

## NOTES

### WAR AND PEACE IN AMERICAN CATHOLIC THOUGHT: A HERITAGE ABANDONED?

In February 1987 George Weigel published what is likely to become one of the more controversial studies of American Catholic life and thought to have appeared in recent years. The book, *Tranquillitas Ordinis: The Present Failure and Future Promise of American Catholic Thought on War and Peace*,<sup>1</sup> advances three theses that are clearly designed to change the state of the question in church discussions of the theology, ethics, and politics of peace and war in our day. First, the tradition of Catholic social theory as it developed in the United States up to the time of John Courtney Murray and Vatican II is a resource that could make a great contribution to the cause of both peace and freedom in our day. Second, during the generation since the Council, the religious and intellectual leaders of the Church in the United States have not only failed to develop this tradition in a way that enables it to realize its potential for good, they have largely abandoned their heritage. Third, Weigel proposes a reclamation and expansion of the tradition that he believes will make an important contribution to a new order of peace, freedom, and justice in our conflict-ridden world.<sup>2</sup>

Broadly speaking, *Tranquillitas Ordinis* has the appearance of a neo-conservative rejoinder to both the liberal and the more radical currents that have been present in American Catholic social thought over the past 20 years. This appearance, however, is in some ways deceptive. Michael Novak, the most prominent Roman Catholic neoconservative, has criticized Catholic thinking on economic life for failing to learn from the great successes of the democratic capitalist system that has so shaped American life. For Novak, Catholic social thought has remained too closely tied to premodern, predemocratic, precapitalist institutions and modes of thought to be able to address contemporary economic problems effectively. By way of contrast, Weigel argues that the tradition of Catholic thought on war and peace, extending from Augustine to Thomas Aquinas to John Courtney Murray, had in fact learned just what it should have learned in order to contribute to the contemporary discussion of the ethics of international politics. Weigel's charge is not that the tradition has been too static, but that those who should be the chief bearers of this tradition have rejected it. In the Roman Catholic context,

<sup>1</sup> Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 21.

the charge of the abandonment of tradition is theologically and psychologically more provocative than is the charge of insufficient openness to the values of democratic capitalism. This gives Weigel's book an even sharper polemical edge than most of Novak's writings.

At the same time, Weigel's adaptation of the preconciliar approaches to the war-and-peace question has a visionary component that many on the political right would likely characterize as utopian. He argues that the future of peace in the modern world depends on the creation of effective transnational institutions for the nonviolent resolution of interstate conflicts, together with the world-wide development of democratic institutions within individual nation-states. The fact that Weigel was formerly a scholar in residence at the World without War Council in Seattle is echoed in this strand of his thought.

Thus the positive content of Weigel's thinking does not fit tidily into the stereotypical categories of the current religious, ethical, and political debates about war and peace in the U.S. today. Whether this is the result of his having made a breakthrough to a new synthetic vision that transcends these categories or to internal inconsistencies in his argument remains to be determined. It is vividly clear, however, what Weigel is against: almost all the thought and action on matters of war and peace in the U.S. Catholic community over the past 20 years. Weigel directs some salutary criticism at the more extreme positions of those at the left end of the spectrum in this discussion, and his criticisms could well be taken to heart by those to whom they apply. His strongest denunciations, however, are directed at those with less radical theological and political views. By minimizing the differences between the more moderate critics of current policy and those holding more extreme positions, Weigel seeks to discredit all who disagree with him. This strategy leads him to some highly selective quotation and citation from a number of Catholic authors and journals of opinion. For this reason I will focus principally on his objections to the more moderate mainstream.

This mainstream thinking received its most comprehensive and systematic expression to date in the 1983 pastoral letter of the U.S. bishops, *The Challenge of Peace*.<sup>3</sup> As a result, some of Weigel's harshest criticism is directed at this pastoral letter. He calls it "a tragically lost opportunity."<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the failure was more serious than not making the creative contribution that could have been made. The letter has done positive harm to the integrity of the Church's moral tradition. In his

<sup>3</sup> National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1983).

