

BOOK REVIEW

The Catholic Concept of Genuine and Just Peace as a Basic Collective Human Right by FRANK PRZETACZNIK [The Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston: New York, 1991, pp. 283 + xii]

The genuine peace towards which people of good will throughout the centuries have prayed in their hearts, of which poets and philosophers for many generations have expressed their vision, and for which from age to age the sacred scriptures of mankind have held the promise, is now appearing to be within the reach of nations. For the first time in history, it seems possible for everyone to view the entire planet, with all its myriad diversified peoples, in one perspective. World peace is not only possible but inevitable.

Apart from the emergence of a large number of independent nation states from the ruins of the medieval Holy Roman Empire (which was based on the claims to universal authority of the Pope as the spiritual and the King as the temporal head of the Christian nations of Europe), the growth of international organizations as permanent institutions for the cooperation of states has paved the way for establishment of enduring and durable peace in the modern sense of the term. In the post World War II period the United Nations was established (1) to maintain international peace and security; (2) to develop friendly relations among nations; (3) to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems and (4) to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations.

Human rights are those rights without which there can be no human dignity. They are in many cases individual rights and they belong to individuals. The subject has been a preoccupation of political philosophers for a long time as may be seen from Locke's theory of social contract, Montesquieu's concept of the separation of powers and, Rousseau's theory of the sovereignty of the people. These political ideas corroded and undermined absolute and despotic monarchy and attempted to protect against the Westphalian model of sovereignty which used individuals as "mere appendices" of the State to which they belonged, simple pawns in its hands to be used, protected or sacrificed according to what was dictated by State interest.

The concept of the protection of human rights has emerged originally in the field of domestic legislation, as in the Magna Carta of King John in England in 1215, the adoption of the British Bill of Rights in 1689, the Bill of Rights in the U.S. Constitution, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789 and other less well-known laws and declarations. This domestic concept was, however, translated into international terms only after World War II.