

# After Kuwait the Deluge

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*This article has been written as a contribution to a study, by Pax Christi International, of the relevance of the 'just war' tradition to the world situation after the Kuwait war. Brian Wicker is engaged with others in editing this study, which it is hoped will appear during 1993, the thirtieth anniversary of Pacem in Terris.*

We have been invited to discuss the justice of war because of the Kuwait case and its aftermath. But, I believe this is not the best place to begin. Let me start by saying why.

Whether the Kuwait War was a 'just war' is still controversial. The *ad bellum* case for using force against Saddam was strong. The *cause*—a plain case of invasion by one sovereign state of another—was surely just by the traditional standards. Furthermore it is unlikely that sanctions alone could have got Saddam out of Kuwait (though I accept that they were not given enough time and that this meant that the 'last resort' criterion was not fully met). The force to be used was assembled under the *authority* of UN resolutions (although some have argued that these were themselves unconstitutional). The *intention* was at least partly to restore peace (even though putting the Sabah family back into Kuwait hardly amounted to justice and peace for the Kuwaitis). On the other hand, the *in bello* criterion of proportionality was always in danger of being breached. The Pope's warning that such a war was likely to do more harm than good was timely and valid.

So there is much to argue about in the case of the Kuwait War. Yet in many ways it was a diversion from our most important problem, namely that of wars that take place within the boundaries of one state, or former state. The modern discussion of 'just war' has almost entirely concentrated on international conflicts. This is largely because the conundrums of just war theory all stem from the existence of warring sovereign powers over which no overarching authority exists to see that justice is done. As a result the world has been haunted, even traumatised by the nightmare of invasion across international frontiers. The 'Great War' of 1914—45 (I regard it as one conflict, albeit divided into two main phases) provided many textbook examples, and the cold war

continued the same theme.

But the 1914—45 conflict had a further, historically novel effect: namely to make all international violence potentially global. As Pope Paul observed at the beginning of *Populo Progressio*, the 'social question' has become world wide; and inevitably war itself has correspondingly widened in scope. Beginning in a little-known European city, Sarajevo, the Great War spread inexorably over the whole planet until it ended in the incineration of another little-known city on the opposite side of the globe: Nagasaki. A Balkan incident turned into a world war.

Technology made possible, and indeed exacerbated this process. With the spread of long-range missiles and of instantaneous mass-communication, major international war has become all but impossible to sustain as a local or regional phenomenon. The new Balkan conflict, for example, has become a world preoccupation almost overnight. Perhaps the Iran-Iraq war will turn out to have been the last case in belonging to two nations were allowed to slog it out, with mass-casualties on old-fashioned battlefields within their own countries.

All this means that in future, wars are likely to be within, not between, established states. What is happening now in former Yugoslavia, in Georgia, Azerbaijan, Somalia, Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland, and what may easily happen soon in Kosovo or South Africa, suggests the likely future of war. It is to conflicts such as these that our discussion of justice *in* war, and the justice *of* war must turn. Are the just-war criteria so mournfully mulled-over for centuries applicable in any way to the sorts of wars that we can see happening now all over the world?

## II

Let us consider first the question of nuclear weapons in this new context. Whether or not old-style nuclear deterrence was morally acceptable, it was at least comprehensible. True, it was wicked and self-contradictory in its basic assumptions. Yet it worked in the sense that it made for a certain predictability (though hardly for justice) in international relations. Of course, this is not to say that it prevented war. It may or may not have done so. Nobody knows. All that we can say is that the theory has not yet been decisively falsified.

Now, as Clausewitz recognised, any war is a duel between two parties. The cold war was no exception. 'Bi-polarity' was its basic principle. There were two blocs, each deterring the other into stalemate. Everything else, at least in what we now call the 'North', was

subordinated to the overarching structure of mutual terror. But this fundamental bi-polar structure has now disappeared, and with it the plausible justifications of deterrence which many of us have discussed, and some of us rejected, over the years.