<sup>4</sup> *Tranquillitas Ordinis* 285.

words:

The real significance of "The Challenge of Peace" was this: the nuclear weapons-and-strategy debate preceding and shaping the bishops' pastoral was the occasion for those themes that represented an abandonment of the classic Catholic heritage to move from the American Catholic attentive public to the very centers of Catholic leadership in the United States.<sup>5</sup>

Even more harshly, Weigel questions why the bishops "have adopted language and imagery that is at cross-purposes with basic Christian insights into the human condition and the moral norms that can be read from that condition?"<sup>6</sup> The charge, in other words, is dereliction of pastoral and magisterial responsibility on the part of the vast majority of the U.S. episcopacy that voted to approve the pastoral letter, as well as a similar dereliction of theological responsibility by those who advised them. These are weighty charges indeed. They call for analysis and response. The fact that Weigel's arguments have recently been judged to raise a legitimate challenge to the approach taken by the pastoral letter by at least one American archbishop makes the need for such analysis even more apparent.<sup>7</sup>

Within the scope of this note it will not be possible to present a fully developed analysis of and response to the total sweep of Weigel's argument. The discussion will be limited to what I take to be the key points that shape the argument and give it its force. These points can be clustered in three areas: the theological, the political, and the ethical. I will maintain that on each of these levels Weigel has retrieved insights from the tradition that are indeed relevant to the current debates. I will also maintain, however, that he employs these insights in an uncritical way. Finally, I will suggest that his basic argument has not achieved a new synthesis of the tradition that can address contemporary issues of war and peace creatively, but rather that it contains internal contradictions that threaten to confuse the debate. This danger of confusion is heightened by his misreading of the views of a number of people toward whom he directs his polemic.

#### THEOLOGICAL ISSUES

Borrowing a phrase from John Courtney Murray, Weigel argues that the taproot that has nourished the great tradition of Catholic thought on

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 258.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 281.

<sup>7</sup> See the review of *Tranquillitas Ordinis* by J. Francis Stafford, the archbishop of Denver, in the *National Catholic Register*, April 19, 1987, 5.

war and peace is the theology of "incarnational humanism." In this theology the grace of Christ perfects human nature and brings it to fulfilment. Though the created world and all that is in it are marred by sin, the final word on human endeavor and human culture is one of hope rather than despair. As Murray put it, "in the perspectives of an incarnational humanism there is place for all that is natural, human, terrestrial. The heavens and the earth are not destined for an eternal dustheap, but for a transformation."<sup>8</sup> This means that the whole domain of the public world—including everything related to culture, politics, and economics—is open to positive Christian influence. Because such influence is possible, Christians have a responsibility to exercise it by assuming responsibility for the direction of history. In doing so, they are called upon to employ all the resources at their disposal, including both human reason and political power. They may even on occasion have to accept the tragic necessity of the limited use of force. Thus Weigel quite correctly insists that the incarnational-humanist approach to questions of war and peace will reject a religious retreat into a perfectionist community that seeks to avoid the dangers and difficult trade-offs involved in efforts to shape culture and use power wisely. And it will affirm and defend all human achievements that are true and good, even though they are not Truth itself and Goodness itself. On balance, Weigel believes, this incarnational humanism should lead to "a critically affirming appraisal of the American experiment and the dynamic peace of public order within our own political community."<sup>9</sup> It will provide the basis for an affirmation of the fundamental moral solidity and soundness of the American achievement, even though this achievement is not the kingdom of God. This, Weigel argues, will enable us to bring John Courtney Murray's "grand project" to completion.

Murray's theology of incarnational humanism was an eloquent re-statement of the complementarity of grace and nature, of faith and reason, of church and society. He contrasted this fundamental theological stance with a view he called "eschatological humanism." This alternative is deeply aware of the discontinuity between all human efforts and the transcendent destiny God's grace has prepared for us. It knows that all human activity is deeply marked by sin, and the failure to admit this further infects even the highest human virtues with pride, turning them

<sup>8</sup> John Courtney Murray, *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Image Books, 1964) 185, cited in part in *Tranquillitas Ordinis* 122. Weigel's frequent citations of this work are from the 1964 paperback edition rather than from the original 1960 edition published by Sheed and Ward. In order to avoid confusion because of the difference in pagination in the two editions, I will rely on the same version as does Weigel.

<sup>9</sup> *Tranquillitas Ordinis* 390.

into what Augustine called *splendida vitia*. Finally, this view insists that the central mystery of Christianity is the cross—the inversion of all human values. Eschatological humanism, therefore, radically devalues the cultural and political endeavors of this world. It regards the differences between worldly regimes as relative and, in the ultimate perspective, unimportant. What is important is faithful witness to the one thing necessary: God's grace given in Jesus Christ.

