

Peacebuilding in Catholic Social Teaching A Response to Kenneth Himes, O. F. M.

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I want to commend Father Himes on a finely wrought paper. We have been in conversation as he has worked his text through various versions. So, after having so much input, I hesitate to respond once again, for fear of adding to the Sisyphean task of completing the paper. I am grateful, therefore, that Ken and I have collaborated over many years on issues of war and peace, so these few minutes may be regarded as part of an ongoing dialogue. I am also grateful to Jerry Powers and the planners for keeping me involved in the process throughout.

Father Himes has offered a fulsome treatment of the current resources and future possibilities for peacebuilding in Catholic social teaching. I especially appreciate the way he has treated the theological components of the tradition, such as reconciliation and forgiveness, of which I will have more to say later. In addition, he has laid out some of the more difficult issues facing those who would develop principles of a *ius post bellum* as a bridge between the Just War Tradition and Catholic peacebuilding, such as the respective roles of retributive and restorative justice.

I. General Comments

A Caution. Let me preface my remarks with some comments on the assigned subject matter: Peacebuilding in Catholic Social Teaching. Implicit in the topic is the hope that Catholic Social Teaching will address the question of the *ius post bellum* and peacebuilding, more broadly, in official documents. That is a legitimate hope, but one that without proper caution may be problematic. First, it appears to assume that a new, fast developing field can and should have an immediate impact on official Catholic statements. Secondly, it seems to assume that the proper medium for education in peacebuilding is high-level official church pronouncements. Approbation is one thing; detailed transmission of research quite another.

Timing. First, then, the question of timing. Ken has shown the beginnings of official Catholic social teaching on peacebuilding as well as areas in which developments in the field of peacebuilding can enrich the tradition. It is good to remember, however, that for the better part of Catholic history progress in the field was largely the work of moral theologians, refining their principles over time in response to changing circumstances. That is how the Just War canon evolved, and, application aside, the Roman magisterium, to my knowledge, never codified the rules of Just War until the publication of The Catechism of the Catholic Church in 1994.¹ The first point, therefore, is that it is not the role of the magisterium to incorporate new insights quickly into the body of official teaching, though Vatican Council II urged that principles be refined in light of ongoing developments and expanded knowledge of world conditions.² The publicizing of the lessons of peacebuilding to Catholic thought belongs, in the first instance, however, to scholars and practitioners, who can use their expertise to advise the academy, other peace activists, justice and peace commissions, episcopal conferences and others on the

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implementation, adaptation and dissemination of these ideas.³

It takes time for ideas to percolate from the bottom up even when there are vigorous social movements or important public intellectuals leading the campaign.⁴ Let me take just one example close to our topic, namely, nonviolence. On the eve of Vatican Council II, official teaching still forbade Catholics from embracing pacifism. During the Council, Archbishop Roberts and the English bishops, along with the late Gordon Zahn, were able to include a somewhat convoluted endorsement of nonviolent direct action in The Pastoral Constitution on the Church on the Modern World.⁵ Almost two decades later in The Challenge of Peace the U.S. bishops treated nonviolence, and along side the Just War, as one of two streams of Catholic tradition on peace and war, but limited it to serving as a personal vocation, not a public ethic.⁶ As late as the early 1990s the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace was unable to publish a set of studies on nonviolence, even though one of the essays was written by the vice president of the Council, then Bishop Jorge Mejia. In 1991, Pope John Paul II, endorsed nonviolence in *Centesimus annus*, but no one seemed to notice; and in 1993 the U.S. bishops, in The Harvest of Justice Is Sown in Peace, identified nonviolence as the foundation of Catholic teaching on war and peace and argued it should be the basis of a state ethic as well as of personal witness, a genuine shift in teaching.⁷ Once again, no one noticed. It will take many years still to make nonviolence an ethic that is “church wide and parish deep”.⁸ And let me note that none of the key statements on nonviolence went into detail describing the practice of active nonviolence.

