

NUCLEAR DETERRENCE MORALITY: ATLANTIC COMMUNITY BISHOPS IN TENSION

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CATHOLIC IT IS NOT. Kaleidoscopic would be a more apt description of the state of official Catholic teaching on the morality of nuclear deterrence as it is being formulated among the bishops in Europe and North America for the guidance of their respective peoples, who have long been associated in the political and military structures of the Atlantic community. For a comparison of the official statements of the concerned episcopal conferences in the U.S.A., Canada, the United Kingdom, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands reveals a posture which is variegated and constantly changing. Since, however, this proliferation of magisterial initiatives is directly due to the renewed emphasis placed on episcopal collegiality by the Second Vatican Council, it would be most appropriate perhaps to describe the current state of church teaching on nuclear deterrence as conciliar and in that sense Catholic, if not catholic. The largely unnoticed tension presently being experienced between the national hierarchies of the nations of the Atlantic community is a result of the dynamics of a decentralized magisterium, which was one of the principal insights and achievements of Vatican II. It thus represents one of the first fruits of the Council in response to the central moral challenge of the era: nuclear deterrence and/or war. Since the potential fruitfulness of the present tension between the various hierarchies will depend to some extent on the ability of each national episcopal conference to understand and respond to the initiatives of all the others, it may be of service to offer here a catalogue of the official magisterial statements which will have appeared by mid-June 1982. Following the survey of the present state of episcopal teaching on the topic, some brief explanatory hypotheses will be proposed as a possible contribution to mutual understanding among the episcopal bodies.

NORTH AMERICA

At the present moment the first draft of a pastoral letter from the United States National Conference of Catholic Bishops has been circulated to the entire membership of the episcopacy by the NCCB *ad hoc* Committee on War and Peace, which has been working under the chairmanship of Archbishop Joseph Bernardin (Cincinnati) since November 1980 to elaborate such a common statement on urgent matters of morality confronting the American people and their religious leaders.

Presumably the structure of this draft of the pastoral letter, to be debated in plenary session of the bishops November 15-17, 1982, follows the general lines of the official position of the American bishops as agreed upon by its Administrative Board and announced by John Cardinal Krol (Philadelphia) before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on the occasion of their hearings on the ratification of SALT II in September 1979.¹ Very sketchily, one could characterize the public discussion among the American bishops since that initial statement in 1979 as an earnest and unfinished dialogue between two groups of bishops: a large majority adhering tentatively to the position set forth by Krol in 1979 and expecting to issue in November an elaborated and clarifying explication of the moral arguments and moral consequences for individuals of that position, and a smaller but highly publicized group who wish to lead the Church further in a prophetic stance against the risks and moral obscenity of nuclear deterrence. In this latter number, of course, are Archbishop Raymond G. Hunthausen (Seattle), who has refused to pay half of his Federal income taxes as a protest against co-operation in funding nuclear deterrence, and Bishop Leroy T. Matthiesen (Amarillo), who has urged Catholic workers in a local nuclear weapons assembly plant to consider resigning on the grounds of conscience. While the majority echoes Cardinal Krol's condemnation of the use (and even the threatened use) of our national strategic nuclear arsenal, they second as well his insistence that it is not evidently required to dismantle the arsenal itself, which, even without the threat to utilize it, serves as a significantly stabilizing factor in international relations, until such time as the arsenals of the superpowers can be reduced or eliminated reciprocally. The smaller band of bishops associating themselves more closely with Hunthausen and Matthiesen evidence deep moral uneasiness with this tolerance of the retention of the arsenal itself. How this tension within the American hierarchy will affect their deliberative process before

¹ U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *The Salt II Treaty*, Hearings on EX. Y, 96-1, 96th Congress, 1st. sess., 1979, Part IV, 116-30. Cardinal Krol summarized his testimony in "SALT II and the American Bishops," *America* 142 (March 8, 1980) 183-85. The authoritative summary of the various American episcopal initiatives on this question, beginning with the epochal testimony of Cardinal Krol, is contained in R. A. McCormick, "Notes on Moral Theology: 1981," *TS* 43 (1982) 113-19. Several recent surveys of various national episcopal statements on deterrence include detailed treatment of the American stances. Cf., e.g., Pius Hafner, "Warnungen vor der atomaren Gefahr," *Schweizerische Kirchenzeitung*, April 8, 1982, 233-36, and Cordelia Rambacher, "Was sagt die Kirche zu Rüstung und Frieden?" *Herder Korrespondenz* 35 (1981) 304-9. Recent journalistic surveys include John Fialka, "Nuclear Fission: Atom-Weapons Issue Stirs Divisive Debate in the Catholic Church," *Wall Street Journal* 199, no. 111 (June 9, 1982), and Pierre de Charentenay, "L'Eglise américaine passe à l'opposition," *Monde diplomatique*, no. 339 (June 1982) 6-7.

November is, of course, a matter of intense interest in both church and government circles internationally.