Whatever we may have thought at the time of the Pope's claim that, in certain strictly limited circumstances, nuclear deterrence was still morally acceptable in 1983, the claim is quite simply irrelevant to 1993. The same goes for most of the arguments put forward by national conferences of Bishops in the early 1980's. It is not so much that they have been refuted as that history has passed them by. The question now is different. Can we have an intelligible strategy of nuclear deterrence in a multi-polar and proliferating world?

At present, the preoccupation is with deterring so-called 'rogue' powers, i.e. third world states like Libya, Iraq, Iran and North Korea. One of the things that makes these states 'rogues' is the perception that, unlike the 'responsible' nuclear powers who occupy the permanent seats on the Security Council, they would not conform to the unwritten rules of cold-war deterrence stability. Now doubtless such 'rogue' states would feel inhibited from using any nuclear weapons they managed to acquire by the knowledge that they would suffer retaliation from somewhere or other. To this extent deterrence may be said to 'work'. But from whom will the retaliation come? And on what authority? In a multi-polar world only two answers are possible. Retaliation will come either from some adversary nuclear state (or alliance) which sees its own vital interests threatened, or from some nuclear world policeman acting on behalf of the international Community as a whole.

Let us consider the first alternative. We shall have a multiplicity of nuclear states, some, like the five permanent Security Council members, publicly acknowledged, others, like Israel and perhaps India, in possession of nuclear weapons which they do not publicly admit to. Each of these states will be trying to deter those it regards as threats to its own 'vital interests'. A multiplicity of nuclear 'duels' will thus emerge, each of which will contain all the conundrums that Europe had to cope with during the cold war plus one more: namely a lack of trust in the 'rogue' side's ability to understand, or willingness to live by, the rules which alone made deterrence survivable. The nuclear superpowers had time and motivation to learn these rules. They discovered slowly and painfully that the enemy was not after all a 'rogue' but a rational actor on the international stage. But do the 'rogues' have the same inclinations or motivations? Of course, calling them 'rogues' implies a negative answer which may simply be a piece of patronising superiority

by the 'responsible' powers. Perhaps they will not turn out to be 'rogues' at all. Nevertheless for the time being here is a formula for global instability and unpredictability compounded by the real risk of nuclear conflagration.

What of the second alternative, namely deterrence by some nuclear world-policeman? Some people (mostly Americans) seem to think of the United States as destined to fulfil that role. But this is plainly absurd, for the United States is one of the players, and cannot plausibly be regarded as an impartial referee for the rest of us. It has its own sense of 'vital interests' to be defended, and these inevitably clash with other states' perceptions of theirs. The United States may, for the time being, be the only remaining superpower: but it is not a supra-power, and should not pretend to be. The United Nations is the only plausible nuclear world-policeman. But who would feel safe with nuclear weapons held as a deterrent by the Security Council? Even if it were possible for anyone to wield nuclear weapons *responsibly*—a very doubtful proposition, for they are, in effect, infinite in power, and those who use them are playing at being God—the Security Council would soon lose the credibility it has recently won if it tried to take control of nuclear weapons. If (as the Bosnia case shows) the UN cannot yet manage conventional weapons for peace-enforcement, how much less can it cope with nuclear ones! Meanwhile, proliferation goes on steadily, and—as in the case of Iraq—is difficult to stop.

The conclusion seems plain: a reliable and intelligible system of nuclear deterrence for the post-cold-war world is quite simply a chimera. What we are likely to get instead is a collection of very dangerous and unstable 'cold' duels. As the Church has been saying ever since the dawn of the nuclear age, although nobody has listened, *the only sensible thing to be done with nuclear weapons is to get rid of them completely and in as safe and prudent manner as possible*. Unfortunately, nobody knows how to do this.

Nevertheless we can at least begin by trying to stop them spreading further, while we wait for those who are tempted to acquire them to come to their senses. It is likely to be a long wait. Meanwhile, every move to strengthen and prolong the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, every temporary moratorium on testing, every new authorised inspection of dubious facilities, every commercial deal that is called off, every demand by a Bishops' Conference to its nuclear-armed government to go non-nuclear, every additional weapon cancelled or scrapped, every manufacturer penalised for breaking the rules marks a gain for the world. There is no single step that will ensure that nuclear weapons do not go off in anger, but each small step is part of a larger movement

away from the brink. The US congress has recently persuaded President Bush to accept a moratorium on US nuclear tests, to be followed by a Presidential commitment to producing a plan for a permanent ban. (This will have the incidental effect of preventing Britain from testing its own weapons for the time being). Are we witnessing here a breakthrough towards a comprehensive test ban? (Russia and France have both announced moratoria. Despite its love-affair with Trident, the British government depends on the USA for a site on which to let off its own bombs. Perhaps, therefore, Britain may eventually be shamed, however reluctantly, to follow suit).