Proper Vehicles. Secondly, what is the proper vehicle for refining and disseminating ideas about Catholic peacebuilding? There is an old debate about whether the social teaching should be specific or general. The late Paul Ramsey used to praise Catholic teaching for keeping to general principles and avoiding overly specific teaching on public issues, comparing the generality of Catholic social documents favorably to the prescriptive policy statements of liberal Protestant churches and the World Council of Churches.⁹ As you know, whereas over the last century the magisterium has gotten more specific in sexual ethics and medical matters, social teaching has remained at a more general level; and some critics have argued that, like most social teaching, teaching on personal morality should also remain at a general level.

Certainly, teaching on war and peace should include endorsement, in broad lines, of peacebuilding; and, when they have been sorted through by scholars and professionals, the principles of a *ius post bellum* should also be included. But official teaching is not the right vehicle for refining or disseminating the latest findings or proposals in the field. There are other and more suitable vehicles for that with publications from Catholic Relief Services and Caritas Internationalis, who have already done some fine work, and from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace which can address complicated issues through specific studies and aids.¹⁰

It is from episcopal conferences and individual bishops that we might more appropriately expect official teaching related to Catholic peacebuilding, but in an applied way or in a summary fashion fitted to specific contexts.¹¹ At the same time, there is a notable challenge in promoting Catholic responsibility for both nonviolence and peacemaking, so that they become “church wide and parish deep”.¹² It seems to me that it is from the engagement of the local church and its successful experience with peacebuilding that its concepts and principles will work their way up

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to teaching at the level of the universal church.

Cooperation with Governments and IGOs. One further general comment on cooperation with government and international governmental organizations, like the United Nations. It is clear that we are living in a period when religion is no longer absent from the public square, due largely to the political success of the Christian right in the United States and of the threat posed by radical Islam. Though the U.S. Department of State has translated our book *Forgiveness in International Politics* into French for dissemination in Francophone Africa, I want to be on record that I don't have a high degree of confidence that either governments or international agencies have a high regard for religious actors in conflict situations, except when they find their own efforts at conflict prevention or post-conflict reconciliation have failed.¹³ The International Religious Freedom Act requires training of foreign service officers in religious issues, but, in my experience of those exercises, they are superficial, with the Department's own handouts re-enforcing stereotypes. As a result, there are numerous lost opportunities.¹⁴

One example. After the Dayton Accords, the bishops of Croatia trained between 30 and 40 of their priests in conflict resolution and transformation techniques. Their hope was that these priests could precede their parishioners in returning to the devastated region of Eastern Slavonia, allowing for a peaceful re-possession of that territory by the native Croats. USCC informed U.N. officials of this capacity and received the promise that as security allowed they would work with the priests in the process of return. It never happened. At last report, the Croat population of that region is only a small fraction of what it was before the break up of the former Yugoslavia.

II. CST and Peacebuilding

Let me turn now to the content of Catholic peacebuilding.

1. Human Rights, For me, a significant oversight in Ken's treatment is the matter of human rights. After all, John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in terris* (Peace on Earth), the contemporary magisterium's most significant statement on peace, written in wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis and an inspiration to peace activists for a generation afterwards, elaborates the positive substance of peace in terms of the "recognition, respect, safeguarding and promotion of the rights of the human person".¹⁵ As Ken rightly points out, one of the major challenges of *post bellum* conflict peacebuilding consists in re-instituting and protecting a legal order in which rights are respected. Likewise, one of the most important tools of conflict prevention is human rights monitoring and advocacy.

Participants learned from the 1994 USCC and CRS conference African Bishops as Peacemakers, conducted at Duquesne University, that many bishops who later served as national conciliators gained their standing by their work in defending human rights. Indeed, one of the great social revolutions in Catholic social pastoral practice emanating from *Pacem in terris* was the proliferation of human rights commissions and centers in zones of conflict.¹⁶ Moreover, when differences arise over transitional justice, as Ken has noted, it has frequently taken the form of a debate between human rights advocates and "peacemakers" intent on preserving a cessation of hostilities or insuring a trouble-free shift to normal institutional life to which Ken has alluded. Accordingly, both theologically and practically the integration of Catholic human rights work

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into peacebuilding is essential.

