NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND NUCLEAR WAR: THE SHAPE OF THE CATHOLIC DEBATE

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ARGUMENT ABOUT nuclear policy has been a fact of public life in the West since the awesome power at the heart of matter was first unleashed during the Second World War. This debate has assumed a number of distinct forms, which have been influenced by the political climate prevailing between the superpowers, by the state of relations between members of the Atlantic Alliance, by the development of new technological capacities, by the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and by the level of public awareness and understanding of nuclear-policy questions.[1]

Recent events suggest that the state of the nuclear question is assuming a distinctive form in the present moment. US/USSR relations are at a most delicate and dangerous point. Tensions have increased significantly in the aftermath of Soviet actions in Afghanistan and Poland. These tensions are reflected in the US Senate's nonratification of the SALT II treaty and in the acrimonious exchanges at the Helsinki Accord review conference in Madrid. At the same time, the two sets of negotiations which have recently begun in Geneva on strategic-arms reductions and on the control of intermediate-range nuclear forces in Europe have opened at least a slim possibility of new developments in arms-control policy. The new state of the question is also shaped by the significant strains which have recently developed within NATO.[2] A significant intellectual debate has begun within the Alliance about the wisdom of a NATO declaratory policy renouncing the first use of nuclear weapons.[3] Further, technological developments have created the possibility of deploying formidable new first-strike weapons, such as MX and Trident II, and weapons which are difficult to detect both before and after they are launched, such as the cruise missile. Possession and deployment of such

[1] Two helpful summaries of the evolution of the nuclear debate in the West are Michael Mandelbaum, *The Nuclear Question: The United States and Nuclear Weapons, 1946–1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1979), and Alan Geyer, *The Idea of Disarmament! Rethinking the Unthinkable* (Elgin, Ill.: Brethren, 1982) chap. 1, "The Third Nuclear Age."

[2] Christoph Bertram, "The Implications of Theater Nuclear Weapons in Europe," *Foreign Affairs* 60, no. 2 (Winter 1981/1982) 305–26.

[3] See McGeorge Bundy, George F. Kennan, Robert S. McNamara, and Gerard Smith, "Nuclear Weapons and the Atlantic Alliance," *Foreign Affairs* 60, no. 4 (Spring 1982) 753–68; Karl Kaiser, Georg Leber, Alois Mertes, and Franz-Josef Schultze, "Nuclear Weapons and the Preservation of Peace: A Response to an American Proposal for Renouncing the First Use of Nuclear Weapons," *Foreign Affairs* 60, no. 5 (Summer 1982) 1157–70.

new weapons by both superpowers will raise the level of uncertainty and danger in the balance of terror by a significant degree. Finally, all these changes have converged to bring the fear of nuclear war and the issues of nuclear policy to the center of public concern on both sides of the Atlantic.[4] This fear has sparked the European peace movement, the campaign for a nuclear arms freeze in the US, the activities of groups such as Physicians for Social Responsibility, and the outpouring of public sentiment at the large demonstration in New York during the UN Special Session on Disarmament in June.

These developments have set the context for a serious new engagement by the churches in this debate. In particular, the Roman Catholic Church in the US has embarked on a course that has thrust it into public argument on a central matter of government policy in a way almost certainly unique in its history. The uniqueness of this level of involvement makes it imperative that church leaders—bishops, clergy, religious, and laity—become as clear as possible about the relation between the central realities of the Christian faith and the host of complex issues which swirl through the clouds of public discussion.

This effort at a deep moral and religious reappraisal of Christian responsibilities in the area of nuclear policy has caused a variety of frequently conflicting conclusions to emerge within the churches. This essay will sketch some of the major positions which have emerged. It will also attempt to identify the reasons—theological, political, and military—which account for the divergences between the positions. It will offer an assessment of the positions and propose a basic theological approach to the moral issues for consideration and further debate. My focus will be on developments within the Catholic community, although these developments will be set against the horizon of the larger theological and secular debate.

The analysis will proceed in three steps: (1) the question whether the gospel of Jesus Christ demands total renunciation of violent force; (2) the moral debate about the use of nuclear weapons; (3) the moral ambiguities of deterrence policies. I conclude with a word about the Church's task in the continuing debate.

THEOLOGY, PACIFISM, AND JUST-WAR THEORY

The emergence of a visible and articulate pacifist movement within the American Catholic community in recent years is one of the most significant forces shaping the moral argument about nuclear policies within the Catholic Church today. To understand this development, it is worth

[4] See Stanley Hoffmann, "NATO and Nuclear Weapons: Reasons and Unreason," *Foreign Affairs* 60, no. 2 (Winter 1981/82) 327–46.

noting that the complete renunciation of the use of violence has been present in one strand of Catholic tradition from the time of Jesus to the present day. Relatively few Christians in the first several centuries participated in the military forces of the Roman Empire.[4a] Also during this period there is no evidence that the patristic authors ever presented theological justification for such participation. After Constantine, however, as Christianity moved from the status of a persecuted minority to the official religion of the Empire and Christians became responsible for the governance and administration of society, their participation in the military became much more general. This social development was accompanied by the beginning of an elaboration of moral norms setting limits to legitimate warfare and to Christian participation in warfare. These norms have gradually been refined into what has come to be known as the just-war theory or the just-war tradition.

Just-war thinking, however, did not completely replace the earlier pacifism of the Christian community. Rather, this pacifist commitment became the particular evangelical witness and vocation of monks and clerics.[5] The rapid growth of monastic life in the post-Constantinian period was in part the result of the conviction among numbers of Christians that the teachings of the gospel were being compromised by the growing engagement of the Church in the affairs of "the world."[6] The monastic response was withdrawal from participation in the prevailing institutions of economic, familial, and political life and positive commitment to the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience lived in community. The nonparticipation of monks in military activity was one aspect of this effort to embody the teaching and example of Jesus in a concrete sociological form. As Bainton has put it, "The prime transmitters of the nonmilitary tradition of the early church were the monks."[7] Thus contemporary pacifist Christians who have become major participants in the debate within the Church on the nuclear question are heirs to a tradition which has been consistently alive through the history of the Church.

It is also evident that since the fourth century this Christian pacifist

[4a] This seems clear before 170. Towards the end of the second century and well into the third, E. A. Ryan concludes, "Christian conscripts and even volunteers were...joining up in appreciable numbers" ("The Rejection of Military Service by the Early Christians," *TS* 13 [1952] 30).

[5] Cf. Roland H. Bainton, *Christian Attitudes toward War and Peace: A Historical Survey and Critical Re-evaluation* (New York: Abingdon, 1960) 63 and 89.

[6] For a classic analysis of this cause of the widespread growth of monasticism, see Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* 1 (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960) esp. 161–64.

[7] Bainton, *Christian Attitudes* 89.

heritage has been largely overshadowed by the just-war tradition's understanding of the limited legitimacy of the use of force. Just as the early monks regarded the increasing engagement of Christians and the Church in the affairs of the world as the great betrayal of the teachings and example of Jesus, so today there are those in the Christian community who regard Christian reliance on just-war thinking as unfaithfulness to the gospel. James W. Douglass has stated this position straightforwardly:

> Inasmuch as war's central action of *inflicting* suffering and death is directly opposed to the example of Christ in *enduring* these same realities, the Church has reason for repentance in having allowed herself to become involved since the age of Constantine in an ethic which would justify what conflicts with the essence of the Gospel.[8]

This statement must be taken with the greatest seriousness in the current debate within the Church, for it makes a claim about the essence of the gospel. It was this claim which led the early monks to take a stand over against the posture of the established Church of post-Constantinian Christendom. It is the same claim which underlies one of Aquinas' arguments for the nonparticipation of clerics in military activity:

> All the clerical orders are directed to the ministry of the altar, on which the passion of Christ is represented sacramentally, according to 1 Cor xi.26: "As often as you shall eat this bread, and drink this chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until He come." Wherefore it is unbecoming for them to slay or shed blood, and it is more fitting that they should be ready to shed their own blood for Christ, so as to imitate in deed what they portray in their ministry.[9]

Though neither the early monks nor Aquinas rejected the participation of *all* Christians in warfare, it is important that they did see an intrinsic connection between nonviolence, the passion of Christ, and the Church's ministry of word and sacrament. Today, following the Second Vatican Council's teaching that the fulness of holiness is the vocation of every Christian (layperson, religious, and cleric alike),[10] and in light of the theological recovery of the fact that the Church's ministry to the world is rooted in the baptism common to all Christians, the pacifist challenge to the just-war tradition has become central for the Church as a whole. One must ask: If there is indeed a fundamental congruence between the passion of Christ and the renunciation of violent force, should not the Church as a whole "imitate in deed" what it portrays in the baptismal

[8] James W. Douglass, *The Non-Violent Cross: A Theology of Revolution and Peace* (New York: Macmillan, 1968) 177–78.