### III

So much for the nuclear question. What are we to say about the wars that are going on now or are likely to occur in the future?

First of all, the only 'just cause' that is still recognised, both in the moral tradition and in international law, is that of self defence. All of the other causes allowed in past ages to be 'just' have gone by the board. But what does the right to 'self-defence' mean? Article 51 of the UN charter explicitly authorises military defence against 'a Member of the United Nations', that is to say a nation state, and then only until the Security Council is able to take charge of the situation. The assumption appears to be that self-defence belongs, at least in the first place, to the sovereign state. Implicit in this assumption is the principle that only the governments of nation states have the authority to go to war, even in self-defence. All governments have this right, irrespective of their human rights record or other deficiencies; but nobody except those governments has it. The arms trade rests on just this principle. Arms-exporting governments justify selling arms to states which do not have the capacity to defend themselves only because they think it is possible and legitimate to distinguish between arms provided to other governments to enable the latter to discharge their duty of 'self-defence', from arms which might be used for internal repression. As a result, it is regarded as illicit openly to sell arms to internal groups, however oppressed, who seek—even with clear moral justification—to overthrow a tyrannical regime. (Such operations have to be covert and quite commonly are discovered to be illegal).

Essentially the same limited doctrine of self-defence is taught in official church declarations on the morality of war. In the absence of a competent and sufficiently powerful international policeman 'governments cannot be denied the right to legitimate self-defence once every means of peaceful settlement has been exhausted' the Second

Vatican Council said. (*Gaudium et Spes* §79) On the basis of this principle, it has been taken for granted that no war can be just that is not waged by a government of a recognised nation-state. But what does this mean? What is to count as 'recognition'? This is a key issue in the current Bosnian conflict. Is Bosnia a sovereign state or not? If so, then it has the legal and moral right to defend itself against Serbian aggression, and to ask for arms to enable it to do so. But if not, what we are faced with in the former Yugoslavia is a form of 'civil war'. As I write the answer does not seem wholly clear, and this is one reason for hesitation in sending help from the international community. The legal and moral concepts of 'recognition' of sovereignty are in urgent need of development here, to cope with this and likely future dilemmas.

Beyond all this, however, there are moral difficulties with this narrow definition of self-defence. First of all, the just war tradition recognises as a just cause self-defence by a people against manifest tyranny. In the nature of the case, there is unlikely to be any international law on the application of this concept. Governments are not going to pass laws that allow for the possibility that they may be legitimately overthrown because they are tyrannical! Nevertheless it is argued by many involved in ethnic and other 'civil' wars that the belligerent victims are acting in self-defence against tyrannical oppression, even though the UN cannot be expected to adjudicate in such cases precisely because it is an organisation of governments. Work needs to be done, perhaps by the International Court of Justice, to clarify the criteria for deciding when the use of violence in self-defence against tyranny is a just cause. No government is likely to assist in this task. It is manifestly a job for 'non-governmental organisations', of which the Church should be a leading example.

Be that as it may, however, the justice of overthrowing tyrants does not really cover the case of, say, Serbs versus Croats, or of both versus Bosnians. For what we have here is a generalised reciprocal set of historical grievances by 'peoples' against each other. The injustices, however real, are too controversial in origin and too broad in scope, to be a clear pretext for going to war in self-defence against a tyranny. As Pius XII said in 1954, in some cases where the damage done by war would be disproportionate, a group has to suffer the injustice. Beyond that, of course, is the Christian command to love the neighbour. Mere hatred, communal rivalry or indiscriminate sense of outrage is no just cause for war. On the other hand, it is clearly a duty of the international community to do everything possible to prevent such hatreds from spilling over into bloodshed. (As Article 33 of the UN charter says 'The parties to any dispute. . . shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation,

enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement. . . or other peaceful means of their own choice. The Security Council shall, when it deems necessary, call upon the parties to settle their dispute by such means'). In the Yugoslavian case, this duty by the international community has manifestly not been fulfilled. One of the most obvious developments that the 'just war' tradition needs to undergo is to incorporate international preventative medicine into its ethical principles and to consider fully the practical implications. Mr. Boutros Boutros Ghali's 'Agenda for Peace' marks a beginning as does Paul VI's famous slogan 'development is the new name for peace'. Just war thinkers have not yet fully appreciated the moral consequences for their own study of this epoch-making insight.

Furthermore, in many cases competent or legitimate authority—a classical just war requirement—is lacking. Local warlords, however powerful, and however large their territories, are not governments, and lack the legal authority necessary for making war. How far groups that claim to have become sovereign states, even though not members of the UN and recognised only by a few other states, are truly sovereign and possess the authority for going to war in self-defence is a nice legal question. But it seems to me that it is necessary in the modern world to delay recognition of such groups until a peaceful *modus vivendi* with neighbours has been established. Doubtless there are good arguments for the creation and recognition of new sovereign states, but having been engaged recently in war ought to be a disqualification rather than a recommendation. Indeed, it should perhaps become a principle of international practice to delay recognition of new states for some time except in the case of those which achieve their status without bloodshed (as seems likely to be the case in Slovakia).

Beyond that, it has to be said that the basis of the doctrine of 'competent authority' in just war thinking is that there is no authority higher than that of the sovereign state to which the aggrieved party can appeal. But today there is a multiplicity of 'higher' authorities, and it is surely the duty of the tradition to insist that the competence of such authorities is continually developed and strengthened by custom and practice. Every time the CSCE or the UN is appealed to, a precedent is created for further development the next time. This growth of case-law needs to be positively encouraged. (The Bosnian authorities are continually appealing to the Kuwait precedent as the basis of their demand for international military intervention. They certainly have a powerful point here). It is therefore arguable that, quite apart from questions of diplomatic recognition, local warlords and communal leaders who engage in ethnic, religious or nationalistic wars are always

in breach of justice not just because they have not followed the criterion of last resort—they have not tried all the resources of peaceful resolution—but also because of the obvious fact that they, like everybody else, are subject to the growing authority of developing supra-national institutions. To this extent they lack the competence to go to war for whatever allegedly 'just' cause.

There is a further problem concerning the concept of self-defence, even in the case of the diplomatically-recognised nation state. Such states will typically claim the right to defend not only their territory and the citizens living in it, but also their 'vital interests'. Now there is no doubt that a modern state cannot survive in isolation from the world. Modern states have 'hinterlands' which extend well into the territories of other states. (The argument that the American interest in Middle Eastern oil was the real cause for which the Kuwait war was fought was plausible even if it was false). Hence some doctrine of 'vital' interests becomes inevitable. But the problem is that one state's 'vital interests' will very often conflict with another's equally 'vital' interests, and there is nobody who can adjudicate on where the line should be drawn. At present, the result is that 'might' becomes 'right'. The most powerful state's definition of its own 'vital interests' is likely in practice to prevail, even before any hot war has started. (During the cold war nobody felt able to challenge effectively the two superpowers' own definitions of their own 'vital interests'). There is no justice here, even though the principle of 'vital interests' has a certain abstract validity. What is to count legally as one state's 'vital interests' over against those of another cries out for further authoritative clarification. Until this is achieved there will always be huge loopholes in any state's claim that it is 'justly' acting in self-defence, for it will almost certainly be acting as judge and jury (and probably executioner as well) in its own cause. Of course there is nothing new here: the just war tradition is full of loopholes such as this. But occasionally a legal loophole gets plugged, often after some particularly egregious breach, and that is a gain for everybody.

