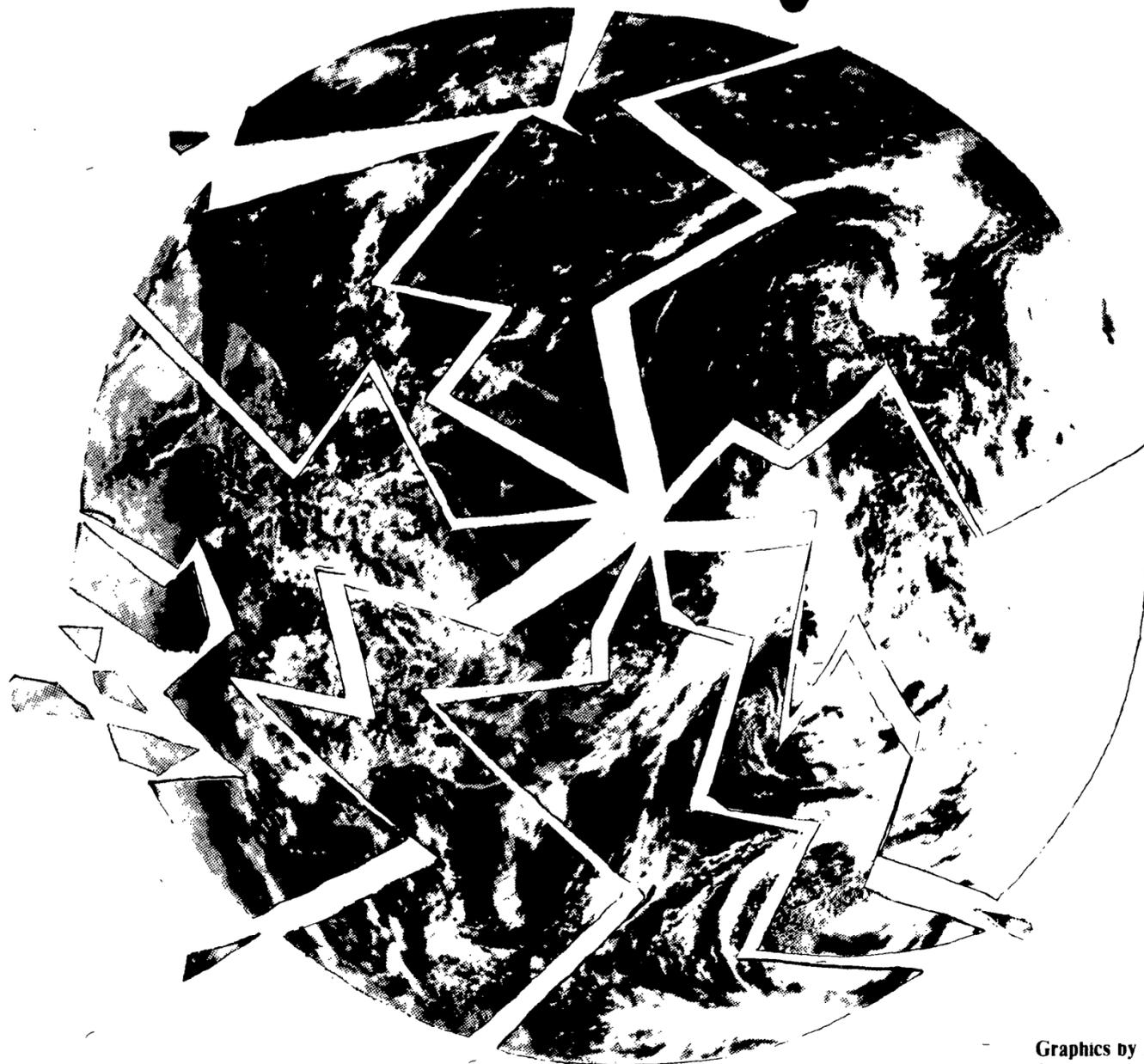


The Nuclear Question



Graphics by Denise F. Grimaldi.

Comparing the Drafts How the Bishops' Pastoral Has Changed

Text from the *second draft* of the bishops' pastoral letter on war and peace is in *italic type*; text from the third draft is in roman type, unless otherwise noted.

I. Role of Church Leaders

The major change in this category is an attempt of the bishops to clarify the weight of different parts of the document.