Weigel believes this eschatological theology has gotten the upper hand in Catholic discussions of war and peace since the Council. It has led Church leaders to a moralistic rejection of the efforts to build a dynamic political order of justice, peace, and freedom. It has caused them to confuse the eschatological peace of the kingdom of God with the politically achievable peace of *tranquillitas ordinis*, and to reject the latter because it is not identical with the former. It has blinded them to the differences between the moral worth of democratic regimes such as that of the United States and the immoral oppression of the totalitarianism of the Soviet Union and its clients. This theological shift is at the heart of the abandonment of the Catholic tradition on war and peace, with the tradition now identified by Weigel with incarnational humanism.

But is the matter really this simple? Murray and Weigel have set up the theological options in a way that is directly parallel to the church-sect opposition of Ernst Troeltsch's well-known typology. H. Richard Niebuhr's more complex typology, developed in *Christ and Culture*, should put us on guard against reducing the options to a binary choice between world-affirming, church-type approaches to the value of culture and politics and world-fleeing, sect-type responses to these realities.<sup>10</sup> Among Niebuhr's five models of the relationship of Christ to culture are two that have characteristically been present throughout the history of Roman Catholic life and thought: the "synthesist" and the "transformationist" or "conversionist." Both synthesist and transformationist approaches to this relation take the human with the utmost seriousness. Neither is sectarian in Troeltsch's sense of the term. Both reject the notion that one can derive moral perspectives from the Bible alone. Weigel repeatedly cites Murray's blunt remark aimed at those who identified Christian morality with biblical ethics: "What . . . makes you think that morality is identical with the Sermon on the Mount?"<sup>11</sup> At the same time, both synthesist and transformationist theologies reject any identification of the sacred order of faith and grace with the secular domain of politics and the state. Murray's entire project of convincing the Catholic Church of the necessity of the affirmation of the right to

<sup>10</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1956).

<sup>11</sup> *We Hold These Truths* 262, cited in *Tranquillitas Ordinis* 25 and elsewhere.

religious freedom depended on this distinction.

Despite these similarities, there are marked differences between the two types. The synthesist view of the relation between Christ and culture relies heavily on natural law discovered by human reason and declares this natural law to be compatible with the demands of the gospel. The conversionist or transformationist view of morality begins from the gospel proclamation that the love of God and neighbor made possible by Christ is at the center of the entire Christian life. It then seeks to mediate the meaning of this love by showing how it must be embodied in this-worldly virtues and moral principles. The synthesist view, in other words, grants greater autonomy to the natural and cultural orders, but believes that these can be combined with Christian faith in a stable and relatively harmonious way of life and social order. The conversionist model, on the other hand, finds much greater tension between cultural and Christian realities. Culture is viewed as more radically sinful, in need of conversion, though it remains fundamentally God's good creation despite the distortions introduced by human freedom. Because it is fundamentally good, it is capable of such conversion. Society, therefore, is always in need of transformation and is always capable of such transformation.

Both Murray and Weigel use the term "transformation" to describe the role that grace, faith, and the Church should play in relation to nature, reason, and society. Despite their use of this term, however, a case can be made that Weigel in particular exemplifies a "synthesist" model of the relation between Christ and culture. Though he states that transformation of American institutions and policies is both needed and legitimate, the overwhelming weight of his book is thrown into the balance against those who make concrete proposals about the form such transformation should take. In Weigel's exposition, Christian faith seems to exist alongside of or above American culture, synthesized with it in concord and harmony but not challenging it in any really pointed way. Despite Murray's strong affirmation of the American proposition, he exhibited considerably more epistemological humility than does Weigel by refusing to draw an unambiguous conclusion about the full compatibility of Christian faith with the way this proposition has been lived out in history. This is most evident from the fact that, contrary to Weigel's reading, Murray *did not* opt exclusively for incarnational humanism and against its more eschatological counterpart. He argued that the two theologies and the styles of life that express them "are not mutually exclusive; these doctrines are integral to the Gospel and complementary to each other . . . There can therefore be no question of dissolving either one of these two tendencies and the style of life it creates."<sup>12</sup> It is clear

<sup>12</sup> *We Hold These Truths* 188-89.

that Murray himself was more inclined toward the incarnational style than the eschatological. He was too critical a theologian and observer of history, however, to affirm the "ideal type" of a synthesist view of Christianity and American culture in an unambiguous way. The completion of Murray's "grand project" will therefore demand that the tensions Murray acknowledged between Christ and the historical American achievement be given greater weight than Weigel seems prepared to do. It is a serious distortion to charge all those who adopt a more critical approach than does Weigel with abandoning Murray's legacy. The Catholic tradition offers, indeed demands, alternatives to such a simplistic "yes or no" choice about the morality of U.S. culture and that part of it concerned with matters of war and peace.