(2) *Tranquilitas ordinis* and *Human Flourishing*. I confess to getting a little nervous when anyone appeals to Augustine's definition of peace as "the tranquility of order", and not just because of George Weigel's book of the same name. There is an old Protestant-Catholic debate, which may be better characterized as an Augustinian-Thomist debate, over the nature of society and of government in particular. In one, sinful human nature requires the coercive arm of the state to establish "a sort of peace" in the *civitas terrena*.¹⁷ In the other, human nature, even in its fallen state, retains its essential goodness, including dispositions to cooperation, and the purpose of government is to coordinate human activity.¹⁸ The teaching on government as a coordinator of the diverse projects found in human society is a constant of modern Catholic social teaching drawn from the Thomist heritage.¹⁹ A characteristically Catholic understanding of peacebuilding, therefore, will include principles that draw on the social nature of human beings that favor the coordinating, as opposed to the coercive, role of public authority. Both are necessary, but the specifically Catholic emphasis, lies in promoting cooperation and sociality.²⁰

I must admit that Catholic social thinking on conflict is deficient in large part because, at least until the first phase of the pontificate of Pope John Paul II, it was formulated under the influence of Neo-Thomism. Both XXIII and Paul VI, inspired by Jacques Maritain and Pietro Pavan, based their hopes for peace on the positive notions of human sociality found in the Thomist tradition. Paul VI showed extraordinary optimism in this respect, and beginning with *Sollicitudo rei socialis* John Paul II seemed to share in this positive attitude about the cooperative qualities of human beings as well. While Catholic Social Theory plainly needs a theory of conflict and principles of conflict prevention, transformation and reconciliation, the elaboration of principles for the *ius post bellum* also need to be informed by the positive impulses found in the Catholic vision of society and politics.

For purposes of illustration. allow me just one example of this positive, cooperative spirit,. In Bosnia, following Dayton, CRS sponsored home-building efforts which brought Muslims, Croats and Serbs together. Muslims might be the prospective homeowners, but Serbs provided the materials and Croats did the building. Re-development served reconciliation.

Catholicism and Peacebuilding. I would like to call attention to a potential distinction, but an especially important one, between two groups of concepts Ken considers for the growth of a Catholic treatment of peacebuilding, that is, between the more clearly theological dimensions and those that are more philosophical, legal and practical. I am thinking, if we can make some rough contrasts, of the difference between teaching on atonement, forgiveness and reconciliation, on the one side, and justice as accountability, amnesty and compensation, on the other. One set is more theological, with a rich set of biblical, theological and pastoral resources available for their elaboration; the other is, in many ways, more political, requiring specific judgments informed by history, institutional capacity, political will and (the limits set by) popular opinion as well as moral principle. The Church has more to contribute on the first than the second, even though mobilization for peace may at times will require bishops and church agencies to address the more political issues.

As Ken has already indicated, John Paul II made a special, though not unique, contribution to peacebuilding, in his 2002 World Day of Peace Message, “No Peace without Justice, No Justice without Forgiveness”.²¹ The legacy of his ministry, however, was much greater than a single text, publicly forgiving his assassin, offering more than a score of apologies to groups who had suffered historical injustice from the Church, and finally celebrating the Day of Pardon to open the Great Jubilee in 2000.²² Forgiveness is a commodity in scarce supply in today’s society. One service of the Church to peace is to model forgiveness in situations of conflict, including proleptic forgiveness where the offenders have yet to recognize their offense.²³ I would hold with those who believe it is part of Christian discipleship to model the forgiveness of Christ even in public affairs, as John Paul II did. Likewise, given the vindictiveness of popular culture, moreover, one of the specific opportunities presented the church in the U. S. is to elaborate a public philosophy of forgiveness, just as it has provided public arguments for abolition of the death penalty.

