

him a 'German' should be a hanging matter. Anyway, I usually call him a 'Bavarian'.

It simply will not do to defend secrecy at the Synod on the grounds that faith is 'centred in mysteries'. The Synod was decidedly not a 'Mount Tabor' experience and nobody thought it was. The only 'mystery' at the Synod was how far *Comunione e Liberazione* and *Opus Dei* would be able to manipulate. Secrecy masked that operation. Unveiling frustrated it.

The 1971 Instruction on Social Communications, *Communio et Progressio*, said that the Church should have the same standards of openness and access to sources of information as anyone else. 'The liberality which is an essential attribute of the Church demands that the news she gives out should be distinguished by integrity, truth, and openness, and that these should cover her intentions as well as her works.'

Finally, no one who knows me has experienced 'the frustrated anger of the self-appointed expert'. I am content with my work, and do not spend my time gnashing my teeth.

## Reviews

**NUCLEAR DETERRENCE, MORALITY AND REALISM**, by John Finnis, Joseph M. Boyle Jr. and Germain Grisez. Oxford, *O.U.P.*, 1987, £30.00, 429 pp.

Despite the fact that it covers nearly four hundred pages with careful argument, with many footnotes, and voluminous endnotes overflowing from almost every paragraph, the central argument of this book is not too difficult to summarise. All three Western nuclear powers base their security on threats to destroy cities, either in some deadly game of 'city-swapping', or in a final retaliation. This amounts to a permanent intention to kill innocent people in large numbers if certain circumstances arise. It is not bluffing. Only the French declare outright that the intention is to threaten populations. The British authorities say the 'primary purpose' is not to attack civilians and the Americans that they do not target cities 'as such'. These are nothing more than evasions intended to pull the wool over the eyes of decent churchmen who cannot bring themselves to face the reality of the deterrent. Although Western Governments have a duty to deter Soviet domination, which would almost certainly be imposed if the West were to get rid of its nuclear weapons, common Jewish-Christian morality categorically forbids the intention to kill the innocent under any circumstances. Most people resort to consequentialist arguments in order to resolve this dilemma in one way or the other, even including Catholic bishops and others who do not argue this way on other issues. However, no consequentialist arguments are adequate since none of them can work in the way they claim—producing the morally right decision by weighing up future consequences. Only a theory of morality based on absolute respect for basic human goods—among which is innocent life itself—is sound. Such a theory underwrites the common morality prohibition of killing innocents. But the West desires the Soviets to fear the deaths of innocent citizens—that is the essence of the deterrent. All tolerance of deterrence as a stage towards disarmament or to some more moral, counterforce, deterrence is based on an illusion. Therefore deterrence must be renounced without delay and all those citizens of Western nuclear powers who accept these conclusions have a duty immediately to

cease cooperation with the deterrent and to actively oppose it if and when they have the opportunity, regardless of the fact that, if deterrence were to be abandoned, it would almost certainly lead to enslavement under a Soviet regime (such are the authors' pessimistic views of international relations). But in case Western citizens think that the defence of Christian civilisation is a special case, we are reminded that the socio-political order of the West is not the same as the kingdom of God. The West corrupts itself hopelessly by opposing Marxism with the threat to massacre innocent people. Consequently states have a duty of immediate unilateral nuclear disarmament. There must be no interim deterrence maintained as a step towards mutual disarmament. Individuals have varying obligations, depending on their present responsibilities. All of them, whether politicians, missile submarine commanders or ordinary citizens, must get out of situations in which they are cooperating with murderous preparations. Naturally, the authors do not expect Western Governments to welcome these conclusions with open arms, and towards the end of the book ask themselves why they have bothered. Their answer is that, when the inertia of vast historical trends is exhausted, unexpected developments might give room for radically new options, which could need a new body of moral thought. With leaders of both super-powers agreeing that nuclear deterrence is immoral and that it ought to be got rid of, history seems to be moving in their direction.

Arguments of this kind have been put forward many times over since the mid fifties, but never at such length, or with so much attention to detail (both strategic and philosophical), or taking on so much of the opposition. The three authors—one working in England, and two in the United States—are conservative Catholic moral philosophers who have for years been deploying increasingly powerful and sophisticated arguments against the various types of consequentialism that have prevailed among Catholic moral theologians since the sixties. Their relentless and absolute opposition to nuclear deterrence—which puts them at odds with many a bishop's conference, and even the Pope, although it follows the same logic as their opposition to abortion—is all the more significant for that. From now on, no-one arguing for deterrence should be listened to—neither bishop, theologian, civil servant from the Ministry of Defence, or philosopher of any religion or none—who cannot demonstrate that they have read this book, absorbed the information it contains and worked their way through its arguments. It should be required reading on every seminary syllabus.

But no book is perfect, and this one, despite its many excellences, caused me some rising irritation towards the end. The chief reason for this was the occasional dismissive remarks about the peace movement, suggesting that in the authors' opinion it is composed of naive and possibly dangerous idealists, who consider the prospects of Soviet domination 'practically negligible' and who are prone to exaggerate the effects of nuclear war. This may be a tactical move to gain credibility with other conservatives, but—despite the inclusion of some good advice on civil disobedience—it reads like the experts' scorn for the ordinary unbookish person of action, supposedly swayed by emotion rather than reason. The truth is that for every naive idealist in the peace movement there are a hundred hard-headed women and men who are perfectly well aware of the Soviet historical record, who do not believe the world will be free of terror and tyranny as soon as nuclear weapons are abandoned and who have a perfectly adequate grasp of the morally relevant facts and have always understood the common morality argument against deterrence. Recent changes in super-power attitudes may be due to a number of causes, but one of them surely has been the stubborn opposition of masses of ordinary people who for years have known without requiring elaborate proof that it is wicked to bomb the innocent, and that for their country to base its security on a threat to destroy the world is simply the height of blasphemy and should be opposed without delay. I think this is an important book, even a great one, but there are other ways of witnessing to an alternative moral vision.

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