During the years immediately leading up to the Second Vatican Council, and especially in the years following it, Roman Catholic systematic theology has been exploring both the great tradition and contemporary intellectual currents in ways that have opened up such alternatives. A common methodological approach is evident in this theology despite the notable differences among the thinkers who have been developing it. It presumes that the meaning of Christian belief must be continually retrieved in a critical way from the accumulated tradition beginning with the Bible. This meaning must then be mediated to contemporary culture by taking that culture's hopes, anxieties, and real though limited self-understanding with great seriousness. Such a process of mediation assumes both that the tradition has something of surpassing value to teach the culture and that the culture has much to teach the tradition. It also assumes that the tradition may sometimes have to stand in critique of the culture and that there may well be elements of contemporary cultural experience that show that critical revision of the tradition is needed. The mainstream of Catholic thinking on war and peace since the Council makes a similar methodological presupposition. This presupposition is the essence of what Niebuhr meant by a transformationist, conversionist approach to the relation between Christ and culture. Only by a one-sided reading of tradition, recent discussions of war and peace among the Catholic theological and episcopal leadership, and contemporary political and military realities has Weigel been able to make a case for his thesis that the Catholic heritage has been abandoned. A more detailed examination of the political and ethical content of these recent Catholic discussions of war and peace will, I believe, corroborate this claim.

#### POLITICAL ISSUES

Weigel sets the stage for both the positive and the polemical themes of his political analysis in the Prologue of his book. Two dates signal the beginning of the modern problem of war and peace as we face it today.

1914 marked the advent of the age of total war, in which whole populations rather than professional armies became both the agents and the targets of armed force. 1917 witnessed the rise of the other great scourge of international affairs: totalitarianism. Weigel presents the grim statistics to back up the charge that the purges and genocide committed by tyrants from Lenin to Hitler to Pol Pot have slaughtered millions of human beings and denied fundamental human rights to countless others. Thus he argues forcefully that we stand between the "fire" of modern total war and the "pit" of modern totalitarianism. An adequate understanding of the political context for the ethics of war and peace in our time can ill afford to neglect either of these two evils. The issue is not simply peace versus war; justice, freedom, and human rights are crucial values that must also be central in the debate. We must resist defining the issue through false choices: "either resist totalitarian aggression, even by war, or run the risk of a world in Gulag; either end the threat of war, even by appeasing totalitarians, or run the risk of global holocaust."<sup>13</sup>

Weigel is surely right in rejecting the "red or dead" definition of the problem. One can nevertheless question the analysis of the political context for the ethical debate that he provides as an alternative to this simplistic formulation. He again invokes Murray to set the framework of his argument. Murray had argued that an adequate approach to the question of war and peace must begin with a determination of "the exact nature of the conflict that is the very definition of international life today." He identified this conflict as the spiritual, moral, and political schism between East and West. Second, one must consider the means available for the defense of the values at stake. These means include not only military means of defense, which must always be a last resort, but an array of diplomatic and economic steps, plus efforts at creating effective international institutions for conflict resolution. Third, against the background of these first two considerations, one will then be in a position to make an assessment of the possible legitimacy of the use of force. If one attempts to reach judgments about the morality of warfare in our time without undertaking the first two levels of analysis, one will have no standard against which to measure the evils of war, and no sense of what the alternatives to war might be.<sup>14</sup>

Weigel believes that the mainstream thinkers in the discussion of the ethics of warfare since the Council have reversed the order of these considerations, destroying the rational coherence Murray sought to bring to the issue. Whether the issue has been Vietnam, Central America, or the question of nuclear policy, he charges that these thinkers, including

<sup>13</sup> *Tranquillitas Ordinis* 17.

<sup>14</sup> *We Hold These Truths* 240–43, discussed in *Tranquillitas Ordinis* 126–30.



the U.S. bishops, are unwilling to face up to the fact that totalitarianism is as much a problem in our world as is the danger of war. They have also failed to consider the question of the nonmilitary means available for the defense of democratic values, thus overlooking the role that initiatives to strengthen a democratic world order (again, *tranquillitas ordinis*) might play in securing a just peace. The implication is that they are naive about totalitarianism and woefully unimaginative in their consideration of the means available to secure a just peace.