[9] *Summa theologiae* 2-2, q. 40, a. 2 (tr. Fathers of the English Dominican Province).

[10] See *Lumen gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) chap. 5, "The Call of the Whole Church to Holiness."

and Eucharistic life in which all Christians participate?

We will seriously misunderstand the theological basis of the just-war theory if we do not accept the full weight of this question. There can be no doubt that the New Testament proclaims a message of peace and calls those who would be Jesus' disciples to a nonviolent way of living. This proclamation and call are evident in Jesus' teachings on love of neighbor and love of enemy.[11] They are embodied in Jesus' renunciation of the revolutionary tactics of the Zealots, who proposed resistance to the oppressive Roman occupation of Palestine through violent means.[12] Most centrally, the death of Jesus on the cross was an unjust execution of an innocent man. Though the full meaning of the crucifixion cannot be reduced to its ethical significance, it is impossible for Christian theology to avoid the challenge of nonviolence that the crucifix presents. As Hauerwas has put it, the cross of Jesus reveals to us "the kind of suffering that is to be expected when the power of non-resistant love challenges the powers that rule this world by violence."[13]

An ethical analysis of war and peace that seeks its roots in the central religious identity of Christianity must acknowledge, therefore, that the values of peace and nonviolence make urgent demands upon the Christian conscience. That the just-war tradition, when it is rightly interpreted, begins from such an acknowledgment is evident from a consideration of what James Turner Johnson has called "the original just-war question." On the basis of his extensive studies of the history of just-war thinking, Johnson has shown that this question "arises again and again in patristic and medieval writers concerned with Christian participation in violence. Put generally, it is the query, 'May a Christian ever morally take part in violence?' "[14] The treatment of warfare in Aquinas' classic discussion of the topic puts the question even more strongly than does Johnson. The

[11] For an important analysis of the relevant passages on love of enemy, see Luise Schottroff, "Non-Violence and the Love of One's Enemies," in Schottroff *et al., Essays on the Love Commandment* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978) 7-39.

[12] See Oscar Cullmann, *Jesus and the Revolutionaries* (New York: Harper, 1970), and Hans Küng, *On Being a Christian* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976) 177-213.

[13] Stanley Hauerwas, "Work as Co-Creation," paper delivered at a symposium on the encyclical *Laborem exercens*, University of Notre Dame, May 3-5, 1982. Hauerwas is here restating John Howard Yoder's interpretation of the ethical significance of the crucifixion; see Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972). Douglass has also written eloquently on the relation between the death of Christ and an ethic of nonviolence: "The logic of non-violence is the logic of crucifixion and leads the man of non-violence into the heart of the suffering Christ" (*The Non-Violent Cross* 71).

[14] James T. Johnson, "On Keeping Faith: The Use of History for Religious Ethics," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 7 (1979) 112. See Johnson's excellent book-length works on the subject, *Ideology, Reason and the Limitation of War* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1975), and *Just War Tradition and the Limitation of War* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1981).

quaestio with which Thomas begins his reflection is this: "Is it *always* a sin to fight in war?"[15] The just-war theory, properly understood, rests on the conviction that violent warfare should be presumed to be morally unacceptable and even sinful.

It is both theologically inaccurate and culturally disastrous if this presupposition is forgotten. In Johnson's view, such a loss of historical memory is exactly what has happened in recent centuries in discussions of the just-war tradition.

> It is one of the sad ironies of history that this origin of the just war tradition has been so badly remembered as to turn it inside out: rather than a sign of a reluctance to justify violence for Christians, the tradition has come to be regarded, and not only by pacifists, as an attempt to declare the need to justify Christian resort to violence a non-question, a question that has already been answered.... An attempt to recollect again, in and for the Christian community, what this original just war question was about leads to the somewhat startling discovery that pacifist and non-pacifist just war Christians have something profoundly in common: a searching distrust of violence.[16]

The original just-war question thus implies that nonviolence is the Christian norm and that the use of force can only be moral by way of exception, if at all. Violent force should be *presumed* to be incompatible with a fundamental Christian moral orientation. Only under the most stringently defined circumstances can this presupposition be overridden.

Childress has made this same point in the language of contemporary moral philosophy. In his reading, the just-war theory rests on the conviction that we have a prima-facie obligation not to harm or kill other human beings. A prima-facie obligation is a genuine moral duty intrinsically binding on our consciences. It is to be distinguished from an absolute obligation, however, for it may conflict with another equally important and binding obligation.[17] For example, I have an obligation to keep the promises I have made. If, however, taking time to stop and assist a person injured in an automobile accident were to cause me to leave unfulfilled a promise to meet a friend for dinner, the more important obligation should take precedence. The logic of just-war theory has a similar structure. It rests on the supposition that the imperative not to harm or kill other human beings can in some circumstances tragically conflict with other equally important obligations, such as the defense of innocent lives, the preservation of basic freedoms and human rights in the face of aggression, or the liberation of persons from situations of degrading poverty and

[15] *Summa theologiae* 2-2, q. 40, a. 1.

[16] Johnson, "On Keeping Faith" 113.

[17] James Childress, "Just-War Criteria," in Thomas A. Shannon, ed., *War or Peace? The Search for New Answers* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1980) 40–58.

political repression. The *jus ad bellum* norms of just-war theory provide a carefully wrought rational framework for determining whether such an exception to the prima-facie duty of noninjury and nonviolence is justified in a given situation. Similarly, the *jus in bello* norms of the tradition further tighten the structure of the moral basis for exceptions to the duty of nonviolence by placing limits on the means that can be morally used even in a justified war.

Johnson and Childress throw considerable light on the historical and philosophical basis of the relation of pacifism and just-war theory. By extrapolation they can also be extremely useful in helping to clarify the fundamental theological roots of the pacifist/just-war debate so central in the nuclear discussion in the Church today. Their essays point to several fundamental issues which are at the heart of the debate.

First, in a biblical and theological frame of reference, we must ask: Can there ever be an obligation which is weighty enough to override the call to nonviolence? In other words, in a Christian perspective, is it legitimate to conclude, as do Johnson and Childress, that the challenge to nonviolence contained in the gospel is a prima-facie rather than an absolute imperative? There are grounds for saying that just-war theory has not answered this question in a theologically satisfactory way.

The obvious candidate for a duty or fundamental value which might be judged equal to or even more stringent than the duty of nonviolence is justice. Just-war theory has been willing to argue that under tightly limited conditions the defense of justice can sometimes provide the basis for an exception to the general norm of nonviolence. If justice and nonviolence should not be simultaneously realizable, just-war theory is willing to grant priority to justice within the narrow boundaries of the *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* norms.

In just-war thinking, justice is regarded as a precondition for genuine peace, and thus the pursuit of justice by limited force can take priority over nonviolence. As John Paul II put it in his 1982 World Day of Peace Message:

> Peace can develop only where the elementary requirements of justice are safeguarded. . . . This is why Christians, even as they strive to resist and prevent every form of warfare, have no hesitation in recalling that, in the name of the elementary requirement of justice, peoples have a right and even a duty to protect their existence and freedom by proportionate means against an unjust aggressor.[18]

Theologically, this argument rests on the affirmation that conflicts between justice and nonviolence are possible in a sinful world. It presup-

[18] John Paul II, "1982 World Day of Peace Message," nos. 9 and 12, *Origins* 11 (1982) 476, 478.

poses that the nonviolent teaching and example of Jesus must be supplemented by a full consideration of the biblical and theological centrality of the Christian commitment to justice if a *comprehensive* Christian answer to the question of warfare is to be developed. It further assumes that peace as understood biblically and theologically includes justice as one of its essential dimensions[19] and that a commitment to peace which does not rest on an active struggle for justice will produce neither peace nor justice.

