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OUR MORAL DUTY TO DEFEND FREEDOM

The high ground of morality about war and peace was seized by the anti-freeze advocates, rather than by the freezeniks, during the March demonstrations in our nation's capital. A seminar entitled "Our Moral Duty to Defend Freedom" was addressed by prominent men from different religious perspectives.

Rabbi Joshua O. Haberman, senior rabbi of the Washington Hebrew Congregation, reminded his audience that it takes two to make peace but only one to make war. He showed that there is not a single pacifist in the Hebrew Bible, and that the Jewish ethic includes the duty of combat when necessary to eradicate evil from our midst.

Rabbi Haberman warned that "disarmament is not an example to the enemy, but an invitation to attack." He quoted a Russian proverb: "Make yourself into a sheep, and you will meet the wolf near by." "There is something more immoral than nuclear war," he concluded, "and that is being deprived of our life as a nation."

Dr. William V. O'Brien, professor of Government at Georgetown University and the author of a major opus on "The Conduct of Just and Limited War," described how the "just war" doctrine is just as relevant to the nuclear-space age as to any previous era. He stoutly defended the right of legitimate self-defense.

In regard to the morality of deterrence, Professor O'Brien argued that a nation should only threaten what it can do and will do. Those naive clergymen who think it is "moral" to possess nuclear weapons only so long as we promise not to use them are painting themselves into a corner which is logically and morally indefensible, and which would make our weapons completely useless.

Dr. Ernest W. LeFever, president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center and the author of many books in that field, urged Americans to differentiate between "prudential fear" which we should have because of Soviet superiority in nuclear weapons of all kinds, and that "inordinate fear" preached by the promoters of a nuclear freeze in an attempt to get us to abandon all plans to defend our nation.

"The bomb is not the enemy," Dr. LeFever declared, "because it can be used to maintain freedom. A nuclear freeze now would only ratify Soviet superiority."

Dr. Ronald P. McArthur, president of Thomas Aquinas College of California and one of the country's leading advocates of a liberal education based on the Great Books as texts, addressed himself to the moral problems created by the proposed Pastoral Letter now being debated by the U.S. Catholic Bishops. He objected to the proposed Letter because it tries to take a neutral stance between us and the Communists, completely ignoring both American efforts for peace and Soviet aggression.

Dr. McArthur objected to the proposed Bishops' Letter because it confuses the message of the Scriptures with the world on earth. The proposed Letter leads its readers to believe that, if we escape nuclear war, God's kingdom will be here on this earth.

Point by point, Dr. McArthur dissected the proposed Pastoral Letter on moral, theological, and historical grounds. The Letter, for example, calls on the United States to "take some independent initiatives, in order to encourage a constructive response." But, says Dr. McArthur, this assumes we are "dealing with men who, once they learned to trust us, would opt, given our good will, for constructive alternatives leading, perhaps, to peace." History offers no evidence to support that view.

The proposed Pastoral Letter states that "deterrence is today received with political and moral skepticism." But, Dr. McArthur asks, "by whom? Not by the majority of Americans who know that, were it not for the power of deterrence, the whole of our civilization, crumbling piece by piece before the Communist menace, would by now have been Finlandized."

Dr. McArthur pointed out that the Bishops' Pastoral Letter recommends pacifism as the correct moral stance -- not because Christ taught us to be pacifists (He didn't) -- but because pacifism will "make it possible to <u>live</u>, to continue existing, because it will decrease the possiblity of nuclear war." But, Dr. McArthur asks the ultimate question, "live how?"

He showed that living under the policies recommended by the proposed Bishops' Letter would mean living in a world "freed from nobility, from shouldering our cross, and, as Americans, from accepting our burden to lead the free world in its defense of what is left of our civilization. Never has anything more disgusting been presented to us as a way of life."