It will be useful to focus on how Weigel attempts to show that this inversion of the order of Murray's questions about war has caused the bishops to abandon his legacy in their pastoral letter *The Challenge of Peace*. Weigel says that "the principal deficiency of the bishops' letter was its virtual detachment of the problem of nuclear weapons from the political context in which they are best analyzed, morally and strategically."<sup>15</sup> Thus " 'The Challenge of Peace' was not a 'peace pastoral' so much as it was a 'weapons pastoral.' "<sup>16</sup> It is certainly the case that the bishops' principal analytic focus is on the assessment of nuclear strategies, force structures, declaratory policies, and targeting doctrines. But none of the drafts of the letter were silent on the reality of the Soviet threat or on the importance of world-order considerations and nonmilitary means for the defense of peace and freedom, and each successive draft gave them increasing emphasis (not simply as a result of pressure from the Holy See, as Weigel maintains). Nonetheless Weigel remains deeply dissatisfied with the way these questions are related to each other in the bishops' contextual analysis.

The issue can be sharpened by calling attention to Murray's interpretation of the nature of the Soviet military threat to the Western alliance, an interpretation that Weigel adopts. In this view, Soviet confidence in the historically inevitable advance of socialism and equally inevitable collapse of capitalism means that the Soviets need not take great risks with their own security in order to achieve their goals. Indeed, they will never place the security of their homeland and the achievements of their revolution in jeopardy. In Murray's words, the Soviet doctrine on the use of force "dictates a policy of maximum security and minimum risk."<sup>17</sup> They will use force when the risk is low, and will refrain from doing so when the risk is high. This led Murray to prescribe the inverse policy for the U.S. as the most effective way of both keeping the initiative in world affairs and containing the advance of the Soviets. We may, he said, "safely invert the Soviet proportions. Our policy should envisage a

<sup>15</sup> *Tranquillitas Ordinis* 280.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 284.

<sup>17</sup> *We Hold These Truths* 229.

minimum of security and a maximum of risk."<sup>18</sup>

This analysis of the mix of security and risk on both sides of the NATO/Warsaw Pact divide is entirely inadequate today, prescinding from the questions of whether it was accurate when Murray first presented it and whether he would still advance it today. There are three reasons why it is inadequate and therefore dangerous.

First, the advances in nuclear weapons technology have changed the nature of the risks involved in the superpower rivalry. The development of weapons capable of a nuclear first strike has had a destabilizing effect on the mutual deterrence relation between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. Should a crisis short of nuclear conflict develop in the relations between the superpowers, the temptation to launch a pre-emptive nuclear strike has been heightened. Thus it is no longer possible to separate risk-taking between the two superpowers on the conventional level or in regional conflicts from risks to security on the nuclear level, as Murray's formulation assumes. Weigel warns against adopting a determinist attitude that allows weapons technology to set the agenda for the morality and policy. I agree. But it is precisely such a rejection of technological determinism that is at the basis of the bishops' argument that we must scrutinize weapons in the light of moral norms. Such scrutiny is the only way that human and Christian values rather than technology will remain in control of strategic policy. It has become impossible to develop an adequate ethic on the use of force without granting a central place to the moral evaluation of different weapons systems and strategic concepts. By stating that 1914 and 1917 mark the beginning of the modern age of international politics, Weigel has effectively ignored the several qualitative transformations of the war-and-peace problematic brought about by each new generation of nuclear strategy and weaponry since 1945.<sup>19</sup>

Second, Weigel argues that the U.S. should once again become the leader of the "party of freedom" on the global stage today. That freedom and human rights must be central to U.S. foreign policy is, in my view, beyond question. There can, however, be considerable disagreement among persons of good will about what can *prudently* be done to support freedom and democracy around the world today. The question of the limits to U.S. power to mold events is real and must be faced squarely in actual policy-making. Also, we must take into account the fact that policy must pursue a number of objectives, not just that of promoting democracy. For example, current U.S. policy toward the U.S.S.R. deals with human rights, strategic and arms-control issues, and a set of questions

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> For a history of these transformations, see Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (New York: St. Martin's, 1981). Freedman is professor of war studies at King's College, London.