This theological argument possesses genuine plausibility. It does not account, however, for one of the central aspects of the New Testament witness, namely, the fact that Jesus did not resort to violent force in self-defense against unjust attack. Nor did Jesus counsel the use of violence in the defense of justice for the Jewish people in the face of Roman oppression. The theology underlying the pacifist stance on warfare appeals to these aspects of Jesus' life and death to argue for the religious and ethical priority of the duty of nonviolence over the duty to establish justice. This posture is well expressed in the statement of an American advocate of nonviolence, A. J. Muste: "There is no way to peace. Peace is the way."[20] The priority assigned to justice as a precondition of genuine peace by the just-war theory is reversed in the ethics of nonviolence.

This pacifist posture is not unconcerned with the pursuit of justice. Activist advocates of nonviolent resistance to injustice are as deeply convinced that nonviolence is the only path to true justice as are just-war theorists that a commitment to the pursuit of justice, even by force, is the only path to true peace. The examples of Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and a host of other nonviolent activists provide strong evidence that the commitment to the priority of nonviolence is neither passive nor ineffective in the face of injustice. Theologians such as Yoder and Douglass have argued that the commitment to a nonviolent ethic is the only hope humans have of breaking the "spiral of violence" which breeds further injustice. In their view, to take up arms in the cause of justice is self-defeating. Further, it contradicts the strategy for the pursuit of the kingdom of God exemplified in the life of Jesus. As Schillebeeckx has interpreted the Scriptures on this question, God's kingdom cannot be brought about by arms; the force of arms is a sinful obstacle to its coming.

> The messianic coming of God, before which evil yields, is not a coming in power, which will shatter evil with nationalistic and messianic force of arms. It works

[19] See "Peace in the OT," and "Peace in the NT," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* 3, 704–6.

[20] I have not been able to locate the source of this statement, which has become something close to the motto of recent American pacifist groups. It is cited without reference in John Howard Yoder, *Nevertheless: A Meditation on the Varieties and Shortcomings of Religious Pacifism* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald, 1971) 68.

through *metanoia*, repentance. It is a victory over evil through obedience to God, and not through human force. For anyone who seeks to achieve a kingdom of peace-without-tears by means of human force calls Jesus 'a Satan' (Mark 8:27-33 par.; see also Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13; Mark 1:13). Jesus espouses the cause of redemptive and liberating love, which while not itself disarming and bringing to repentance—on the contrary—nevertheless eventually proves victorious over force. That Beelzebub cannot be driven out by Beelzebub also applies here. . . . What applies to Jesus in the New Testament applies to all Christians: to follow Jesus to the point of suffering.[21]

In the final analysis, however, the religious-theological commitment to nonviolence as an absolute imperative of the gospel does not base its case on its effectiveness in the pursuit of justice within history. Though Yoder and Douglass are activists in the cause of justice, both acknowledge that effectiveness cannot be the ultimate reason for the absolute priority of nonviolence. Yoder acknowledges the possibility of a conflict between nonviolence and justice which can be resolved only outside of history. When such a conflict occurs, Christians are called to acknowledge that it is God, not they, who holds the ultimate responsibility for establishing the fulness of justice and peace.

This is the deepest meaning of Jesus' willingness to accept an unjust execution rather than take up arms to resist it. As Yoder puts it:

The choice that [Jesus] made in rejecting the crown and accepting the cross was the commitment to such a degree of faithfulness of divine love that he was willing for its sake to sacrifice "effectiveness." Usually it can be argued that from some other perspective or in some long view this renunciation of effectiveness was in fact a very effective thing to do. "If a man will lose his . . . life he shall find it." But this paradoxical possibility does not change the initially solid fact that Jesus thereby excluded any normative concern for any capacity to make sure that things would turn out right.[22]

In other words, the cross of Jesus implies that making things "turn out right" (justice) is subordinate to trust in the God who is the only truly "legitimate authority" in these matters of the ultimate outcome of human history and politics. Zahn's conclusions about the implications of the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount echo Yoder's understanding of the meaning of the cross:

These, taken in context with the workings of grace and the power of God (which, as Scripture tells us, is made perfect in infirmity), combine to produce an "otherworldly" perspective in which the practice of statecraft becomes at best a

[21] Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord* (New York: Crossroad, 1980) 695-96.

[22] Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* 240.

secondary consideration. After all, if it avails us not to gain the whole world at the cost of our immortal souls, it might follow that the salvation of our souls could require us to be prepared to suffer the loss of the political and spiritual freedoms we prize where the only alternative is to commit sin.[23]

Zahn, like Yoder and Douglass, is a strong advocate of creative nonviolent action in the defense of these freedoms. Nevertheless, his theology, like pacifist theology in general, is prepared to tolerate injustice in the limit situation where justice cannot be attained by nonviolent means.

The debate between pacifism and just-war theory thus presses us to some very fundamental theological questions. What is the ethical significance of the death of Jesus? Does the commandment to love one's neighbor imply that the incarnation of love in a just social order should take priority over the love of enemies which is expressed in nonviolence? Does the victory of Christ over sin and death in his resurrection imply that Christians are now empowered by God to participate in the shaping of a new and more just earthly society, or is its primary meaning the bestowal of the grace to follow Jesus Christ in the way of the suffering servant?

These are basic theological issues that need to be explored at greater depth and in direct relation to the urgent questions of war and peace. My own very preliminary approach to them takes the following form. The fulness of God's love revealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus is both model and cause of Christian action for peace and justice. The kingdom of God, inaugurated by the paschal mystery of Christ, is a kingdom in which love, justice, and the abolition of all violence will be accomplished. In the words of the Psalmist, it is a kingdom in which "kindness and truth shall meet, justice and peace shall kiss" (Ps 85:11, NAB). It is the paschal mystery as a single unified event, however, which is the basis of Christian hope for the full realization of both justice and peace. Neither the crucifixion alone nor the resurrection alone adequately represents the content of Christian conviction. The death of Christ on the cross is one aspect of the coming kingdom. The Father's act of raising him from the dead and inaugurating the kingdom of justice is a second and equally significant aspect of the paschal event. In shaping their lives in history, Christians are therefore compelled to look back to Jesus' nonviolent death and to see in it a demand to practice nonviolence. At the same time, Christians are compelled to look forward to the kingdom whose realization will establish the fulness of love and justice in the relations between all persons and God. This hope and anticipation of the kingdom are as important for a Christian theology of peace as is the historical memory of the crucifixion.

[23] Gordon Zahn, "Afterword," in Shannon, *War or Peace?* 241.

The tension between this memory and this hope can never be fully overcome within history. Both the pacifist tradition's commitment to nonviolence as the way to justice and the just-war tradition's commitment to justice as the way to peace are therefore partial embodiments of the memory and hope which are the bases of Christian faith and Christian love. The total reconciliation of justice and peace is an eschatological reality. Within time the imperatives of justice and the demands of nonviolence can and sometimes do conflict. I would conclude, therefore, that both the pacifist ethic and the just-war ethic are legitimate expressions of Christian faith. Each of them, however, is incomplete by itself and neither can claim to be the only Christian response to the relation of peace and justice. As Childress has put it, "Pacifists and proponents of just war theories really need each other."[24] This conclusion should not be interpreted as the expression of a desire not to offend either camp. It is intended as a theological statement about the reality of Christian life "between the times" of the inauguration of the kingdom and its eschatological fulfilment. A pluralism of responses to the question whether nonviolence or justice is primary in a Christian ethic is a theological necessity, not just a sociological fact.