At times we state universally binding moral principles as well as formal church teaching; at other times we make specific applications, observations and recommendations which allow for diversity of opinion on the part of those who assess the factual data of a situation differently than we do.

In some cases the bishops are stating Catholic moral principle. For example: It is never permitted to direct nuclear or conventional weapons to "the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their populations..." (The Pastoral Constitution, 80) The intentional killing of innocent civilians or noncombatants is always wrong.

In other cases they are expressing their judgment in interpreting a specific case. For example: On Deterrence. In this letter we have outlined criteria and recommendations which indicate the meaning of conditional acceptance of deterrence policy. In concert with the evaluation provided by Pope John Paul II, we have arrived at a strictly conditional moral acceptance of deterrence. We cannot consider it adequate as a long-term basis for peace.

These quotes are texts from the document "Precis."

II. Traditional Catholic Positions on War

In this section there seems to be some changes of language and a more detailed expansion of some positions. A few examples that highlight this: On just war theory:

Second Draft: "The purpose of the moral theory is not, in the first place, to legitimize war but to prevent it. The presumption is against the use of force. This presumption against using force must be overridden before such use can be claimed to be justified."

Third Draft: "Just war teaching has evolved, however, as an effort to prevent war, only if war cannot be rationally avoided does the teaching then seek to restrict and reduce its horrors. It does this by establishing a set of rigorous conditions which must be met if the decision to go to war is to be morally permissible. Such a decision, especially today, requires extraordinarily strong reasons for overriding the presumption in favor of peace and against war. This is one significant reason why valid just war teaching makes provision for conscientious dissent. Objection to war — all war — must be the norm for all sane people. Only the most powerful reasons may be permitted to override such objection."

On war as a last resort:

Second draft: "The physical, moral and spiritual consequences of any use of force are so detrimental that resort to arms is justified only when all other reasonable means of redress have been pursued."

Third draft: "For a cause to justify going to war all peaceful alternatives must have

been exhausted. There are formidable problems in this requirement. No international organization currently in existence has exercised sufficient internationally recognized authority either to mediate effectively in most cases or to prevent conflict by United Nations or other peacekeeping forces... Further, when any nation or people perceives conflict between or among other nations as advantageous to itself, the tendency is to attempt to prevent, rather than to advance peaceful settlement." (Nearly a page of further elaboration encouraging the potential role of the United Nations in the regard, all absent in the first two drafts, follows.)

Basic rule on counter-population warfare:

First draft: "Under no circumstances may nuclear weapons or other instruments of mass slaughter be used for the purpose of destroying population centers or other predominantly civilized targets."

Second draft: unchanged from first.

Third draft: unchanged from first.

Moral rejections of nuclear war

To say "no" to nuclear war is both a necessary and a complex task. We are moral teachers in a tradition which has always been prepared to relate moral principles to concrete problems. Particularly in this letter we could not be content with simply restating general moral principles or repeating well-known requirements about the ethics of war. We have had to examine, with the assistance of a broad spectrum of advisers of varying persuasions, the nature of existing and proposed weapons systems,

the doctrines which govern their use and the consequences of using them. As our Appendix indicates we have consulted people who engage their lives in protest against the existing nuclear strategy of the United States, and we have consulted others who have held or do hold responsibility for this strategy. It has been a sobering and perplexing experience. In light of the evidence which witnesses presented and in light of our study, reflection and consultation, we are sure of one moral imperative we should declare: a rejection of nuclear war. But we feel obliged to relate our judgment to the specific elements which comprise the nuclear problem.

In light of the evidence which witnesses presented and in light of our study, reflection and consultation, we are sure we should reject nuclear war. But we feel obliged to relate our judgment to the specific elements which comprise the nuclear problem.

For the tradition which acknowledges some legitimate use of force, contemporary nuclear strategies push the moral limits beyond the permissible. A justifiable use of force must be both discriminatory and proportionate. Certain aspects of both U.S. and Soviet strategies fail both tests. The technical literature and the personal testimony of public officials who have been closely associated with U.S. nuclear strategy have both convinced us of the overwhelming probability that a nuclear exchange would have no limits.

For the tradition which acknowledges some legitimate use of force, some important elements of contemporary nuclear strategies move beyond the limits of moral

Continued on Page 12