known as regional issues. If the effort to advance human rights were to jeopardize arms control in a serious way, as it did early in the Carter administration, a choice must be made. Weigel's argument does not grapple with this problem. He simply affirms that "linkage" between arms-control and disarmament policy and a human-rights policy toward the Soviet Union should be vigorously insisted upon in U.S. foreign policy without discussing what the costs of such linkage might be.<sup>20</sup> Also, a plausible case can be made that in the Gorbachev era the linkage between arms reduction and increased democracy in the Soviet Union may run in the opposite direction from that assumed by Weigel. Arms reduction may be a precondition for increased democracy and economic freedom in the U.S.S.R., given the nature of the Soviet economic and political systems. If this is the case, Weigel's analysis will lead to exactly the wrong policies.

Third, Weigel implies that the future of freedom and democracy in the world depends almost entirely on U.S./U.S.S.R. relations. I fully agree that Leninism is an enemy of freedom and should be opposed where this can be done prudently and effectively. But not all tensions and conflicts that policy must address can be analyzed solely in terms of the East/West conflict. For example, the Middle East conflict has East/West dimensions, but it would be folly not to recognize the many other levels of the conflict. The failure of the U.S. to take the full measure of the power of the Islamic resurgence in Iran was a serious flaw in our policies toward the Shah. There are significant dangers that such mistakes could easily be repeated elsewhere if Weigel's political analysis were to be adopted.

There is, of course, much room for debate about these criticisms of the formula of "minimum security and maximum risk" as the basis of U.S. policy. However, I believe the criticisms are weighty enough to show the excessiveness of Weigel's claim that the bishops allowed their thinking to be shaped by "a survivalist anti-ethic that, by absolutizing the value of sheer physical survival, so transvalues all other values that they become relative, and ultimately irrelevant."<sup>21</sup> The judgments of the bishops and the other mainstream thinkers in the Church debate clearly differ from Weigel on these matters. The fact that they do so means that the issues should be debated on their merits. It is unfortunate that Weigel seeks to portray the disagreement as a dispute between those, supposedly including the bishops, who have lost their commitment to the value of freedom and democracy, and those, like Weigel, who have kept this commitment. To pose the issue this way is to confuse what is at stake in a most unhelpful way.

<sup>20</sup> *Tranquillitas Ordinis* 359.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 282.

## ETHICAL ISSUES

Weigel's theology and contextual political analysis operate together to shape the ethical questions that do and do not get raised in *Tranquillitas Ordinis*. His synthetic theology of the positive relation of Christ and culture rests on a prior judgment about the nature of the political context that minimizes the degree to which ethical criticism of contemporary policy in the area of war and peace is to be expected. This theology would be impossible if his political analysis of the international context and America's role within it were different than it is. Such contextual analyses of the situation and broad theological presuppositions, of course, always help to shape Christian ethical argument about public policy. However, ethical reasoning and moral principles are not strictly dependent variables; they have an independent contribution to make in the formation of judgments about disputed policy questions.<sup>22</sup> In my view, Weigel has allowed his overarching political perspectives to cause him to give insufficient attention to certain questions that are inevitably forced to the center of the war-and-peace debate if the just-war tradition is confronted in all its dimensions. This political stance leads him to focus his argument almost exclusively on the *jus ad bellum* criteria for the legitimacy of the use of force, to the serious neglect of the *jus in bello* criteria. In addition, his consideration of *jus ad bellum* is chiefly concerned with the criterion of just cause. The *jus ad bellum* norm of proportionality does not play a significant role in his argument. Weigel has minimized those aspects of the just-war tradition that would compel him to adopt a less synthetic, more transformationist theology and that would question his positive estimate of the moral potential of an activist, interventionist U.S. policy on behalf of democracy throughout the world.

Weigel's stress on just cause as a criterion for the legitimacy of the use of force is important. It helps focus the war-and-peace debate on the full range of human values that are at stake in international affairs: human rights, freedom, justice, security, and peace itself. Perhaps the most valuable contribution of his entire project is his plea that Christians and the public at large recognize that democracy provides a key institutional means for realizing these values simultaneously.<sup>23</sup> There is great moral appeal in his recommendation that U.S. policy seek to promote democracy as the best path toward a more peaceful world.

The issue, of course, is whether and when the promotion of democracy provides justification for the use of force. For the just-war tradition the answer to this question is "sometimes yes, sometimes no." It depends on

<sup>22</sup> See Ralph B. Potter, *War and Moral Discourse* (Richmond: John Knox, 1969) chap. 2, "The Complexity of Policy Recommendations."