This conclusion needs considerably more support than has been provided here. A few remarks will suffice to show its implications for the sections to come. Those who use just-war theory in addressing the nuclear question need the pacifist witness to the centrality of nonviolence. They need this to prevent them from losing their memory of the original just-war question as they engage in the intricate analyses of the relation between just-war norms and the complexities of current policy debates. Similarly, pacifists need the refined categories of moral analysis and reasoning about conflicting values that just-war theory provides. Without these categories they risk removing themselves from the policy debate. Though on some questions Christians might be justified in withdrawing from careful debate about the intricacies of public policy, this can surely not be the case where hundreds of millions of lives are at stake. Pacifists need just-war thinkers to keep the Christian community engaged in shaping these policies in accord with the demands of both justice and peace.[25]

THE MORAL DEBATE ON THE USE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Both pacifists and just-war theorists are in agreement that the dawning of the nuclear age has brought with it a qualitatively new potential for

[24] Childress, "Just-War Criteria" 40.

[25] For some further useful reflections on the question's pluralism in the Church today and the implications of such pluralism for policy debate, see J. Bryan Hehir, "The Just-War Ethic and Catholic Theology: Dynamics of Change and Continuity," in Shannon, *War or Peace?* 15–39.

both murderous violence and profound injustice. The growth of pacifism within the Church in recent years has in large measure been a response to the ominous threat posed by nuclear weapons. In discussing this threat in his encyclical *Pacem in terris*, John XXIII stated that "in an age such as ours, which prides itself on its atomic energy, it is contrary to reason to hold that war is now a suitable way to restore rights which have been violated."[26] In the context of a similar discussion, Vatican II referred to "the massive and indiscriminate destruction" which modern scientific weapons are capable of inflicting.[27] The Council then went on to state: "all these considerations compel us to undertake an evaluation of war with an entirely new attitude."[28] The theme of the morally problematic character of warfare in the nuclear age was reiterated most recently by John Paul II in his homily at Coventry Cathedral in Great Britain: "Today, the scale and the horror of modern warfare—whether nuclear or not—makes it totally unacceptable as a means of settling differences between nations. War should belong to the tragic past, to history; it should find no place on humanity's agenda for the future."[29]

Hehir has pointed out that papal and conciliar statements such as these are open to various interpretations when placed in the context from which they have been drawn.[30] Douglass appears to believe that the nuclear age is leading the Church to a pacifist position through a two-step evolution of thought which is not yet complete. First, he acknowledges that the prime concern of just-war theory is the pursuit of justice, not the legitimation of war. He argues, however, that in the nuclear age it is becoming apparent that violent force is not in fact compatible with the attainment of justice:

> Always implicit [in just-war theory] is the assumption that the waging of war can sometimes be consistent with the attainment of such justice. If, as a result of weapons developments which St. Augustine could hardly have foreseen, war and justice should be seen to have reached an absolute conflict, war as the physical factor in the theory must give way to justice as the ruling moral principle.[31]

This conflict between modern war and justice is the basis of the contem-

[26] John XXIII, *Pacem in terris*, no. 127, in David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, eds., *Renewing the Earth: Catholic Documents on Peace, Justice and Liberation* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Image Books, 1977) 154.

[27] Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World) no. 80, in O'Brien and Shannon, *Renewing the Earth* 262.

[28] Ibid.

[29] John Paul II, Homily at Coventry Cathedral, May 30, 1982, no. 2, *Origins* 12 (1982) 55.

[30] Hehir, "The Just-War Ethic" 19–22. Paul Ramsey has pointed out that the diversity of interpretations is in part the result of an erroneous translation of *Pacem in terris*, no. 127 (*The Just War: Force and Political Responsibility* [New York: Scribner's, 1968] 192–98).

[31] Douglass, "The Non-Violent Cross" 176.

porary argument that even on just-war grounds Christians are obligated to adopt a stance of nuclear pacifism. The nuclear pacifist maintains that all use of nuclear weapons fails the test of the just-war criteria or, in stronger form, that in a nuclear-armed world no war can withstand scrutiny according to these norms.

The second step in the evolution that Douglass believes is underway in Church teachings on warfare is a move from nuclear pacifism to a recovery of the early Church's commitment to nonviolence. He believes that this step was implicitly taken by John XXIII in *Pacem in terris* and is the logical outcome of Vatican II's call to "undertake an evaluation of war with an entirely new attitude."[32]

As Hehir has observed, Douglass' argument for the presence of these twin developments in Church teaching goes beyond the evidence. Vatican II and John Paul II have both reiterated the existence of "the right to legitimate defense once every means of peaceful settlement has been exhausted."[33] Also, as has been argued above, it would seem that an *exclusive* commitment by the Church to nonviolence would go beyond the theological possibilities of our existence "between the times."

The question whether the use of *nuclear* weapons can ever be a genuine instrument of justice is less clearly addressed in recent Church documents. This question has thus become one of the chief foci in the continuing discussion of the morality of warfare in the Church today. For the pacifist the issue is clear: since all use of force is judged incompatible with the gospel, then this is true a fortiori of nuclear weapons. For just-war theory the issue cannot be resolved in this clear-cut manner. A reasoned argument about the possibility or impossibility of just use of nuclear weapons under the concrete contemporary historical circumstances is a prerequisite. The important challenge that the pacifist tradition brings into this just-war debate is its reminder that nonviolence is a prima-facie obligation. In light of the "original just-war question," the use of nuclear weapons or of any other form of violent force must be presumed unjustified until strong reasons to the contrary are produced.

The just-war tradition has developed a refined set of moral categories for reasoning about the possible justification of violence in the pursuit of justice. These categories have been formulated in different ways during different phases of the tradition, but in this context they can be summarized briefly. The criteria fall into two broad groups. *Jus ad bellum* criteria determine whether the alleged grounds for the initiation of armed hostilities are sufficiently grave to override the prima-facie obligation of

[32] See ibid., chaps. 4, 5, and 6.

[33] *Gaudium et spes*, no. 79; John Paul II, "1982 World Day of Peace Message," no. 12. See Hehir, "The Just-War Ethic" 22–23.

nonviolence. *Jus in bello* norms govern the judgment regarding the use of particular means within war.

Ad bellum norms include the following: (1) legitimate authority, i.e., the authority to resort to force is subject to the general criteria of political legitimacy; (2) just cause, i.e., defense against injustice; (3) last resort, i.e., all peaceful alternatives to the use of force in securing justice have been exhausted; (4) a declaration of war—in effect, a way of insuring that resort to arms is indeed a last resort; (5) reasonable hope of success, i.e., if the values of justice on which the overriding of the duty of nonviolence depends are unlikely to be achieved, then the prima-facie obligation to nonviolence remains in effect; (6) proportionality, i.e., the values of life, freedom, and justice which are achieved must be greater than the death, suffering, and social upheaval that the war will produce; (7) right intention, i.e., the war must be conducted with the intention of achieving justice and ultimate peace, not out of hatred, desire for revenge, or in a quest for dominance over others.

The *in bello* criteria for the judgment of the morality of the use of particular means (i.e., certain strategies or tactics, particular types of weapons, etc.) are two: (1) discrimination, i.e., noncombatants must be immune from direct attack; (2) proportionality, i.e., the values sought by the use of particular military means must outweigh the harm caused by these means.[34]

These norms embody the culturally accumulated wisdom of the Christian and humanist traditions. They encapsulate the historical experience of the West about the restrictions which must be placed on the use of force if force is to be limited to the protection of justice as the basis of a genuine peace.[35] The question which cries out for an answer is this: Can the use of nuclear weapons ever be a reasonable means to the attainment of justice?

This question actually concerns a number of different but related issues, for there are a variety of ways in which nuclear weapons could conceivably be used in warfare and a variety of strategic doctrines concerning their use. The most horrendous of these possibilities, a direct nuclear attack upon population centers of another nation, patently fails to meet the just-war criteria. Such an attack involves the intended killing of vast numbers of noncombatants. It therefore falls under Vatican II's often-quoted condemnation of indiscriminate bombing: "Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or of extensive

[34] For a careful elaboration of the meaning and function of these criteria, see Childress, "Just War Criteria" 45-50 and passim.