The Canadian bishops issued on November 25, 1981, a sharply critical assessment of the American government's decision (announced on August 9, 1981) to proceed with the production and deployment of the neutron bomb.² Seeing in this decision a return to the dangers of the cold war, the bishops warned that use of such a weapon risks inaugurating a general nuclear war, which has been condemned by the Council and in various papal statements.³ More fundamentally, they drew attention to the moral perversity which appears to guide research and development of weapons whose principal merit supposedly is their capacity to spare the material objects on a battlefield while exterminating the persons caught there. More recently, press reports record a statement by the Canadian bishops to the Parliamentary Committee for External Affairs, made in late February 1982, which advocated the dismantling of nuclear weapons installations in Canada, the discontinuation of Canadian manufacture of component parts of nuclear weapons, and, most dramatically, re-examination of Canada's role in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).⁴

GREAT BRITAIN

Included in the record of official episcopal teaching on nuclear deterrence from the Catholic hierarchies of the United Kingdom are documents from three sources: (1) the Bishops Conference of England and Wales; (2) the pronouncements of Basil Cardinal Hume, Archbishop of Westminster and president of the Episcopal Conference of England and Wales;⁵ and (3) the recent statement of the Roman Catholic Bishops Conference of Scotland.

The bishops of England and Wales have issued statements on the morality of nuclear deterrence on several occasions and have announced that they are continuing their own process of reflection on the topic,

² French text of the Declaration provided by the documentation service of the General Secretariat of the French Episcopal Conference, 106 rue du Bac, Paris (Document no. 440, pp. 7-8).

³ Citing W. M. Abbott, S.J., and J. Gallagher, eds., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: America Press, 1966): "The Church in the Modern World," no. 80, p. 294.

⁴ Reported in the *St. Louis Review*, May 7, 1982, 8.

⁵ Of considerable potential significance for possible developments within the community of European churches is the fact that Cardinal Hume additionally holds the presidency of the Conseil des Conférences Episcopales de l'Europe, an organization which groups together representatives of thirty-five episcopal conferences of the Continent. Conversations I have had with officials of various European episcopal organizations suggest that further co-ordinated efforts among the various national hierarchies may contribute to the evolution of magisterial teaching on these questions.

without, however, promising to make another statement in the foreseeable future.⁶ In none of these statements does the Conference go beyond the teaching of the Second Vatican Council: "Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or of extensive areas along with their populations is a crime against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation" (*Gaudium et spes*, no. 80).⁷ In their first statement on the question (December 1971) the bishops, after recalling the outlines of the just-war theory, echo the Council in recalling the limits established by the tradition in selecting targets and strategies.⁸ Again, at their annual assembly in October 1978, the Conference called on the government to take initiatives which would encourage international negotiations for the control and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, notably chemical weapons.⁹ This episcopal position was taken up again in their message "The Easter People," issued in response to the important National Pastoral Congress at Liverpool, which had brought together 2,000 delegates from dioceses and organizations in May 1980. At that Congress the group discussing peace questions had tentatively challenged the validity of the just-war tradition and, by a majority, condemned as unjust all nuclear wars and even the continued possession of nuclear weapons. In response to this strong position, the hierarchy expressed their own continuing concern about these questions.¹⁰

Subsequently, in response to insistent requests to issue a more comprehensive and detailed analysis on the topic, perhaps in the wake of Cardinal Krol's articulation of the American hierarchy's position, the Conference issued, on November 27, 1980, a statement which, after repeating the teaching of *Gaudium et spes* and recalling its own earlier statements, confesses its inability to say anything more definitive.

⁶ Press statement of the Bishops Conference of England and Wales, Nov. 27, 1980. Text of the statement is included in the official summary, "Catholic Statements etc. on Nuclear Weapons, Originating in England and Wales," published by the Commission for International Justice and Peace of the Episcopal Conference of England and Wales (38-40 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1PD), ed. R. S. Beresford, General Secretary (hereafter, Beresford). The text of the press statement also appeared in the *Tablet* 234 (Dec. 13, 1980) 1239.

⁷ Cf. n. 3 above.

⁸ Beresford 1, "Statement concerning Moral Questions, 1971." Cf. the earlier edition of the statement, *Moral Questions: A Statement by the Bishops Conference of England and Wales* (London: Catholic Truth Society, n.d., Doc. no. 432) 13-14.

⁹ Beresford 2-3, citing the acta of the Episcopal Conference of 1978.

¹⁰ Beresford 6, citing the Report of Sector G, p. 6A. The bishops responded to this report in their subsequent message, "The Easter People," approved by the bishops July 14-16, 1980. Cf. Beresford 7-8, citing section III, "Witnessing to Christ in the World: Christian Witness and Justice," nos. 166-71. Cf. the original text, *The Easter People* (London: St. Paul's Publications, 1980).

We are frequently asked to make a statement on the morality or otherwise of the nuclear deterrent. . . . As a Conference of Bishops we have to say frankly that we are not yet able to give a comprehensive and authoritative judgment on every aspect of this difficult matter.

It is often supposed that the Church can provide an immediate answer to every moral question, however complex. This is not the case. Sometimes the passage of time and much prayerful consideration are required before the mind of the Church can be clarified and a pronouncement made.¹¹

The bishops then go on to pose various questions that evidently reveal the skeleton of their own internal debate and suggest the crucial questions on which the bishops themselves have been unable to find agreement:

Is it ever permitted to use a weapon of mass destruction? Or to threaten or intend to use it? Or to possess it as a means of keeping the peace? In particular, is it right to urge unilateral disarmament, seeing it as a stage towards multilateral disarmament? And is it right for our own country to abandon the nuclear deterrent while allowing nuclear weapons from other countries to be based in our territory?¹²

This last question is capital in the evaluation of European episcopal teaching on nuclear deterrence, which involves an even greater complexity of moral argument than the problem challenging their American counterparts. For European churches must answer two separate moral questions: (1) Is it legitimate to possess, and threaten to use, their own independent nuclear arsenal? Even apart from that anguishing question, (2) is it legitimate to accept the security that comes from the protection of the American nuclear umbrella, to which Great Britain has given governmental and public support and co-operation? Refusing to treat the two questions in unrealistic isolation from each other, the bishops defer a definitive answer.