On issues like amnesty, truth commissions, and so on, judgments are more contingent and so prudential. Bishops, of course, have obligations to address such issues, for, as Vatican Council II declared, bishops, by virtue of their office, should “expound on the principles . . . concerning peace and war and the fraternal coexistence of all peoples.”²⁴ Of necessity, however, they should address them *in situ* in relation to the common good of their communities. On these issues, they can be informed by the lessons of Catholic peacebuilders, but primarily to aid in making their own judgments. We must also bear in mind that action on behalf of peace and justice is, in the first place, the responsibility of the laity.²⁵ Sometimes, I fear, in hope of drawing the publicity bishops can draw, we fail to encourage lay leadership and grassroots mobilization on behalf of peace.

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1. **Catechism of the Catholic Church** (Libreria Editrice Vaticana/United States Catholic Conference, 1994), no. 2243.
2. On the need of further development of Catholic teaching to meet the exigencies of “an immense variety of situations and forms of human culture”, see “*Gaudium et spes: The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*” in David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, eds. **Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary History** (Orbis, 1992), no. 91.
3. On the role of the laity in international affairs, see *Gaudium et spes*, nos. 89- 92, esp. no 89. Also, see no. 43, “The Help the Church Strives to Give Human Activity through Christians”.
4. See, for example, Marvin L. Mich, **Catholic Social Teaching and Movements** (Twenty-Third Publications, 1998).
5. “*Gaudium et Spes: The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*” in **Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage**, no. 78.
6. “The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response” in **Catholic Social Thought**, nos. 62-78.
7. For the official endorsements and newer assessment of nonviolence, see John Paul II, “*Centesimus annus: On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum*” in **Catholic Social Thought**, nos. 23. 25. 52; United States Catholic Conference, “The Harvest of Justice Is Sown in Peace” (USCC [1993]; reprint 2001), pp.10-12. Also see, **Called Together to Be Peacemakers: Report of the International Dialogue Between the Catholic Church and Mennonite World Conference, 1998-2003**. Abridged ed. Willard Roth and Gerald W. Schlabach, eds. (Pandora Press, 2005), nos. 178-179. The official rapprochement between the Catholic and Mennonite churches is one of the most significant developments for Christian peacemaking in recent years. In January, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Mennonite World Conference submitted a set of joint recommendations to the World Council of Churches for use in the concluding convocation of its Decade Against Violence in 2011.
8. I owe the phrase “church wide and parish deep” to Gerald W. Schlabach, See his “Just Policing: How War Could Cease to Be a Church-Dividing Issue” in Ivan J. Kauffman, ed. **Just Policing, Mennonite-Catholic Theological Colloquium, 2002**, 19-75; quoted phrase, p.50. Also, **Just Policing, Not War: An Alternative Response to World Violence**. Gerald W. Schlabach, ed.; foreword by Jim Wallis (Liturgical Press, 2007).
9. Paul Ramsey, **Who Speaks for the Church?: A Critique of the 1966 General Convention on Church and Society** (Abingdon, 1967).