[35] See James T. Johnson, "Weapons Limits and the Restraint of War: A Just War Critique," *The Society of Christian Ethics 1980 Selected Papers* (Waterloo, Ont.: Council on the Study of Religion, 1980) 89.

areas along with their population is a crime against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation."[36] This *in bello* norm of discrimination applies to countercity attacks whether they be first-strike or in retaliation. This conclusion is reinforced by other just-war criteria, particularly that of proportionality, for countercity warfare, once begun, is virtually certain to lead to an all-out exchange resulting in the destruction of all those values which might make more limited forms of warfare sometimes marginally justifiable.

The contemporary debates about nuclear policy raise several other considerations about the use of nuclear weapons which call for a more complex form of reflection than that required by countercity warfare. Some US defense analysts advocate policies which envision the limited use of strategic nuclear weapons against the military forces, command-control-and-communication systems, political and bureaucratic leadership, and key economic resources of the Soviet Union. Proposals of such limited "war-fighting" and "war-winning" strategies are accompanied by the contention that they represent a moral improvement over policies which threaten and prepare for countercity warfare.[37]

These strategies give the appearance of coming closer to meeting the *in bello* criteria of discrimination and proportionality. However, this appearance is deceptive for two reasons. First, these counterforce war-fighting strategies do not eliminate the technical means for countercity warfare. They also leave open the strategic option of resorting to massive attacks on population centers, should limited war fail to achieve its goals. Second, the actual effects of a counterforce attack by one superpower against the other will be difficult to distinguish from an attack on population centers. Both the collateral damage to population centers and the likely loss of command-control-and-communication systems in counterforce nuclear war will make it exceedingly difficult for national leaders to know what the adversary's intentions and actions really are. Collateral damage and command-control-and-communication vulnerability thus exert powerful pressure for escalation to mutual destruction. As Keeny and Panofsky have remarked, there is an "almost inevitable link between any use of nuclear weapons and the grim 'mutual hostage' realities of the MAD world."[38] The use of any strategic nuclear weapons, therefore, increases the likelihood of massive countercity attacks.

[36] *Gaudium et spes*, no. 80.

[37] See Colin S. Gray and Keith Payne, "Victory Is Possible," *Foreign Policy* 39 (Summer 1980) 14–27.

[38] Spurgeon M. Keeny, Jr., and Wolfgang Panofsky, "MAD versus NUTS: Can Doctrine or Weaponry Remedy the Mutual Hostage Relationship of the Superpowers?" *Foreign Affairs* 60, no. 2 (Winter 1981/82) 294. They present their arguments for this conclusion in the body of the article.

Thus a key element in the dispute over whether strategic counterforce war-fighting strategies are morally less objectionable than are strategies which envision the destruction of cities is the prudential military-political judgment about whether the limitation of nuclear war can indeed be predicted with reasonable confidence. US Department of Defense policy statements acknowledge that any employment of strategic nuclear weapons by one superpower against the other can be expected to rapidly escalate into an all-out war.[39] No one can be sure of the outcome of an attempt to conduct limited nuclear war directed against the military and political structure of a nation which itself possesses nuclear weapons. But the bulk of the strategic literature on this question, as well as most of the public statements of the national leaders of the countries involved, imply that it is highly unlikely that such limits would be respected.

The *ad bellum* criterion of reasonable hope of success becomes the relevant moral norm in this debate. In my view, the hope that any use of strategic weapons can be kept limited exceeds the bounds of reasonable judgment. A policy which aims at the actual use of strategic weapons against the other superpower's forces must thus be judged unacceptable as an instrument for the pursuit of goals which are themselves just. In my judgment, this conclusion applies not only to the initiation of a limited nuclear exchange but *in bello* as well. To respond to a nuclear attack on one's own military forces by launching strategic nuclear weapons against the forces of the attacking nation increases the probability of escalation to the point of mass slaughter. Therefore the use of strategic nuclear weapons even in would-be limited wars must be judged morally unjustifiable on the grounds of both *ad bellum* and *in bello* norms. This conclusion goes beyond the explicit teachings of the Holy See, though it has been supported by a number of episcopal statements.[40] I believe it should become a firm judgment in all future Church teaching on warfare.

The current debate on nuclear strategy has also focused on the possibility of another form of limited nuclear war: the use of intermediate-range or tactical nuclear weapons in defense of West Europe. Here again the moral judgment about such scenarios is dependent upon a military-political judgment about the actual likelihood of keeping such use limited. A significant debate on this point has begun in recent months in the journal *Foreign Affairs*. In their important essay urging the adoption of a policy of "no first use" of nuclear weapons by the North Atlantic Alliance, McGeorge Bundy, George F. Kennan, Robert S. McNamara,

[39] See US Department of Defense, *Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1981* (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1980) esp. 65–67.

[40] A helpful collection of these statements from US bishops and a variety of other church sources, both Catholic and Protestant, is in Robert Heyer, ed., *Nuclear Disarmament: Key Statements of Popes, Bishops, Councils and Churches* (New York: Paulist, 1982).

and Gerard Smith propose a re-examination of the overall structure of NATO defense and deterrence strategy. In the course of their discussion of this complex area, they affirm that the profusion of nuclear weapons systems in Europe on both sides of the East/West boundary "has made it more difficult than ever to construct rational plans for any first use of these weapons by anyone."[41] They go on to state an even stronger conclusion:

It is time to recognize that no one has ever succeeded in advancing any persuasive reason to believe that any use of nuclear weapons, even on the smallest scale, could reliably be expected to remain limited. Every serious analysis and every military exercise, for over 25 years, has demonstrated that even the most restrained battlefield use would be enormously destructive to civilian life and property. There is no way for anyone to have any confidence that such a nuclear action will not lead to further and more devastating exchanges. Any use of nuclear weapons in Europe, by the Alliance or against it, carries with it a high and inescapable risk of escalation into the general nuclear war which would bring ruin to all and victory to none.[42]

A number of the published responses to the Bundy-Kennan-McNamara-Smith essay have been critical of their proposal.[43] All these critical responses base their objections on the grounds that a no-first-use policy would weaken the Western deterrent against Warsaw Pact aggression. I shall deal with the deterrence issue in the next section. In the context of the present discussion on the morality of the use of nuclear weapons, it is important to note that the critics of the proposal made by Bundy *et al.* do not respond to the fundamental assertion that it is highly improbable that a nuclear exchange could actually be kept limited once any use had in fact occurred. The authors of the original essay have taken note of this fact:

In all the comment and criticism our essay has received, there has not been one concrete suggestion as to just how a first use of nuclear weapons would be carried out—in which numbers and with what targets. We think there is a reason for this reticence. All the specific proposals we have encountered over the years, and they have been many, look unacceptably dangerous in the context of the forces now deployed on both sides.[44]

The dangers of first use which are emphasized here are also present in the case of retaliatory use of nuclear weapons in the European theater.

[41] Bundy *et al.*, "Nuclear Weapons" 756. [42] Ibid. 757.

[43] See both the response of four West German authors (n. 3 above) and the letters published in a section entitled "Debate over No First Use" in *Foreign Affairs* 60, no. 5 (Summer 1982) 1171–80.

[44] Bundy *et al.*, "The Authors Reply," *Foreign Affairs*, ibid. 1180.

The likelihood of escalation to general nuclear war which attends *any* use of nuclear weapons in Europe makes such use an irrational means to the pursuit even of such legitimate values as freedom and justice. I would therefore again conclude, on the basis of a combination of the *in bello* criteria of discrimination and proportionality and the *ad bellum* criterion of reasonable hope of success, that no nuclear-weapons use in Europe can be justified.

An additional consideration about the moral aspects of strategies for fighting limited nuclear wars concerns the moral legitimacy of collateral damage to civilian populations which would accompany nuclear attacks on military targets. The traditional *in bello* criterion of discrimination rules out direct attacks on noncombatants. Consequently some participants in the current public argument have concluded that the deaths of civilians caused by nuclear attacks on military targets do not violate the norm of discrimination.