Several months earlier, however, on July 18, 1980, the Conference had indicated a certain ambiguous reserve about the recent government decision to modernize its nuclear forces by adopting the more advanced Trident 1 missile system for its submarines. It did not, however, condemn the decision to modernize.¹³

The voice of Basil Cardinal Hume of Westminster has been raised on these topics in considerable detail. While hesitating to declare himself opposed to all uses whatsoever of nuclear weapons, he has articulated a position whose component articles might easily persuade individual Catholics to embrace a "nuclear pacifist" stance. Locating his own moral argument within the traditional respect for the right to life, the Cardinal presupposes the immorality of targeting civilians with nuclear weapons

¹¹ Beresford 3-5.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.* 9.

and declares that even the threat to do so is immoral.¹⁴ He then takes up the more difficult question of the possible moral legitimacy of some "counterforce" use of nuclear weapons in a limited and discriminate way, such as the use of antiballistic missiles, air-to-air missiles, or antisubmarine weapons. Conceding that escalation from such isolated and military utilization is not a certainty, he nevertheless hints at a personal moral position profoundly sceptical of such an antiseptic use of nuclear weapons in a real wartime situation. The passage deserves quotation in full:

Total war is immoral under all circumstances. It would also follow that it is wrong, in my view, to seek to deter an aggressor by threatening to wage total war in this morally unacceptable way. [The Archbishop quotes an analogous passage from *To Live in Christ Jesus*, the 1976 statement on this topic issued by the United States National Conference of Catholic Bishops.] I could not, however, similarly condemn outright the possession of nuclear arms which are directed to military targets. But I would wish to emphasise two vital conditions. First, their possession and use would not be justified unless it is possible in practice to draw a clear distinction between military installations and personnel who will be destroyed and the civilian populations which may be affected. And secondly, the use of strategic weapons of this type must not lead to escalation. It is unlikely that these conditions can be realised in practice. If these two conditions do not obtain, then it is very doubtful that even deterrent weapons directed to military targets can be morally justified.¹⁵

Before concluding this survey of official teaching by the Roman Catholic bishops of England and Wales along with the pivotal personal statements of the Archbishop of Westminster, it might be helpful to observe that another ecclesiastical voice in England, that of the Archbishop of Canterbury, has raised a radically trenchant protest against the momentum of the arms race. Archbishop Robert Runcie, speaking at a meeting of the British Council of Churches on November 24, 1980, proffered a statement on the morality of nuclear deterrence which has at present, among official religious statements in the West, no equal for precision of analysis, balance of judgment, and theological richness. With a severity of scepticism about governmental competence that echoes the tones of Augustine of Hippo, Runcie urges vigilance against the "hygienic vocabulary" of defense officials and specialists whose stock in trade ("demographic targeting" etc.) covers over what he judges to be "lunatic"

¹⁴ Cardinal Basil Hume, address to the first national convention of the Disarmament Campaign, April 12, 1980, reprinted in the *Tablet* (n. 6 above) 441-42.

¹⁵ Interestingly, the sentence "It is unlikely that these conditions can be realised in practice" does not appear in the *Tablet* (n. 14 above) but has been inserted in handwriting in the text appended to Beresford, with the notation that this sentence is to amend the earlier version as an official correction of the text.

policies. Against the familiar complacency of some members of the political elites, he summons his hearers to "a religious war."

... the world is dangerous because all regimes, in varying degrees, do not sufficiently respect the word and deal in lies and propaganda which create the possibility of doing the unthinkable.¹⁶

With persuasive allusion to the creative power of the Word and of our own words to heal the wounds of human nature, the Archbishop urges a return to the wellspring of Christian life in order to animate a renewal of Western approaches to peace.

I am convinced that nuclear warfare makes it virtually impossible to draw distinctions between combatants and noncombatants. It may be possible to have a just war but there can be no such thing as just mutual obliteration. I recognise that. And the old distinctions about the just war I find unconvincing in this climate. We are capable of unbinding the forces which lie at the heart of creation and of destroying the entire planet.¹⁷

Nevertheless, Runcie counsels against unilateral nuclear disarmament for Britain, which might shatter the Atlantic alliance. Rather, he calls for removal of all battlefield nuclear weapons and urges the adoption by NATO nations of a "no first use of nuclear weapons" policy. He then shrewdly cautions against expecting that the financial savings to be derived from dismantling the battlefield nuclear weapons can be transferred to more humanitarian purposes, such as aid to poorer nations. For he foresees that the alliance's imperative efforts to shore up its conventional forces in Europe, in order to establish a military balance on that level, will absorb whatever savings can be made from discontinuing the maintenance of battlefield nuclear weapons.

Alluding to an address by the Anglican Primate of England may seem out of place in a survey of initiatives of the Roman Catholic hierarchy of England and Wales. It is done here because of its possible impact on the ongoing discussions within the Catholic Bishops Conference and/or on the initiatives of individual Catholic bishops and citizens. A further contribution to the evolution of official Catholic teaching on these questions may possibly derive from the promised statement being prepared by a commission of the Anglican Church under the chairmanship of the Bishop of Salisbury, due to be published on October 18, 1982, in preparation for the general synod of February 1983.

