

Contemporary Affairs

**TRANQUILLITAS
ORDINIS:**
**The Present Failure
and Future Promise
Of American Catholic
Thought on War and Peace**
by George Weigel
Oxford, 1987
489 pp. \$27.50



How does today's Catholic Church deal with vital issues of war and peace? Not very well, says Catholic theologian Weigel.

Augustine, who saw the fall of Rome in A.D. 410, abandoned the pacifism of earlier Church fathers to lay out those conditions under which war was morally defensible and even desirable. His concept of the "just war" underlies all traditional Catholic theories of war and peace.

Today's Church, argues Weigel, when it abandoned Augustine's essential doctrine of *tranquillitas ordinis*, "the peace of public order in [a] dynamic political community," lost the concept essential to any discussion of the morality of war. Spurred by Vatican II to modernize its teachings, and seared by the Vietnam War, the American Church adopted ideas that owed more to Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker movement, Gordon Zahn's pacifism, and Daniel and Philip Berrigan's radical activism than to Augustine or Catholic "moderate realism." Against the radical pacifists, Weigel puts forward the Augustinian-inspired work of American Jesuit John Courtney Murray (1904-67), "the preeminent American Catholic theologian on peace and freedom." It is "freedom," in particular, that Weigel misses in recent Catholic pronouncements on U.S. involvement in Central America and in the American Bishops' 1983 peace pastoral. The American Church, abhorring war, fails to address the equally ugly threat of totalitarianism.

WASHINGTON
by James Reston
Macmillan, 1987
272 pp. \$17.95

"It will not be wise to underestimate America's current resistance to exhortations from the preachers, professors, columnists, and editorial writers.... For, unless I miss my guess, the Americano, *circa* 1960, is in no mood to rush off on his own initiative to 'emancipate the human race'.... or engage in any of the other crusades mapped out for him in Cambridge, Mass."

So wrote James ("Scotty") Reston, the *New York Times's* prize-winning Washington columnist, during a now-forgotten debate among intellectuals over America's "national purpose" during the Eisenhower era. A Scottish-born Calvinist, Reston has seldom indulged in crusades—or ideological handwringing. Read today, his columns