In contemporary Catholic moral theology there has been an intense dispute about the significance of the direct/indirect distinction.[45] This debate is important in itself, and the way it is resolved is relevant to the way one reasons about the morality of collateral damage to civilian populations. Nevertheless, I believe that proponents of the different positions in this debate should reach the same conclusion about the issue at hand. One view holds that the directly intended object in such an attack is the destruction of a military target and that civilian deaths are unintended indirect consequences. According to this view, one is still bound, by the traditional interpretation of the principle of double effect, to weigh the evil consequences which indirectly accompany the attack against the good effects which flow from it. Here all the considerations discussed above regarding the likely outcomes of counterforce nuclear war between the superpowers become relevant. Even if, therefore, one argues that collateral damage to civilian populations is indirectly voluntary, the judgment about proportionality between the two effects must be negative.

The other school of moral theologians in the debate about the direct-indirect distinction takes a different approach in its treatment of intention. This school argues that one cannot determine what an agent intends to do without taking all the foreseen consequences into account. If the agent chooses to perform an action whose good consequences are proportionately greater than are the evil consequences, this school would judge that the evil consequences are not the object of direct intention. If,

[45] See, e.g., Richard McCormick and Paul Ramsey, eds., *Doing Evil to Achieve Good: Moral Choice in Conflict Situations* (Chicago: Loyola University, 1978), and John R. Connery, "Catholic Ethics: Has the Norm for Rule-Making Changed?" *TS* 42 (1981) 232-50.

on the other hand, the foreseen evil consequences are proportionately greater, then the direct object of intention is evil. In other words, for the second school the direct intention cannot be determined apart from a judgment of proportionality. Both schools, therefore, must evaluate the morality of collateral damage by assessing the proportionality between the evils of loss of life plus possible escalation and the goal of defending justice. This assessment, I believe, should lead to a negative moral judgment on attacks which will cause significant damage to population centers. All nuclear attacks in Europe fall under this judgment. The two schools, however, will reach this conclusion by different routes.[46]

One last possibility. All the previous possibilities explored here concern nuclear conflict between the superpowers. The use of these weapons in conflict between one of the superpowers and a nonnuclear nation or between a nuclear nation other than the US and the USSR (e.g., France, Israel, India) and a nonnuclear nation presents a somewhat different set of problems for moral judgment. The probabilities of escalation to general nuclear war would perhaps be less in such a conflict. Therefore the *ad bellum* and *in bello* moral judgments would be somewhat less forceful. Nevertheless, I believe that the use of nuclear force in such situations exceeds the bounds of rationality. Though one might hypothesize cases in which a strictly limited use of nuclear force against the conventional forces of a nonnuclear nation would not immediately transgress the just-war criteria, such hypotheses have little or nothing to do with the real international situation.

In the concrete, the real cases can be divided into two types. The first includes all those situations where serious regional conflict carries with it the danger of engaging both superpowers even against their best intentions. The Middle East and Persian Gulf region is the prime example here, though an Indo-Pakistani war or a major race war in southern Africa are also strong candidates. The introduction of nuclear-weapons use into such conflicts would increase the likelihood of superpower engagement to a very significant degree. Therefore, following a line of reasoning similar to that outlined in the discussion of limited nuclear war between the superpowers, I believe we should reach a negative moral judgment on use in this sort of situation as well.

The second case concerns the use of nuclear weapons in a conflict where the superpowers are uninvolved. No such situations presently exist. The proliferation of nuclear weapons could conceivably bring such a situation into being. This is highly unlikely, however, for it is unreasonable to believe that superpower interests will not be swiftly engaged by any conflict that reaches the nuclear level. There is no reasonable basis

[46] For an interesting parallel argument, see Johnson, *Just War Tradition* 219–24.

for confidence that the fragile international system could bear the major additional strain that the use of nuclear weapons would place on it. The urgent imperative is to prevent the nuclear level from being reached anywhere on the globe. This imperative, together with the more immediate considerations of discrimination and proportionality which apply to all warfare, urges us to a negative moral judgment on the use of nuclear weapons in conflicts of this sort.

From all these considerations one conclusion must be drawn: the use of nuclear weapons can never be morally justified. This conclusion follows from a judgment at once normative and prudential. Normatively, it rests on the just-war theory's insistence that there are limits both to the legitimacy of the resort to force in the pursuit of justice and to the means which can be legitimately employed even in justified conflict. Prudentially, the conclusion arises from a judgment about the course of events which can be expected to follow on the use of nuclear weapons in a variety of different contexts. A prudential judgment, by definition, is not subject to logically certain demonstration. And in the case of nuclear war, the practical experience which is the ordinary source of prudence is fortunately unavailable. But the strong weight of the evidence from strategic studies is on the side of the argument advanced here.

Thus, on the question of the use of nuclear weapons, the pacifist and the just-war traditions converge. We can modify Douglass' statement quoted above as follows: nuclear war and justice can be seen to have reached an absolute conflict. Therefore both the pursuit of justice and the commitment to peace demand the rejection of the use of nuclear weapons in all circumstances. I believe that this nuclear pacifist conclusion should be placed at the foundations of future church initiatives for justice and peace.

MORAL RESPONSES TO THE AMBIGUITIES OF DETERRENCE

The conclusion that nuclear weapons can never be used morally leaves unresolved the central question, how to prevent such use from occurring. Here we must enter the paradoxical world of deterrence theory. Agreement on the unacceptability of any use of nuclear weapons can and does coexist with disagreement about the morality of the possession of and threat to use nuclear weapons for purposes of deterrence. The moral legitimacy of strategic doctrines designed to deter an adversary from the use of military force through the threat to use nuclear weapons against that adversary has become the most controverted question in the nuclear debate today.

Indeed, the moral issues in the debate about deterrence must be faced even by those who do not share the conclusion that no use of nuclear weapons can ever be justified. Those who argue that some extremely

limited use of nuclear force could be morally legitimate generally do so as part of a larger argument about deterrence. For example, proponents of policies which threaten and prepare to use tactical and intermediate-range nuclear weapons in the defense of Europe argue that these policies are the most effective way to deter both nuclear and conventional aggression by the Warsaw Pact against NATO.[47] The same is true of those who support policies which project the limited use of strategic nuclear force by the superpowers against each other's homelands. They argue for such policies as the best means for preventing precisely such horrible events from occurring.[48] Pacifists too must face the paradoxes inherent in the moral debate about deterrence doctrines. Those committed to an ethic of nonviolence reject the just-war criteria as an appropriate basis for the conclusion we have reached about the moral illegitimacy of nuclear-weapons use. However, they hold to the conclusion itself at least as tenaciously as do Christians who rely on the just-war tradition. They are therefore faced with the challenge of advancing their own views of the best means for the prevention of nuclear war. Pacifists argue that there are forms of nonviolent action which can be effective in resisting unjust aggression. The pacifist branch of the Christian community, however, must ask the question whether the forms of nonviolent resistance developed by Gandhi and Martin Luther King can in fact successfully deter the use of nuclear weapons by an adversary. Theologians such as Yoder and Zahn argue that "effectiveness" and "statecraft" are at best secondary considerations in a Christian theological perspective. If their primary commitment is to the protection of all human life, however, they cannot consistently support actions which would make nuclear war more likely. Therefore they cannot logically refuse to enter into the debate about the best way to prevent such warfare from occurring. Pacifists may rightly conclude that the possession of and threat to use nuclear weapons is itself immoral. But the rightness of such a conclusion will depend on the cogency of their argument about the best means of preventing war in the nuclear age.

Thus just-war thinkers who reach the nuclear pacifist conclusion

[47] See, e.g., Edward N. Luttwak, "How to Think about Nuclear War," *Commentary* 74, no. 2 (August 1982) 21-28.

[48] The view of Gray and Payne is representative of this approach: "An adequate US deterrent posture is one that denies the Soviet Union any plausible hope of success at any level of strategic conflict; offers a likely prospect of Soviet defeat; and offers a reasonable chance of limiting damage to the United States....As long as the United States relies on nuclear threats to deter an increasingly powerful Soviet Union, it is inconceivable that the US defense community can continue to divorce its thinking on deterrence from its planning for the efficient conduct of war and defense of the country. Prudence in the latter should enhance the former" ("Victory Is Possible" 26-27). See also US Department of Defense, *Annual Report: Fiscal Year 1981* 65-67.

advocated here, those whose strategies include preparations for the possibility of limited nuclear war, and those who reason from a pacifist starting point must all face the paradoxes and ambiguities inherent in nuclear deterrence. Though the rhetoric employed by national leaders and defense analysts is sometimes overheated and even bellicose, it is not reasonable to believe that any sane person wants to set the nuclear juggernaut in motion. The policy debate about deterrence is not a debate between those in favor of nuclear war and those against it. It is a debate between persons with differing perspectives and convictions on how to prevent nuclear violence. The moral ambiguity inherent in deterrence strategy is reflected in the fact that persons who share fundamentally similar goals reach such different conclusions about the way to attain them.