It comes initially as something of a surprise to those unfamiliar with the British ecclesiastical landscape to discover that the hierarchy of the United Kingdom is bicephalous. For, while the hierarchy of England and

¹⁶ Text provided by Lambeth Palace (London SE1 7JU) p. 2.

¹⁷ Official text (n. 16 above) p. 1.

Wales was re-established after the centuries of penal legislation in 1850, the Scottish hierarchy did not reappear until 1878.¹⁸ We must look further, then, and farther north to ascertain the state of official church teaching on nuclear deterrence in the U.K. Study of the Scottish statement (March 16, 1982) uncovers a position notably more critical than that of the bishops of England and Wales. Indeed, the Scottish bishops move even beyond the more decisive stance of Cardinal Hume. While repeating the affirmation of the continuing validity of the just-war tradition and reiterating the Vatican Council's condemnation of counter-city attacks, the Conference makes two points which depart from the episcopal statements of England and Wales. First, all use of nuclear weapons is condemned as morally unacceptable, because such use would likely escalate to a broader and less discriminate war:

And even if there are weapons of so-called controlled capability which might not merit condemnation on the grounds of being indiscriminately destructive, nevertheless the escalatory consequences of their use and their long-term effects would render their use morally unacceptable. . . .

We are convinced, however, that if it is immoral to use these weapons it is also immoral to threaten their use.¹⁹

Secondly, the statement includes an element unique in episcopal statements from North America or Europe: a rejection of the present willingness of citizens (including church officials) to leave to governments the right to make these crucial decisions (about a possible nuclear response to conventional or nuclear attack) without any possibility of public influence at some point in the life of the nation. Protesting the present governmental policy of silence on these questions, the bishops reject the demand that such options be delegated to governmental officials.

We do know that the policy [of our government] is one of deterrence, but we do not know what measure of retaliation is contemplated should deterrence appear to fail. While it may not be politic for government to disclose certain information, we should know whether a threat of retaliation with such weapons is likely to be implemented in the event of any attack or only in the case of a nuclear one. Whatever is done will be done in our name and, in a democracy, with our presumed agreement.²⁰

There is, then, in the wake of Vatican II's institutionalization of shared responsibility among the national hierarchies, an episcopal pluralism, even within one political entity, Great Britain, probably undreamt of in the philosophies of the Council fathers.

¹⁸ For the background of the separate episcopal structures, cf. M. P. Hornsby-Smith, "Catholicism in England," *America* 146 (May 22, 1982) 396-99.

¹⁹ The Roman Catholic Bishops Conference of Scotland, "Disarmament and Peace," *Tablet* 236 (April 10/17, 1982) 386.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

FRANCE

Another postconciliar development in the Church's response to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the consequent heightening of the risk of total war, which could not have been predicted during the Council itself, is the recent silence, almost unbroken, of the hierarchy of France on this question. As is well known, most of the leaders in the Council's effort to take a strong stand against the momentum towards nuclear destruction were French. In his study of the sessions leading up to *Gaudium et spes*, W. J. Schuijt narrates the vigorous interventions in favor of a complete condemnation of nuclear deterrence and its supporting arsenal made by numerous French bishops, notably Feltin (Paris), who presciently feared the uncontrollability of such weapons, Ancel (Lyons), Gouyon (Rennes), and Martin (Rouen), all of whom urged condemnation of the national right to make war, Liénart (Lille), who disputed the claim that modern war might be "just," and Bouillon (Verdun), who advocated complete disarmament.²¹ These powerful efforts to bring the Church to a radical stance on modern war were, of course, parried by other fathers, especially some of the Americans, including a small band led by Archbishop Philip Hannan (New Orleans), who felt that all the early versions of Schema 13 were wanting in balanced appreciation of the moral responsibilities and dedication of statesmen and military officials. Surely one of the remarkable ironies of recent church history is the almost complete reversal of position by these two national hierarchies; for it is now the American bishops who have taken the lead in damning the arms race, while the French have so far contented themselves with very muted criticism indeed of the possible moral perils of deterrence.

Indicative of this trend to speak of the nuclear peril in cautious tones is the recent (June 1982) statement made jointly by the French and German hierarchies. After a year's deliberation on the topic, disclaiming any episcopal responsibility for elaborating political platforms, and recalling the crucial but somewhat remote criterion of the common good as the measure of politics and strategy, the collaborative effort resembles

²¹ W. J. Schuijt, history of the text of chap. 5, in H. Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* 5 (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969) 328-47. René Laurentin makes rather disparaging remarks about the chauvinism of the American fathers of the Council in this episode, suggesting that they hoped to extort from the Council a solemn thanksgiving for the American contribution to global stability. Cf. his *Bilan du Concile* (Paris: Seuil, 1966) 175-78. Xavier Rynne, *The Fourth Session* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966), stresses the unrepresentative character of Archbishop Hannan's last-minute intervention, insisting that a small portion of the American hierarchy supported these efforts (225-30).

for all the world the famed progeny of the hills.²²

Slightly more incisive is the joint statement issued on October 21, 1982, by the French Commission on Justice and Peace (under the presidency of Msgr. Jacques Ménager of Reims) and the corresponding organ of the Federated French Protestant Churches. This collaborative effort recalls the Council's (as well as other church groups') condemnation of indiscriminate targeting, warning against the seeming tendency in some quarters (probably abroad) to adopt the notion of limited nuclear war as an acceptable military strategy. A second promised (collaborative) proposal of these groups is awaited momentarily on the occasion of the Second United Nations Special Session on Disarmament (June 1982).

