and unintended byproduct of attacks on military targets; against those who believe that the principle of noncombatant immunity is necessarily incompatible with nuclear deterrence; and especially against those who believe that in war any means are legitimate and any target a military one, including noncombatants. Ramsey makes his point with characteristically vivid metaphors: One

would not (or at least should not) attack the three-year-old daughter of a criminal in order to bring him to give himself up; one would not (and should not) tie babies to the bumpers of automobiles in order to reduce traffic accidents. No more should one attack mothers, children, and other noncombatants, or the very social fabric of a nation, in order to "weaken its morale" and bring it to its knees. The issue is of the utmost importance. It is finally the question whether any war is going to be justifiable in fact, whether a war can and will be directed, not only at its outset, but also in its daily conduct, toward a just purpose — the protection of persons from harm. Paul Ramsey has done as much as any other man since World War II to bring this issue to public attention. If today national leaders and the national public are more sensitive to the moral immunity of noncombatants than they were in the time of Dresden and Hiroshima, it is largely to his credit — along with the work of a handful of other Protestants and a multitude of Roman Catholics.

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But however important it is to affirm and to respect noncombatant immunity, Ramsey's position on this issue contains a problem. Under ordinary circumstances, and even under most extraordinary circumstances, our choice is between respecting noncombatant immunity, on the one hand and, at most, possibly attaining some modest gain in total good consequences on the other. In such cases many persons would agree with Ramsey that it is morally obligatory to respect the right of the noncombatant to immunity, and obligatory to pay the price — and it may be a sizeable price — of protecting that right. In ethics the issue is not merely how to produce the best total consequences, but also *whose* good consequences they will be. Furthermore, in Christian ethics, right action is not merely a matter of producing some abstract good but also, and primarily, acting so as to affirm the covenant of mutual loyalty with every other man in which one stands, whether he likes it or not, because we all exist under a covenanting God.

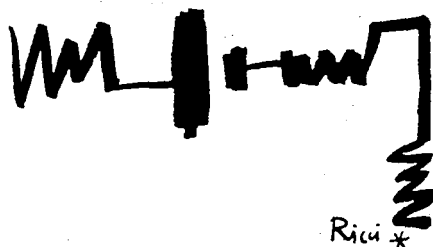
What is one to do, though, when the alternatives are starker? What if one must choose between the right to immunity of a handful of persons, on the one hand, and the destruction of countless millions of people, with all of whom we are in covenant under God, on the other? How morally justified would one be in saying that although, tragically, he unintentionally allowed the deaths of millions upon millions as collateral damage, at least he did not commit murder by direct and intentional attacks upon the

innocent? In such an extreme case it is not as clear what one should do as Ramsey may assume.

He has a preliminary answer: such cases do not occur. But that reply will not hold up. Strategists are not hard pressed to concoct scenarios of this sort; and since, as Ramsey says, there is no distinctively Christian perception of the facts, he cannot declare that no such case would ever occur. It is unlikely but by no means impossible. But, Ramsey might continue, one ought not appeal "merely to consequences made to seem overriding in extreme examples," as he in fact argues in another work. However, he correctly answers this objection himself in the present volume and elsewhere, when by precept and example he proves "the virtue of unpacking a hypothetical case and the clarification of moral conduct that may be derived from such an exercise." Ramsey should not then foreclose in advance either the possibility or the moral significance of such a case of conflict between rights and incalculably great consequences.

If such a conflict were to occur, what then would be one's Christian moral obligation? In this volume Ramsey does not speak to this question, presumably because he does not entertain the idea of such a case. In earlier works, however, he has dealt with a similar type of issue at least twice, and in ways that are helpful. Once, in *War and the Christian Conscience*, he imagined an extremely rare type of tubal pregnancy, one in which the unborn child could not possibly become viable, and the only way to bring about an abortion and save the mother was to attack the unborn child directly and intentionally. In that case it would be a matter of one life or none. If so, he concluded, then love must remain sovereign over its rules, and one must attack the child lest both be lost. Furthermore, to do so "is not to do wrong but to do what we know to be right in order that good may come of it."

On another occasion, in *Nine Modern Moralists*, he discussed the case of the leaky longboat crowded with twice the passengers it could carry and at the point of going down at sea far from any known aid. It was clear to him that some persons must (morally speaking) be put overboard in order that some might be saved. Nor would he call that murder, but again,



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doing what is right to prevent everything from being lost.