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10. See, for example, **Peacebuilding: A Caritas Training Manual**, 2nd edition at www.caritas.org.
11. On “The Subjects of Social Pastoral Activity”, see Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, **Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church** (Vaticana/USCCB, 2005), nos. 538-540. It is important to take note of the various forms and the various levels at which Catholic peacemaking/peacebuilding take place.
12. “Peacemaking” is the appropriate word here in the broader context of Christian initiatives for peace because of the semi-official “Called Together to Be Peacemakers” report of the International Catholic-Mennonite Dialogue (See above, n 6).
13. William Bole, Drew Christiansen, S. J. and Robert T. Hennemeyer, **Forgiveness in International Politics: An Alternative Road to Peace** (USCCB, 2002).
14. In my experience, the same secularist prejudices against religion hold true of foreign policy intellectuals more broadly. A major exception, however, is the work being done by Douglas Johnston at the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy. See Douglas Johnston, **Faith-Based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik** (Oxford, 2003) and Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson, **Religion: The Missing Dimension in Statecraft** (Oxford, 1994).
15. “*Pacem in Terris*: Peace on Earth” in **Catholic Social Thought**, no. 139. Also, see Drew Christiansen, S. J., “Commentary on *Pacem in Terris*” in **Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations**, Kenneth R. Himes, ed. (Georgetown, 2004), 217-143.
16. On the pastoral impact of *Pacem in Terris*, see Christiansen, “Commentary”, pp. 237-238.
17. Augustine’s views are actually quite complex, though hardly systematic. My characterization, emphasizing the punitive function of government in a fallen world, derives from the debates of mid-twentieth century, between Neo-Orthodox Protestants, like Reinhold Niebuhr, and Neo-Thomists, like Jacques Maritain and John Courtney Murray.
- For fuller interpretations of Augustine’s political theory, see Donald X. Burt, O. S. A. **Friendship and Society: An Introduction to Augustine’s Practical Philosophy** (Eerdmans, 1999); Jean Bethke Elshtain, **Augustine and the Limits of Politics** (Notre Dame, 1995), and Eugene TeSelle, **Living in Two Cities: Augustinian Trajectories in Political Thought** (Scranton, 1998).
18. On the background of Thomas’s social and political philosophy, the essential source is Georges DeLagarde, **La Naissance de l’Esprit Laique au Declin du Moyen Age**, v. 1, Bilan sociologique du XIIIe siecle (Nauwelaerts, 1956). For interpretation of the social and political philosophy, see Thomas Gilby, O.P. **Between Community and Society: Philosophy and Theology of the State** (Longmans, 1954); and Paul E. Sigmund, “Thomistic Natural Law and Social Theory” in Sigmund, ed., **St. Thomas Aquinas on Politics and Ethics** (Norton, 1988), pp. 180-188.
19. On the coordinating function of government, see *Pacem in terris*, , nos 46-53; *Gaudium et*

spes, 73-75; *Populorum progressio*, 33 in **Catholic Social Thought**.

20. For the communitarianism of contemporary Catholic social thought, see *Gaudium et spes*, nos. 23-26, 32 and John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*: On Social Concern, nos. 38-39 in **Catholic Social Thought**.

21. World Day of Peace Message, 2002, “No Peace without Justice, No Justice without Forgiveness” at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii_mes_20011211_world-day_for_peace_en.html. Also, see Desmond Tutu, **No Future Without Forgiveness** (Random House, 1999) and Donald W. Shriver, Jr. **An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics** (Oxford, 1995).

22. For Pope John Paul II’s pre-jubilee apologies, see Luigi Accattoli **When A Pope Asks Forgiveness: The Mea Culpas of John Paul II**, tr. Jordan Aumann, O.P. (Pauline, 1998). On apology, forgiveness and reconciliation as part of John Paul’s jubilee agenda, see “As the Third Millennium Draws Near”, **Origins** 24:24 (Nov. 24, 1994) 401, 403-416, esp. nos. 35-36; “Service Requesting Pardon”, **Origins** 29:40 (Mar. 23, 2000) 645, 647-48 and the homily for the same service, “Purification of Memory”, 48-50.

23. For discussion of what I call here “proleptic forgiveness” and what we elsewhere term “prophetic forgiveness” as well as on “corporate forgiveness” by group leaders and symbolic public figures, see **Forgiveness in International Politics**, Chap. 4. “Political Forgiveness: Acts and Agents”, pp. 61-88.

24. “*Christus Dominus*: On the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church” in **Vatican II: Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents**, Austin Flannery, O.P., ed. (Liturgical Press, 1975) pp. 564-610, no. 11. On some of the contributions of the hierarchy to Catholic peacebuilding, see United States Institute for Peace, Special Report, April 9, 2001, “Catholic Contributions to International Peace”, esp. pp. 3-8, and Drew Christiansen, S. J. “Catholic Peacemaking, 1991-2005”, **Review of Faith in International Affairs** 4:2, Fall 2006, 21-28.

25. See *Gaudium et spes*, no. 43.