One possible source for future episcopal initiatives in this area is suggested in the brief text on moral theology *L'Homme debout* published in 1980 by Msgr. Jacques Jullien, formerly professor of moral theology at Brest and currently bishop of Beauvais.²³ A potential source of renewed episcopal reflection might be the sincere questioning of French military officers troubled by the moral issue of the justifiability of France's nuclear defense policy. Msgr. Jullien recounts in his volume the touching story of the resignation of a promising young submarine officer who was unable finally to reconcile his constitutional oath to execute the deterrent threat with his moral convictions and religious training.²⁴ After recounting this episode involving one of his former parishioners at Brest, the Bishop goes on to defend France's decision to deploy its independent nuclear force, although he had earlier doubted the wisdom of this choice. Yet it remains possible that a significant shift in the attitudes of French military officers themselves might eventually be reflected in the position taken by at least some of the French bishops. Due to the exceptionally solid social consensus behind the *force de frappe*, however, a corporate stance by the French hierarchy challenging this consensus is unlikely.

A second profoundly revolutionary development for French church teaching, as well as for the nation's foreign policy, would be the gradual withdrawal of the American nuclear umbrella—for example, as a result of the current American retreat from the intention to be the first to use nuclear weapons in the interest of defending Europe in a conventional war. The tide in the United States is running against such initial use of nuclear weapons to shore up inadequate conventional forces in the event

²² This summary and evaluation is made on the basis of the penultimate version of the text, finally approved by the French contributor, and before the final agreement of the other signatory. The allusion to the progeny of the hills is, of course, a reference to the satiric comment of Horace "parturiunt montes, nascitur ridiculus mus" in the *Ars poetica*.

²³ Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1980. Cf. esp. 109–34.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 111, 130.

of war.²⁵ If such a trend were to continue and to expand, a brighter light might fall in France on the risks and the consequent moral responsibilities of authorizing the use of nuclear weapons. In such circumstances it would not be unlikely that conscience would quicken in France, evoking an appropriate response among the hierarchy.

A more likely development in church teaching touching these questions in France, however, would be the ecclesial re-examination of the more fundamental question of the citizens' responsibility to participate in governmental processes and to form personal judgments on national options in foreign policy. As early as 1974, Msgr. Gabriel Marie Joseph Matagrín (Grenoble) pointed out that in recent years, under the Fifth Republic, there had been a growing tendency in the public to delegate to the occupant of the Elysée the right, and the corresponding duty, to make fundamental choices vitally affecting even the physical security of the nation—for example, in the field of nuclear deterrence.²⁶ It was precisely to counteract this exaggerated deference to public authorities on vital questions that Matagrín summoned the Church. The call is still echoing in the Church and may be heard more acutely in a social context changing under various pressures suggested above. At any rate, for the time being, the irony remains intact. While the American bishops are now talking in the accents of the French fathers of the Vatican Council, the eldest daughter of the Church keeps her peace.

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

While the status of episcopal teaching on the morality of modern war is fluid throughout Western Europe, as will have been evident from the accounts presented above of the situation in Great Britain and France, nowhere does this appear to be more true than in the Federal Republic of Germany. Opening a protracted "peace offensive" with a pontifical Mass at Cologne on June 5, 1982, the German hierarchy is deeply engaged in the process of formulating a common position on the topic. A pastoral letter which has been in preparation for some time is promised for the end of this calendar year, at the earliest. The statement, being prepared under the auspices of the hierarchy's Commission on the Faith, will gather up the fragments of earlier episcopal statements, taking cognizance as well of various proposals and studies prepared by official church groups and commissions. All statements which have appeared up to the present

²⁵ Cf. the surprising challenge to the present policy by several of its architects, now having second thoughts: McGeorge Bundy, G. F. Kennan, R. S. McNamara, and Gerard Smith, "Nuclear Weapons and the Atlantic Alliance," *Foreign Affairs* 60 (Spring 1982) 753-68.

²⁶ "L'Enjeu du nucléaire: L'Avenir de notre société," *Documentation catholique*, no. 1726 (Sept. 4-18, 1977) 776-79.

have been explicitly offered as preliminary contributions to the document promised at the end of the year.

Principal contributions to the dialogue of the German Church up to the present include the joint French-German letter already discussed,²⁷ a report of the Central Committee of German Catholics (November 14, 1981), and a lengthy address by Joseph Cardinal Höffner (Cologne) to the Episcopal Conference of Germany at Fulda on September 21, 1981.