One should not simply conclude that no such extreme conflicts of moral responsibility can occur in war. If such a case were to occur, and if to prevent an incalculable disaster one were to decide to attack the innocent directly, then what would his intentions be? Perhaps there would be a morally significant sense in which he would not *intend* the death of these innocents even though he would be attacking them directly. He would not desire or want their deaths. (Ramsey is not entirely consistent in the present volume about whether "wanting" and "not wanting" an effect to ensue is really the test of "intending." On p. 318 he says that this is the test, but on p. 398, in another article, he says that it is not.) But however the question of "wanting" is decided, he would be responding to the deepest kind of moral obligation to those with whom he is in covenant. He would, as Ramsey has put it, be doing "what we know to be right in order that good may come of it."

Ramsey assumes that when noncombatant immunity conflicts with the effort to reduce evil con-

sequences, noncombatant immunity must always take precedence. I am suggesting that in rare types of extreme cases, where the evil consequences would be incalculably disastrous, moral responsibility itself would call this precedence into question. Furthermore, I believe that such a conclusion is assimilable with Ramsey's ethic.

A word of caution is needed in conclusion, however. None of the preceding argument is intended to give the least aid and comfort to that commander, civilian or uniformed, who is hard pressed or impatient or angry and wants an excuse for attacking noncombatants. The commander is exceedingly unlikely to encounter an actual case like the above. He may, but he should not expect to. Furthermore, he will probably be in no condition to assess the matter with moral objectivity. He would do better to work with the maxim that Ramsey has often repeated, that today prudence and moral responsibility largely coincide in requiring the immunity of noncombatants. When it is prudent to be moral, far more people will opt for moral action, though sometimes we are not even fully in favor of prudence.

worldview

Index to Vols. 11-12

January 1968-December 1969

Articles and Editorials

After the War, *Editorial*, Mar 69

American Pacifism: The Problems and the Promise, *Mulford Q. Sibley*, Feb 69

American Society Is . . . , *Editorial*, Jun 69

American University Today, *The, Bernard Murchland*, Feb 69

America Today: Are We at a Watershed? Jan 68

Our National Policies: Time for a Change, *John C. Bennett*; For America, a Special Moment, *Jerald C. Brauer*; Political Reality and Human Reality, *John Cogley*; The Choice Is Ours — Now, *Philip M. Klutznick*; A New Pattern for America, *Hans J. Morgenthau*; Politics as Science, Not Prophecy, *Paul Ramsey*; The Challenge of the Future, *Kenneth W. Thompson*

Anarchism, Violence and Civil Disorder, *Paul W. Blackstock*, Jun 68

And on Other Fronts, *Editorial*, May 69

Balkanization, Biafra and Human Rights, *Editorial*, Nov 68

Karl Barth and Thomas Merton: Grace as Demand, *William Clancy*, Jan 69

"Biafra Lobby" and U.S. Foreign Policy, *The, Ernest W. Lefever*, Feb 69

Bunglers' War, *The, Edmund Stillman*, Nov 69

Christian and Politics, *The, Peter J. Riga*, Oct 69

Christianity and Communism: The Emerging Dialogue, *Bernard Murchland*, Nov 69

Churches in Foreign Policy Debates, *James R. Jennings*, Mar 68

Churches, the State and Modern War, *The, Editorial*, Sum 68

Communist China and U.S. Policies, *Editorial*, Mar 69

Conscience and Community, *Editorial*, Nov 68

Contemporary Crisis and the Will of America, *The, James V. Schall, S. J.*, Apr 68

Contra Academicos, *Bernard Murchland*, May 68

Crisis of International Education, *The, Charles A. Gliozzo*, Sum 69

Diary of a Trip to Asia, *Seth Tillman*, Sum 69

Discriminating Realism of Paul Ramsey, *The, Joseph L. Allen*, Dec 69

Election 1968, and Beyond (reprint), *Paul Ramsey*, Dec 68

End of the '60's, *The: America Today, Editorial*, Dec 69

Ethical Rhetoric and Ethical Reality: Vietnam and the Middle East, *Thomas Sieger Derr*, Mar 68

Ethics for the New Man, *Bernard Murchland*, Sum 69

European Students' Revolt, *The, Henry ten Kortenaar*, Sep 68

Fear in Our Time (reprint), Jun 68