At this point it may be apposite to consider the crucial test case of UN military intervention in Bosnia. The debate over this has been intense, and of great importance to the 'just war' tradition, even though, explicitly, the discussion has not been much conducted in terms of the just war criteria. How far would a UN military intervention fit into the moral tradition? Well, we can perhaps suggest a few pointers. That a just cause exists, in terms of very grave breaches of justice for the Bosnians, can hardly be denied in view of the evidence already accumulated about 'ethnic cleansing' and other atrocities, quite apart



from the question of whether this is a case of invasion of one sovereign state by another. Secondly, the issue of competent authority would presumably be pretty well settled simply by the fact of Security Council authorisation, provided such action were clearly in accordance with the UN charter. Thirdly, that the intention would be to restore peace is a basic assumption of the proposal itself. Fourthly, in view of repeated failures in negotiation, and of the delays already insisted upon at the UN itself, it could hardly be argued that the contemplated action would be anything other than a last resort. Fifthly, the *ad bellum* criterion of proportionality would seem to be covered by the extensive discussions that have taken place about the use of minimum force to restore peace. So far so good. But there are still some very serious worries. The most obvious concerns the probability of success. It is here that the military advice to the UN and its members is exceedingly pessimistic. I think it has to be admitted that the chance of military intervention succeeding, even in the limited sense being considered, is worryingly small. This is a point understandably undiscussed by the Bosnian authorities and pressure groups: but it has to be discussed by those who have to take the decision. Even if we consider only the option of limited and surgical air-strikes, we have to remember the extent to which air-power enthusiasts have consistently over-estimated the capacity of air attacks to produce decisive results in war. The record in Kuwait, and more recently in Iraq itself, is not at all reassuring here, war is not at all reassuring here. For example, it now appears that few of Iraq's mobile Scuds were destroyed during Desert Storm. Certainly the advice of the military on Bosnia suggests that many of the words uttered by experts in favour of the miraculous accuracy and discriminatory capability of modern weapons are having to be rapidly eaten. This point leads at once to a further worry, over the issue of discrimination itself. Not only the accuracy of weaponry, but the terrain and the nature of the disposition of forces are relevant here. It seems very unlikely, given the mingled character of the warring sides, that modern weaponry, especially from the air, can be used with the kind of discrimination necessary for the moral criterion to be truly met. Most of the military seem to be agreed that large numbers of innocent civilians would be at risk in any attempt to intervene militarily in Bosnia. Finally, it has to be said that the *in bello* criterion of proportionality would be seriously jeopardised by any likely intervention, especially if—as is often feared—it took longer than originally planned or turned into a 'quagmire'. In such circumstances, as the Vietnam experience suggests, proportionality considerations are likely to go out of the window in the interests of a quick solution, or worse still a quick exit.

These reflections are not reassuring. Perhaps they are not decisive against the possibility of a just intervention, but they certainly justify a great deal of reluctance and caution. It is far from clear that a US military intervention could result in a just solution of the conflict. Those who think that it can must, I think, be regarded as obliged to prove their case. They have not yet done so.

#### IV

So far I have discussed political and legal issues. Now we must turn to more specifically theological ones.

I have already used the concept of 'development' in a number of ways. It is necessary now to point out that it is a theological as well as a political and economic concept. We must remember what John Henry Newman called the 'development' of Christian doctrine. In its social, just as in its dogmatic teaching the Church must continue to 'develop'—sometimes even to the point in practice of reversing—earlier and less relevant positions. This has obviously happened with what the Popes used to call the 'social question', i.e. the constellation of theological and political issues stemming from industrialisation. Papal discussion of the 'social question' began, in *Rerum Novarum*, as a preoccupation of European and American societies. By the time of *Populo Progressio* it had become a global concern. Today things have gone further still: for the 'social question' has now coalesced with the North/South 'peace and justice' question, as *Centesimus Annus* makes abundantly clear.