The moral ambiguity of deterrence strategies is also reflected in recent Church teachings. Vatican II took note of the fact that the theory of deterrence is advocated as a way of preventing nuclear war. On the basis of the theological and strategic thinking at its disposal seventeen years ago, the Council did not reach a firm conclusion on the moral legitimacy of the possession of and threat to use nuclear weapons for purposes of deterrence.

> This accumulation of arms, which increases every year, also serves, in a way heretofore unknown, as a deterrent to possible enemy attack. Many regard this state of affairs as the most effective way by which peace of a sort can be maintained at the present time. Whatever be the case with this method of deterrence, all people should be convinced that the arms race in which so many countries are engaged is not a safe way to preserve a steady peace.[49]

The care and caution evident here are the result of the inherent paradox of deterrence in a nuclear world. In following the logic of deterrence theory in such a world, nations threaten and prepare to undertake actions which we have concluded can never be justified. At the same time, the intention which leads to such threats and preparations is the intention to prevent nuclear war. The paradox of deterrence is rooted in the fact that intention (nuclear-war prevention) and action (the preparation and threat to unleash nuclear war) move in opposite directions.

Recent discussions of the issue within the US Catholic community show that this paradox is agonizing to the Christian conscience. Several different efforts have been made to come to grips with it. The pacifist approach which predominates among Catholics affiliated with groups such as Pax Christi moves in a straightforward way from an objection to

[49] *Gaudium et spes,* no. 81.

all violence, to a condemnation of the use of nuclear weapons, to a rejection of the threat to use them, to a delegitimation of their possession and production.[50] In a pastoral letter of 1976, the American bishops did not adopt this line of reasoning fully, but they did condemn both the use and the threat to use nuclear weapons against noncombatants. "As possessors of a vast nuclear arsenal, we must be aware that not only is it wrong to attack civilian populations, but it is also wrong to threaten to attack them as part of a strategy of deterrence."[51]

In testimony on behalf of the United States Catholic Conference before the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate in 1979, Cardinal John Krol repeated this earlier judgment about the threat to use nuclear weapons against noncombatants. He carried the argument a step further by distinguishing between threatening with these weapons and simply possessing them.[52] He used this distinction in an argument which has been repeated in a number of subsequent statements by individual bishops and was incorporated into the first draft of the NCCB pastoral letter on war and peace. He stated that the possession of nuclear weapons could be tolerated as the lesser of two evils provided that negotiations toward the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons are proceeding in a meaningful way.

This argument rests on three presuppositions. First, it assumes that it is possible to make a morally significant distinction between the possession of nuclear weapons and the threat to use them. Second, the conclusion that the possession of nuclear weapons is the lesser of two evils in the present situation presupposes a judgment that unilateral nuclear disarmament by the US could increase the possibility of Soviet nuclear aggression against the Atlantic Alliance. Third, it appears to imply that if arms-control negotiations are not leading to meaningful reductions in force levels, the Church would be compelled to challenge the moral legitimacy of deterrence as such.

[50] See Joseph Fahey, "Pax Christi," in Shannon, *War or Peace?* 63: "Pax Christi USA seeks to foster both nuclear and general disarmament. It believes that the construction and possession of nuclear weapons represents a profound immorality in the contemporary world." See also Joan Chittester's response to the first draft of the Pastoral Letter on War and Peace of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops: "My hope is that in the final draft of this much needed pastoral, the bishops will complete the prophetic work they have begun. Let them say a clear no to nuclear war and the possession and manufacture of nuclear weapons as well" ("Stepping Tentatively between Prophetism and Nationalism," *Commonweal* 109 [1982] 429).

[51] National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *To Live in Christ Jesus: A Pastoral Reflection on the Moral Life* (Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1976) 34. See the analysis of the ambiguities present in this statement in Hehir, "The Just-War Ethic" 28–29.

[52] John Cardinal Krol, "Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, September 6, 1979," *Origins* 9 (1979) 195–99.

The reasoning of the Krol testimony has been challenged from both flanks. The presupposition that one can distinguish between possession of nuclear weapons and the threat to use them has been denied both by those who reject possession and by those who contend that there can be no deterrent without a genuine threat of use.[53] Catholic moral theology has always maintained that it is immoral to intend to do that which is itself immoral. The Krol testimony accepts the conclusion that any use of nuclear weapons is immoral. It sees the *threat* to use them as an indication of the presence of an *intention* to do so. It assumes, however, that the *possession* of these weapons is compatible with an intention *not* to employ them. But it also assumes that mere possession can serve as a deterrent, for unilateral disarmament is implicitly rejected on the grounds that it might well invite Soviet aggression. Thus possesion must at least be *perceived* as a threat by potential adversaries.

The involuted quality of this argument is ground for suspecting that something has gone awry in the way its approach to the morality of deterrence has been structured. The reformulation of two aspects of this argument would be of considerable help in clarifying what is at stake. First, the actual content of the intention which guides the formulation of deterrence policy must be made explicit. Second, a reconsideration of the notion of toleration as used in the Krol testimony is needed.

The relation between intention and action in deterrence strategy has several different levels which must be carefully distinguished. Were the intention that of using nuclear weapons and the action their actual use, there would be no question that both intention and action should be declared morally illegitimate if the conclusion of the previous section of this essay is accepted. Deterrence policies, however, are formulated with the explicit purpose of preventing the outbreak of nuclear war. The actions implementing these intentions are not the actual use of nuclear weapons but military and political steps which attempt to prevent nuclear conflict. One must distinguish, therefore, between the intent to use nuclear weapons and the intent to deter their use. No simple logical argument can be made from the illegitimacy of use to the moral evaluation of the intentions involved in deterrence.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that any and every strategic doctrine or weapons system proposed in the name of deterrence is morally acceptable. Quite the contrary. The factor that makes the intention behind a deterrence policy distinguishable from an intention to employ nuclear force is a reasoned judgment that the policy in question will actually prevent use. One must be able to make a solid judgment that the policy

[53] For examples of these two responses, see Chittester, "Stepping Tentatively" 429, and Robert L. Spaeth, "Disarmament and the Catholic Bishops," *This World* 2 (Summer 1982) 5–17.

in question will decrease the likelihood of nuclear war if the policy is to be regarded as a true deterrent policy. To go ahead with the implementation of a policy which increases the likelihood of the use of these weapons is to *intend* this outcome. But to pursue policies which can be reasonably projected to make nuclear war less likely, even if these policies involve implicit or explicit threats, is to *intend* the avoidance of war. The moral judgment on the intention behind deterrence policies is therefore inseparable from an evaluation of the reasonably predictable outcomes of diverse policy choices.

In other words, it is impossible to reach a moral judgment about the morality of nuclear deterrence as a general concept. The real question for moral judgment is whether a concrete strategic option will actually make the world more secure from nuclear disaster or less so. There is no such thing as deterrence in the abstract. Rather, there are only specific defense postures involving diverse weapons systems, targeting doctrines, procurement programs, and strategic master concepts. It is these that must be subjected to ethical scrutiny, not some abstract notion of deterrence or intention. As there is a wide diversity of ways that nuclear weapons might conceivably be used, so an equally large number of policies are advanced in the name of deterrence. In the question both of use and of deterrence, the moral conclusion will depend on a complex form of reasoning involving the concrete options from a simultaneously normative and prudential point of view.