The joint statement of the presidents of the French and German Bishops Conferences has been treated above. While reaffirming the right of self-defense and urging renewed dedication to arms-control measures, the document makes its most significant contribution in remarks of a general political nature on the climate of social life in Europe. While eschewing a political role for the hierarchy itself, the respective presidents utter some evaluations of the contemporary state of politics which are not uncritical. Particularly with respect to North-South relations, the letter raises questions about the adequacy of Western political philosophies and patterns of governmental behavior. Western societies are judged to be blind to their own crushing impact on the smaller nations, due to the unfettered exploitation of their societies' relative advantages of power and wealth.²⁸

Rather a different tone, deriving perhaps from the alternative (East-West) perspective shaping the document, marks the recent (November 14, 1981) statement of the Central Committee of German Catholics "On the Current Peace Discussion."²⁹ Urging a posture of *sang-froid* in the eye of widespread panic about the perils of nuclear arms, the statement looks beyond the tensions created by military imbalances to the fundamental political antagonism between East and West which has given rise to the arms build-up. For the necessity to maintain military parity in Europe, despite the dangers and sacrifices involved, arises from the insuperable antagonism between the political systems which have divided the Continent: totalitarian Marxism-Leninism in the East and liberal democracies in the West.

Totalitarianism is branded as an amoral ideology bent on continuing repression of human rights within its present boundaries and on global

²⁷ Cf. n. 22 above.

²⁸ The sharp criticism of society is focused exclusively on North-South relations, leaving East-West tensions unexamined.

²⁹ "On the Current Peace Discussion," a statement adopted by the Plenary Assembly of the Central Committee of German Catholics, Nov. 14, 1981, published by the Secretariat (Hochkreuzallee 246, 5300 Bonn). The Central Committee is an official body comprising delegates from all recognized German Catholic organizations, including both the Commission on Development and Peace (similar to the Justice and Peace Commissions elsewhere) and Pax Christi. Its formal documents, such as the present one, enjoy very significant nonepiscopal authority.

hegemony, achieved by harnessing the resources of Western Europe in its cause. Of capital importance in carrying out this design is the subtle and divisive campaign to split Europe off from its natural ally, the United States, especially by means of a "peace offensive" shifting the blame for the present division of Europe onto the shoulders of the United States.³⁰ It is reported that this tone was used in earlier versions of the text to make an explicit defense of the deployment of the neutron bomb, although revision of the text deleted this conclusion.³¹

Response to this global strategy must be based on a clear assessment of the danger, a clear view of the goal of liberal democracy, namely, the establishment of order through law, and a firm commitment to nuclear deterrence, including the unambiguous willingness to execute the deterrent threat. Needless to say, in the present crisis arms-control negotiations are a high moral imperative, according to the document's final and scarcely saving phrases.

Of the three extant documents on which one must rely in attempting to gauge as circumspectly as possible the tenor of the letter promised for later this year, presumably the most significant is the lengthy address by Cardinal Höffner, president of the German Episcopal Conference, assembled on September 21, 1981, at Fulda. For the address, which was given after the members of the Episcopal Conference had had an opportunity to propose modifications of the text, represents more than merely a personal statement by the Cardinal. Recapitulating the traditional teaching on the limits of legitimate self-defense, Höffner reminds his audience and readers that the tradition disallows acts of reprisal and equally unambiguously condemns indiscriminate bombing which may violate the immunity of noncombatants. While defending the right to maintain even a nuclear arsenal as a form of deterrence, he recalls that Paul VI and John Paul II have expressed anxiety about the indefinite durability of the present period of tense mutual deterrence, precariously balanced on an armaments scale that mocks the moral pretensions of contemporary man.³² Turning briefly to the discussion of the wisdom of deploying the neutron bomb, the Cardinal seems to question that decision on moral grounds by recalling that the choice to cross the nuclear threshold by utilizing such a weapon would involve those responsible for the decision in the indefensible act of inaugurating a nuclear war, since it is not certain

³⁰ "The Soviet Union wishes . . . to create the impression that it is the ties with the United States that constitute the real threat to peace" (7).

³¹ Suggested in the commentary published in *Schweizerische Kirchenzeitung*, April 8, 1982 (cf. n. 1 above).

³² Cited from the French version, published in *Documentation catholique*, no. 1820 (Dec. 20, 1981) 1118.

that the tactical use of such weapons would remain under control.³³ Finally, the Cardinal repeats Vatican II's call for establishing an international organization capable of insuring the peace.

THE NETHERLANDS AND BELGIUM

Neither the Dutch nor the Belgian hierarchy has yet taken a position on the morality of nuclear deterrence, although both episcopal groups are reported to be engaged in discussions and studies which might lead to formulating such statements, even within the year.³⁴ Some hints at the views of some members of these two conferences may be of interest to those trying to anticipate the directions in which such episcopal initiatives might lead.

Jan Cardinal Willebrands (Utrecht) has made two interventions on moral questions related to deterrence. Writing in the name of the Episcopal Conference of the Netherlands to the Prime Minister and to the Chamber of Deputies on December 13, 1980, on the occasion of the parliamentary debate on modernization of NATO nuclear weaponry, and joining forces with the (Dutch) Council of Churches, which reiterated its earlier (1978) address to the government urging caution in co-operating