Development of this kind is part of the prophetic duty of the Church: that is, of its role in discerning the signs of the times. One of the most interesting, but difficult questions for the immediate future is whether it is possible to 'develop' just war thought any further than it has already gone, or whether the time has come when it must be put on one side in favour of pacifism. It is certainly the case that modern Catholic thought has become increasingly sceptical as to the possibility of any just war in the modern world. From *Pacem in Terris* in 1963 ('It no longer makes sense to maintain that war is a fit instrument with which to repair the violation of justice') through many intervening stages to the recent June 1991 editorial in *Civiltà Cattolica* ('the theory of the "just war" is untenable and needs to be abandoned') there runs a consistent, if somewhat wayward course of development in favour of a practical pacifism. While in theory a war conducted according to certain extremely strict criteria could in the past be judged just, the Church today seems to be saying that there is now virtually no chance that a war will conform to those criteria. In other words the risk of any war being

disproportionate is now so great that it is an illegitimate risk to take. What kind of judgement is this? Well, first of all it is no mere inference from historical evidence and observation. It is rather an apodictic prophetic pronouncement, which says, in effect: enough is enough! It is the product of the theological claim that the Church is equipped to be able to discern the signs of the times by means which are not just those of the well-informed scholar, but by the Holy Spirit working within the community of faith. Of course, not all the claims made for such apodictic utterances are valid. The *Civiltà Cattolica* article itself is vulnerable to objections of inconsistency and careless formulation. But a case cannot be made out against it merely by offering an alternative interpretation, or an alternative selection of the available evidence, for the truth-conditions for such utterances are of a quite different order. Neither can the judgement be set aside just because it has only the authority of an unsigned editorial in a Jesuit magazine. Prophecy carries its own authority with it, and convinces by its own power. The true prophet is, practically by definition, an 'authority' on the signs of his own times, and it is only later that the Church comes to recognise 'officially' the validity of what he has said.

The sort of prophecy exemplified by the *Civiltà Cattolica* article is something which the official Church is from time to time called upon to endorse. The question is whether now is the time for this particular conclusion to be drawn about war. It rests partly upon the belief that no modern war can be proportionate, either in its *ad bellum* or in its *in bello* aspects. This is a judgement that seems open to a good deal of dispute. But it is important to recognise here that only a prophetic judgement can actually settle a question of proportionality in war, just as only a court of law can settle the question of proportionate damages for a civil offence. Has the time now come for the Church to draw this conclusion about war?

This last question raises another, of a more domestic kind, and one which arose in connection with the nuclear deterrence issue in the early 1980's. What kind of authority does a national conference of bishops have when it issues a pastoral letter on the morality of war and peace? This is a very important issue both theologically and politically, and is very apposite today.

There are good historical and theological arguments for saying that it is the bishop of the diocese, not the episcopate of the nation-state, who—in communion with Peter—is the primary locus of authority in Church teaching. These arguments have been foregrounded in recent years by those, including the present Vatican administration, who wish on the one hand to downplay the role of bishops' conferences in favour

of a 'high' view of the diocesan bishop's responsibilities, and at the same time to push for an even higher view of the Pope's jurisdiction over almost everything the diocesan bishop does and says. Thus individual bishops are simultaneously flattered and marginalised in favour of the centralised power of Rome.

But the argument is theologically and politically unconvincing. At least in highly developed nation states the reality is that the diocese is a very artificial entity, and the bishop in charge of it has little real authority except on relatively unimportant, i.e. purely ecclesiastical, matters. On the great questions of the day, when discerning the signs of the times becomes a solemn theological duty, the nation-state is the arena on which things are played out. Here the national conference of bishops is the body which counts, and it feels that it counts. The peace pastorals of the early 1980's made this point. Some people tried to downplay their significance because they were 'only' the opinions of bishops' committees which had no proper ecclesial standing. But that was not how the politicians saw things. The political fact is that a single 'prophetic' bishop can be easily marginalised as a crank. But a whole conference of bishops cannot so easily be swept aside, as the Malawian regime has recently discovered. It was precisely because, in the case of the peace pastorals, the bishops conferences could not be marginalised that they experienced subtle self-censorship to conform their teaching on nuclear deterrence to their own governments' policies, even at the expense in some cases of flatly contradicting the teaching of their fellow bishops in other countries. (Of all the conferences that produced peace pastorals, only the Scots went against their own government on the morality of deterrence: and this was doubtless because Scots did not see the English government as having unquestionable legitimacy to control Scottish affairs. What is more Scotland was saddled with a disproportionate number of nuclear bases and installations).