This fact is implicit in the Krol testimony, but I believe it is obscured by the way the questions of intention and threat are handled. It is also implicit in the Cardinal's statement that the moral legitimacy of a deterrence policy is contingent upon genuine progress in arms control and reduction. To make the legitimacy of deterrence contingent upon "meaningful and continuing reductions in nuclear stockpiles"[54] is another way of saying that a particular strategic policy must truly make nuclear war less likely if this policy is to be ethically legitimate. But the argument moves back to the abstract level again when it concludes that if the hope of arms reduction were to disappear, then "the moral attitude of the Catholic Church would almost certainly have to shift to one of uncompromising condemnation of both use *and* possession of such weapons."[55] Rather than calling for a shift to a generalized condemnation of use and possession, a breakdown of arms-control and reduction negotiations would rather be cause for moral objection to the specific policies which have caused such a breakdown. Such a response would more accurately reflect the fact that the real moral judgment concerns concrete policies, not abstract ideas about use and possession. It would also avoid the

[54] Krol, "Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee," Section I.
[55] Ibid.

unfortunate outcome of removing the Church from the policy argument precisely at a time when its participation in this argument is most urgently needed.

The second issue in the deterrence debate raised by the Krol testimony which needs reconsideration is the *toleration* of the possession of nuclear weapons as long as arms-reduction negotiations are moving forward effectively. The intention of the testimony is to acknowledge that the risks entailed by the existence of nuclear weapons make their possession by the United States a genuine evil. This evil is judged tolerable if two conditions are simultaneously present: (1) the Soviet threat continues to exist, making unilateral disarmament even more dangerous than continued possession; (2) this risk is being decreased through effective arms reduction rather than increased through a continuing arms race.

The logic of this position is essentially correct, but it can be formulated in a way that will provide much clearer guidance in the effort to reach decisions about actual policy choices. The point of the argument would be more evident if the conditions under which specific deterrence policies are justified were more explicitly stated. These conditions are two. First, any new policy proposal must make nuclear war less likely than the policies presently in effect rather than more likely. Second, any new policy proposal must increase the possibility of arms reduction rather than decrease this possibility.

These two principles have the advantage of acknowledging that the moral judgment about deterrence is fundamentally a judgment about the direction in which we are moving. There is an intrinsic link between the direction of a particular deterrence policy and its legitimacy or illegitimacy. One cannot reach a moral judgment about such policies in a nonhistorical way. The possession of nuclear weapons is indeed an evil because of the inevitable risk of use which such possession carries with it. But the judgment of moral rightness or wrongness concerns the way human agents respond to the existence of this evil in their actual policy choices. The twin principles of reduction of the probability of nuclear war and increase in the possibility of arms reduction can provide more help in guiding such choices than can the general concept of toleration.[56]

An example may help clarify the point being made here. On December 12, 1979, the Foreign Ministers of the countries party to the NATO

[56] There is an illuminating parallel between the way the concept of toleration has been used in the Krol testimony and the way it was used by preconciliar theologians opposed to the Church's acceptance of the right to religious freedom. The chief problem with both of these uses of the notion of toleration is their separation of moral and historical judgment. What I am proposing here regarding deterrence policy is analogous to the revision which John Courtney Murray made in the religious-freedom argument: the recognition that moral judgments cannot be made unhistorically.

military structure approved a plan which would call for the deployment of 572 new nuclear weapons in Western Europe: 108 Pershing II Medium Range Ballistic Missiles (MRBMs) and 464 Ground Launched Cruise Missiles (GLCMs). This decision was taken in response to the Soviet deployment of significant numbers of intermediate-range missiles (SS-20s) and Backfire Bombers, both capable of delivering nuclear weapons on Western European targets. This decision was accompanied by a call to pursue the reduction of these Soviet theater nuclear forces through negotiations, with the proposed Pershing IIs and GLCMs to be used as "bargaining chips." Thus, from one point of view, the NATO decision would appear to pass the test of the criteria of the Krol testimony: the deployment of new NATO intermediate-range nuclear forces was linked to a serious arms-control proposal.

From the viewpoint of the two criteria for legitimate deterrence proposed here, this decision has a different appearance. NATO Pershing II missiles will have the capacity to strike Moscow within five or six minutes of launch. Their deployment may have the consequence of leading the Soviet Union to adopt a "launch on warning" policy for their own missiles in order to strengthen their deterrent against what is grimly referred to as "nuclear decapitation." Such a policy would remove the awesome decision about the use of Soviet nuclear forces from human hands and place it in Soviet computers. The likelihood of accidental nuclear war in such a situation would consequently be increased by a significant degree. One must conclude that the deployment of these new Euro-strategic weapons will make general nuclear war more likely, even though they are proposed in the name of deterrence. McGeorge Bundy has made this point somewhat more gently: "I...do not believe that it is stabilizing for one government to place the capital of its great nuclear rival under the threat of supersudden missile attack, and there appears to be some question of whether American Pershing II may not have that capability."[57] I would make the point somewhat more forcefully: the new Euro-strategic weapons fail the test for a morally legitimate deterrent according to the norms proposed here.

Similar analyses can be made of policies which call for war-fighting strategies on the intercontinental level and of the deployment of "first-strike capable" weapons such as the MX and Trident II missiles. These strategies and weapons systems are proposed as deterrents to Soviet use of nuclear weapons against the United States and its forces. First-strike weapons, however, invite pre-emptive attack and therefore transform deterrence into provocation. Also, for a strategy of limited nuclear war to

[57] McGeorge Bundy, "Deterrence Doctrine: A Need for Diversity," *Christianity and Crisis* 41 (1982) 387.

be credible as a deterrent, it must be based on a reasonable confidence that it can indeed be kept controlled and limited. There is little basis for such confidence.[58] Thus these new strategies and weapons systems also violate the two principles of legitimate deterrence.

The moral issue in the debate about deterrence strategy can be stated simply: Are the policies being advocated really deterrents or not? If they increase the probability of nuclear war or if they make arms control and reduction more difficult to achieve, they are not. Pacifists, nuclear pacifists, and even those who envision some forms of strictly limited use of nuclear weapons should be able to reach consensus on these two principles for the evaluation of deterrence policies. The great danger in the present moment is that moral judgments about the use of nuclear weapons will be adjusted to fit the logic of a favored deterrence posture. This appears to be happening in scenarios for limited intercontinental nuclear war, for tactical nuclear war in Europe, and in the rationales which are proposed for a variety of new weapons systems. Such developments turn on its head the structure of reasoning which is the only possible basis for just deterrence. The urgent task of the Church in the current debate is to keep this moral inversion from gaining popular acceptance. It will do so by focusing the debate over deterrence on the central values of war prevention and arms reduction and by continually scrutinizing concrete policies in light of these values.

CONCLUSION

This overview of the nuclear debate has attempted to survey the significant moral positions on the matter which are present within the Church today. It has reached three conclusions: both pacifist and just-war approaches to the morality of war must be represented within the Church if it is to pursue its ministry of justice and peace adequately; no use of nuclear weapons is justifiable in the circumstances of the present international political and military order; and concrete deterrence policies must be individually evaluated from the viewpoint of their contribution to war prevention and disarmament.

The first conclusion is theological and ethical; the second and third are ethical and prudential. Because these last two conclusions rest in part on nontheological judgments about the likely outcomes of certain military and political activities, it is likely that there will be more disagreement with them than with the first conclusion. It must be recognized, however, that even the first principle, with its legitimation of some limited uses of force, rests on a prudential judgment about the means which may sometimes be necessary for the attainment of justice. If the Christian

[58] See Desmond Ball, "Can Nuclear War Be Controlled?" *Adelphi Papers*, no. 169 (London: International Institute of Strategic Studies, 1981) esp. 37–38.

community had refused to make any corporate prudential judgments about the affairs of the political order, the just-war theory could never have emerged. Neither could judgments have emerged about intrinsic linkage between Christian faith and such secular institutions as limited government, the constitutional protection of the right to religious freedom, and the guarantee of a living wage.

In the nuclear debate the Church is being invited to see a new link between Christian faith and the international politico-military order. It took centuries for the Church to reach consensus on these other institutional correlates of Christian faith. The time left for reaching consensus on the questions of nuclear morality is short. But there is no more urgent task. The analysis and conclusions offered here are an attempt to contribute to the formation of this consensus.