³³ A crucial passage in the text occurs on p. 26 of the official German version: Joseph Kardinal Höffner, *Das Friedensproblem im Licht des christlichen Glaubens* (Bonn: Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, 1981): "Gegen die Neutronenwaffe wird freilich von vielen besonders heftig protestiert: Sie sei nicht nur in sich schrecklich, sondern werde den Rüstungswettlauf ins Unermessliche vorantreiben. Auch sei der Hinweis, dass der Einsatz der Neutronenwaffe auf bestimmte Ziele, zum Beispiel auf massenweise heranrückende Panzer, begrenzt werden könne, höchst bedenklich: denn wer mit der Neutronenwaffe beginne, bahne dem totalen Atomkrieg den Weg." Because of the crucial character of this text, we may be allowed to cite as well the official French version (*Documentation catholique*, no. 1820 [Dec. 20, 1981] 1122): "Beaucoup de personnes, on le sait, protestent vivement contre la bombe à neutrons: non seulement elle est terrifiante en elle-même, mais elle entraîne la course aux armements à l'infini. De même, l'affirmation selon laquelle l'emploi de la bombe à neutrons pour des objectifs déterminés, par exemple contre une attaque massive des chars, pourrait être limitée, est des plus problématiques: en effet, quiconque commence par la bombe à neutrons ouvre toute grande la porte à la guerre atomique." I add an altogether unofficial English version: "Many are of course protesting with special vigor against the neutron bomb: not only is it horrible of itself; it would propel the arms race beyond any bounds. The claim that one could limit the use of the neutron bomb to definite targets, for example against advancing columns of massed armor, is extremely questionable, for he who introduces the neutron bomb paves the way for all-out nuclear war."

³⁴ One can safely draw this somewhat surprising conclusion from the announcement in *Dossier Pax Christi* of Brussels, not a notably conservative newsletter, that both these episcopal bodies have announced deliberations preparatory to such a pronouncement. The prospective evaluation by the Belgian bishops is announced in notes prepared for discussion on Feb. 1, 1982, by Pax Christi; a similar project is noted for the Netherlands in *Dossier Pax Christi*, 1982, no. 2, xi.

with such programs of modernization, the Cardinal raised the alarm against unreflective acquiescence in the drift towards a nuclear whirlpool.³⁵

Speaking another time on his own initiative, Willebrands seems to have gone further, pointing to the possibility of self-deception in using the word "war" to refer to a nuclear confrontation which would surely bear no resemblance to any phenomenon yet seen on the earth.³⁶ In this spirit of scepticism about the reliability of much of the governmental and public discussion of war and peace issues, the Cardinal announced the extensive church consultations which were then being undertaken in the hope of enlightening the public forum with the light of reflection from within the Church.

One of the voices certain to influence this process of consultation when it reaches the level of the episcopacy itself is that of Msgr. R. P. Bär, Auxiliary Bishop of Rotterdam, whose article "Christianity and Deterrence" was published in the English version of the NATO magazine.³⁷ In this article Bär reveals his own position, which discounts any possibility of a binding statement of a political nature on nuclear deterrence being issued by the Dutch hierarchy. His reasoning is simple and perhaps faintly preconiliar: *Roma tacente, taceant omnes episcopi*. Since Catholic teaching must be universal in order to be binding, national hierarchies must await the initiative of the Vatican, which has so far eschewed any unambiguous condemnation of those possible uses (or threatened uses) of nuclear weapons not condemned by Vatican II.³⁸

The Belgian Bishops Conference issued in May 1978 a summary of previous papal and conciliar statements on the topic of deterrence. Since then the bishops have not spoken either as a conference or individually. They are now said to be on the verge of issuing such a statement.³⁹

Conclusion

While it is self-evident that these documents speak adequately for themselves of the various national ecclesiastical perspectives that can illumine the moral challenge of nuclear deterrence, it may be useful to

³⁵ Jan Willebrands, writing in the name of the Dutch bishops, Dec. 13, 1979, *Documentation catholique*, no. 1778 (Jan. 20, 1980) 94.

³⁶ As reported in *Dossier Pax Christi*, 1982, no. 2, viii.

³⁷ *NATO Review*, Feb., 1982, 23-27.

³⁸ "As we have already said, the highest authority of the Roman Catholic Church has not adopted a political position on this issue either. . . . It would therefore be unusual, to say the least, for a national conference of bishops to adopt any different position" (26).

³⁸ Despite numerous opportunities and multiple statements from the Holy See on deterrence, no evidence exists of any movement beyond the doctrine of Vatican II, *Gaudium et spes*, no. 80.

³⁹ Cf. n. 34 above.

suggest some general reflections on the surprisingly pluralistic posture of the respective hierarchies on fundamentally the same moral challenge within the same political and military alliance of nations.

The most striking phenomenon is the sharp divide between two groups of episcopal bodies: the English-speaking (more importantly, perhaps, those of the Anglo-Saxon social and political culture, namely, Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom) on the one hand and the Continental nations on the other. While there are highly significant differences of specificity and of severity of judgment, for example, between the American hierarchy's present stance and that of the Episcopal Conference of England and Wales, at the two extremes within the Anglo-Saxon grouping, even here one finds a remarkable resonance between the personal statements of Cardinal Hume and the official position of the U.S. Catholic Conference, while the Scottish and Canadian positions likewise display a certain concord that is striking in light of the absence of any collaborative effort between these two groups.

When one crosses the Channel, however, in such a voyage into the postconciliar world of the teaching Church, one encounters, at least at present, quite a different atmosphere of profound reserve. With perhaps two individual exceptions to be found in Msgr. Matagrín of France and Cardinal Höffner of Germany, the bishops are notably more cautious in assessing the moral acceptability of deterrence. At the risk of appearing temerarious, one American observer of this phenomenon might be allowed a few words of speculation about the roots of this radical pluralism in the Church.