The peace pastorals issued by bishops' conferences in the early 1980's marked a significant 'development' in the teaching of the Church on war and peace. While the conferences were drawn into conformity, by subtly internalised pressures, on the deterrence issue, they were staking out new ground in the general debate. This has proved fertile for later cultivation. On a great issue of the times it was the bishops conferences that saw the need to address the question, and even if the result was disappointing or even incoherent it was important that the effort was made. Doubtless one result has been the increasing convergence taking place today, especially after the Kuwait experience, between the pacifist and the just war traditions in the Church, especially at the level of practical outcomes. But not only there, for those in the

just war tradition have come to appreciate more deeply many of the values that inhere in the pacifist tradition, notably in the area that has come into view under the general umbrella of the 'green' agenda. It is not only that Catholic just war thinking is tending today to come to the conclusion that modern war by its very nature is inevitably unjust: it is also that in coming to this conclusion, judgements are made and constellations of values emerge which are borrowed from the pacifist tradition.

On the other side, of course, pacifism is faced by new conundrums and dilemmas of its own, of which the possible use of proportionate but potentially lethal force by the UN to enforce peace and bring belligerents to see sense in Bosnia is only the most obvious example. This challenge has always been implicit in the UN charter, but now it has come to the top of the international agenda. If it makes progress it will certainly pose a question to the principled pacifist whose hopes have always lain in the establishment of an effective international authority for the promotion of peace and security for all, but who has never had to confront the possibility of that authority mustering and using lethal force in the cause of justice and peace.

## V

To sum up: the problem today is that warfare is largely internal to sovereign states, and the Church's teaching tradition has to accommodate itself to this fact. In some ways we face a situation more akin to that of the European Middle Ages than to that of recent times. In particular, issues surrounding the criterion of competent or legitimate authority for engaging in war, so prevalent in feudal societies, surface once more in modern ethnic and nationalistic warfare. What is unique to our own time is that modern technology, applied both to our capacity for mass destruction and for mass-communication, is combining with nationalistic fanaticism to produce a challenge to the established sovereign state system: a system which alone until now seemed capable of providing a legal foundation for the recourse to war. *Pace* the Kuwait case, and despite the efforts of politicians to obfuscate the issues, the criterion of 'just cause' is likely to figure less, and that of 'legitimate authority' is likely to figure more in future discussions than it has done hitherto. The Bosnian case is a classic example here: for - leaving aside the purely humanitarian issues - the question is whether this is a civil war or a case of international aggression.

None of this must be allowed to obscure the fact that *in bello* considerations of proportionality and discrimination are leading with

increasing speed to the conclusion that today war is no longer an apt means for solving any of the world's problems. The convergence of this 'practical pacifism' with the older pacifist tradition is another feature of the modern world which our discussion must take account of. Perhaps a new stage in the development of Christian thinking about war will be reached as a result.

Finally, the Church must exercise its prophetic role in discerning the signs of the times, and speaking openly and decisively about them. The experience of the early 1980's 'Peace Pastorals' was ambiguous here, not only because so many of them produced either platitudes or self-contradictory propositions, but also because of the uncertain theological roles played by the national conferences of bishops that produced them. Nevertheless, they did constitute a distinct and significant contribution to the Church's mission to address the great international issues of the day, and laid a foundation on which to build. Let us hope that in the future the results are less like the Tower of Babel and more like a Cathedral of Peace.

## George Steiner and the Theology of Culture

Graham Ward

In 1990 George Steiner was invited to give the Gifford lectures at Glasgow University. They were well received. In fact, in Donald MacKinnon's words, they were 'an outstanding series'. They are as yet unpublished. While we still await their publication, the paperback version of *Real Presences*, his most outstanding explication so far of a theology of culture, has appeared. Furthermore, in 1993 John Hopkins University Press are publishing, under the editorship of Nathan Scott, a collection of essays on various aspects of George Steiner's work. This article attempts to assess the preoccupation with theological issues evident in Steiner's work from the beginning.

That culture and its meaning are underwritten by God is a thesis with a long history in literary studies. From the Greeks to Proust, from

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