<sup>23</sup> See *Tranquillitas Ordinis* 73, 328.

whether the other criteria of the tradition are met. Will the good achieved by the use of force proportionally outweigh the suffering and death that the war is likely to bring (*jus ad bellum* proportionality)? Can the war be fought with a reasonable hope of success using morally legitimate means (i.e., means that are themselves proportionate and discriminate)? Weigel alludes to these concerns at various places throughout *Tranquillitas Ordinis*, but he never systematically addresses them. I am willing to grant that mainstream American Catholic thought on war and peace has focused more heavily on the question of means than on the *ad bellum* question of ends. I am not willing to grant Weigel the luxury of remaining as silent as he does on the *in bello* question of the morality of means. It is a luxury that enables him too easily to avoid facing the question of the degree to which his perspective has itself abandoned a significant part of the just-war tradition. This question applies to his assessment of the U.S./U.S.S.R. strategic competition. It also applies to the recommendations he makes about an appropriate U.S. response to regional conflicts such as that in Central America. For example, he states that U.S. policy toward Central America should begin "with the assumption that intervention in Central America [is] a geopolitical given and, even more importantly, a moral and strategic responsibility."<sup>24</sup> In making this recommendation, he carefully avoids dealing with the question of whether and when such intervention might legitimately include the use of military force. This sidesteps an absolutely crucial moral issue in the policy debate.

Weigel's way of interpreting the content of the just-cause norm is also shaped by his analysis of the political context. He rightly states that the peace and justice that are the proper goals of international politics are not to be identified with the *shalom* of the kingdom of God.<sup>25</sup> The goals of politics are more modest: basic human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the elemental demands of justice. Securing these goals will establish a this-worldly peace that is the precondition for the pursuit of nobler and higher objectives.<sup>26</sup> The question remains, however, how these several moral objectives are to be related and ranked in the formation of policy. Weigel's position on this is clear: he grants first priority to securing political liberties and civil-political rights, and accords the demands of economic justice lesser weight. This is in part a political judgment on his part, for he argues that the institutions of freedom are essential for the

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 378.

<sup>25</sup> Weigel unfortunately avoids discussing the way *The Challenge of Peace* treats the relation between the peace of the kingdom of God and the peace attainable in history (nos. 56-65). This makes it far too easy for him to pin the label "utopian" on the bishops' letter.

<sup>26</sup> *Tranquillitas Ordinis* 358.

achievement of economic development and for the opportunity for all persons in a society to share in that development. This judgment has strong empirical warrants.

Weigel unfortunately moves from this affirmation of the importance of political freedom to a stance that downplays the importance of economic justice by picturing it as a kind of by-product of political democracy. Further, he interprets Paul VI's statement "If you want peace, work for justice" as a claim that all questions of justice must be effectively addressed and resolved *before* there can be a morally worthy peace.<sup>27</sup> This interpretation enables him to charge mainstream Catholic thought with a maximalist, even utopian, view of the relation between justice and peace. But this interpretation is a serious distortion of critical Catholic thinking on the subject since the Council. This thinking was summed up in the more recent pastoral letter of the U.S. bishops, *Economic Justice for All*:

Biblical justice is the goal we strive for. This rich biblical understanding portrays a just society as one marked by the fullness of love, compassion, holiness, and peace. On their path through history, however, sinful human beings need more specific guidance on how to move toward the realization of this great vision of God's Kingdom. This guidance is contained in the norms of basic or minimal justice. These norms state the *minimum* levels of mutual care and respect that all persons owe to each other in an imperfect world.<sup>28</sup>

These minimum demands of basic justice touch the political order: they imply that the standards of due process of law and the other institutions of constitutional democracy should be extended to all persons. But they also have economic implications: basic justice implies that minimum nutrition, housing, and the possibility of finding employment must be secured for all when the resources to do so are available. These economic objectives are not more important than are those in the political sphere. But both the political and economic minimums must be met if a morally worthy peace is to be established. Just as the lack of democracy is an impediment to development, economic deprivation can undermine the stability and legitimacy of democratic regimes.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 252–53, 346–48.

<sup>28</sup> National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1986) no. 68.