Of manifestly fundamental importance to the development of such divergence of views between the Continental hierarchies and those of the English-speaking world is the geographical factor. Proximity to the poised forces of the Warsaw Pact can have a marvelously clearing effect on political analysis. While the Channel would not constitute a very considerable firebreak in a nuclear war, it may well be that it continues to serve psychologically as an assurance of invulnerability, at least in a conventional conflict. Another significant factor is the comparative flexibility of maneuver available to the government planners in the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States, since all of these powers boast a relatively balanced blend of conventional and nuclear forces. France and Germany, on the other hand, to speak only of the great Continental powers, find themselves in a less advantageous position. For, while they are great powers indeed militarily, the forces at their disposal are less adaptable to undertaking radical revisions of strategy. France, on the one hand, may now find itself overcommitted to reliance on nuclear weapons in an era when the alliance may be moving in the direction of greater emphasis on

conventional deterrence and defense. Germany, on the other hand, has denied itself the nuclear option, thus finding itself at the mercy of shifts in defense policy taken by other governments, notably that of the United States. The Continental powers, then, are less able to contemplate radical changes in European security arrangements and understandably are less open to church initiatives urging such fundamental reconsiderations of policy.

These two observations, of a relatively uncontroversial character, would probably be easily admitted by most students of the spectrum of ecclesiastical views on deterrence. An additional reflection, however, more speculative in nature, may shed some further light on the developing opposition between these two groups of church leaders. That reflection concerns the differing value given to deference to political authority in the two groups of societies, the Anglo-Saxon and the Continental European. There is, or at least has been in recent decades, a much less confrontational style in the political culture of the Continent than in the English-speaking nations of the Atlantic community, who display a certain connatural affinity for designing and exercising a political system of checks and balances. This divergence between political cultures which treasure deference to political authority, such as those of France and Germany, and those built on a preference for creative conflict within the political realm may be crucially operative in the dynamics of episcopal deliberations as they approach the possibility of voicing fundamental opposition to governmental policy on issues of vital national interest.

Collegiality, in a word, is at work. Some probably will prefer to call it cacophony, the emergence of an irreconcilable opposition between groups of national hierarchies whose collegial deliberations about matters of public responsibility are so influenced by national or cultural perceptions that any harmonious orchestration of the Church's universal teaching authority has been rendered impossible. Many will sigh nostalgically for the serenity of an earlier era: *Roma locuta, causa finita*. Their worst misgivings about the Council are being corroborated by the unmistakable disarray of the magisterium.

Indeed, the present survey does present a case study in collegiality: a moment in the life of the Church which reveals both the risks and the promise of the postconciliar Church. The risk is evident in the present, perhaps inevitable, proliferation of ecclesial responses to what is supereminently mankind's common threat: the proliferation of nuclear weapons and strategies. Some will be brooding on the story of Babel.

Others, however, may read in the same record rather the promise of a universal magisterium more supple and responsive to the accelerating urgency of moral challenges. For in the variegated pronouncements of the various ecclesial voices there stand revealed as well the virtuosities of

collegiality, the heightened capacity of the Church to respond to emerging crises through the witness of those churches most acutely and urgently confronted with the responsibility of leadership on a particular moral issue. From this more optimistic perspective it is not accidental that the American Church has taken a conspicuous lead in condemning the present strategic policy of the nation. The urgency to pass judgment on the doctrine of assured destruction weighs more heavily on the American Church than on any other. For it is Americans alone who have already used atomic weapons in war. It is likewise America which admittedly makes the most definitive nuclear threats and sees to it that such threats remain credible. In this sense the morality of nuclear deterrence is pre-eminently, though by no means exclusively, an American problem. Once, in the spirit of Vatican II, national episcopal conferences became more fully conscious of their respective local responsibilities, it was seemingly inevitable that American bishops would take the lead in uttering this long overdue condemnation. Collegiality thus contributes to the consciousness of the Church universal the peculiar moral acuity of one nation's memory of having already perpetrated the unspeakable crime against God and man which the Council so resoundingly condemned. In doing so, it may provide other national episcopal conferences with the crucial witness of the repentance of one people who have learned through experience to eschew reliance on the weapon with which they first burdened the human condition. There is no moral witness so unimpeachable as memory.

Yet, other churches besides the American have a right to a voice in the universal response of the Church to the nuclear peril. Especially those churches gathering the faithful of nations almost helplessly sheltered for the last third of a century under the American nuclear shield have a right to voice their own moral anxieties and national concerns. For example, the hope of Europeans that the American strategic arsenal itself be not dismantled before these alliance partners are able to design alternative defense measures is a legitimate concern which the church leaders of these nations are obliged to articulate in the context of the current dialogue. "A decent respect for the opinions of mankind" is a sentiment becoming America's bishops, then, as surely as it befitted the founding fathers at the moment of our nation's birth. Sensitivity to the tension of other, especially closely associated, episcopal bodies as the American bishops make their own fateful choice in November seems to be an ecclesial obligation flowing from the Catholic character of the magisterium. On the delicate and decisive point of distinguishing between the use and threat of nuclear weapons on the one hand, which the NCCB position has already condemned, and the continued possession of the strategic arsenal itself on the other, which the Conference defended as an

interim policy pending reciprocal arms-control measures, attention to the caution that marks virtually all European episcopal statements on deterrence would be the mark of an episcopal body conscious of its integration in the universal magisterium as well as of its unique burden as the episcopacy of the only superpower open to religious inspiration and influence. For collegiality transcends unilateralism in the development of church teaching. Collegiality finally is Catholic.