<sup>29</sup> Weigel maintains that my writings on human rights grant priority to economic equality over political liberty and tend "to diminish the relationship between political freedom and economic development" (*Tranquillitas Ordinis* 200–201). This misrepresents my views. For example, in discussing the priorities among political and economic rights, I have argued that "There are interconnections between the various sectors of rights that make the issue quite different from a political vs. economic trade-off. There are positive causal links

This dispute about the priorities that should exist among the political, economic, and other moral components that form the objective of international politics is not simply a dispute about the meaning of a just cause which could conceivably justify resort to the use of force. Weigel rightly observes that the ends of international politics are relevant to a broader set of questions than those concerning the possible justification of war. Even more importantly, they serve as a standard for judging what a rightly ordered political community would look like; they specify the nature of a morally acceptable peace. By narrowing his definition of the primary end of both war and this-worldly peace to the creation of democratic political institutions, Weigel ends up with a definition of the moral ends of policy that have been shaped by a political agenda. In contrast to this way of proceeding, the critical mainstream in U.S. Catholic thought has sought to project goals for policy in an area such as Central America that include both political and economic development. This leads to a rejection of Weigel's view that all the moral problems in international affairs will be solved by launching a kind of crusade for democracy. The world is too complex for this single-value approach to be effective; it is too dangerous for this to be wise. A mix of political and economic steps is what is needed, with the exact proportion of each determined by moral and political prudence.

To conclude: Weigel has written a challenging book that is likely to play a role in the debate on war and peace in the American Catholic community in the years ahead. Many of his positive proposals have considerable merit, particularly those that stretch the definition of the issues beyond the narrow question of the avoidance of war to the more fundamental questions of creating an order of freedom, justice, and peace. However, he blends his theological, political, and ethical arguments together uncritically, finally allowing his political analysis to exclude a number of contributions from theology and ethics that are essential if the Church is to make its distinctive contribution to these debates. For this reason, I think it is fair to say that *Tranquillitas Ordinis* is more a treatise on the politics of ethics and theology than a treatise on the ethics and theology of politics. Finally, the principal weakness of the book—and it is a major fault that threatens to obscure the book's contribution—

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between the sectors which cause them to reinforce as well as compete with each other. Under the conditions that actually prevail in many nations today, a failure to meet basic needs leads to increased political repression and decreased self-determination. Denial of political liberty, the right to association, and the freedom of workers to organize often leads to lopsided development and the denial of the rights to food, housing, health and work for large parts of the population" (*Claims in Conflict: Retrieving and Renewing the Catholic Human Rights Tradition* [New York: Paulist, 1979] 195). This perspective can be expressed in capsule form. What is needed is *both bread and freedom*; the two depend on each other.

is the frequent polemical excess in Weigel's criticism of those with whom he disagrees. The charge that these people have abandoned the lineaments of the Catholic tradition on the morality of international politics in both peace and in war is, I submit, flatly wrong.<sup>30</sup> One must hope that in the days ahead this charge will not become a battle cry within a Church that is itself always in need of the peace that comes from civil discourse.

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<sup>30</sup> This charge is particularly wide of the mark when it is directed against the thought of J. Bryan Hehir, to which Weigel devotes a chapter of *Tranquillitas Ordinis*. This chapter maintains that Hehir's "thought and work have been the crucial vessel through which the abandonment of the heritage was completed, not by activists or intellectuals or journalists, but by the Catholic bishops of the United States and their public policy agency, the United States Catholic Conference" (*Tranquillitas Ordinis* 324). In my view, such an interpretation of Hehir rests not simply on a selective reading of his writings, but on a deep misunderstanding of his theological and ethical perspectives. Hehir's thought is steeped in the legacy of John Courtney Murray. In 1980 James Turner Johnson, who has probably written more extensively and perceptively on the history of the just-war tradition than anyone in his generation, reviewed a volume of essays on contemporary moral-theological approaches to the ethics of warfare. The essay by Hehir in this book provides a kind of preview of the counsel he was subsequently to give the bishops' drafting committee. Johnson commented: "Bryan Hehir's exploration of how the just war ethic has been treated in recent Catholic theology is an exceptionally incisive essay, comparable to the best of John Courtney Murray's analyses of the subject two decades ago" (James T. Johnson, review of Thomas Shannon, ed., *War or Peace: The Search for New Answers*, in *Worldview* 24, no. 1 [Jan. 1981] 21). This evaluation of Hehir's relationship to the tradition is the polar opposite of that presented by Weigel. In my view, Johnson's evaluation is the correct one.