BOSTON COLLEGE

BOISI CENTER
FOR RELIGION AND AMERICAN PUBLIC LIFE

What is the Prophetic Role of the Catholic Church in American Society Today?

Inaugural "Prophetic Voices of the American Churches" Lecture

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April 1, 2002

WOLFE: Well, thank you all for coming out on Easter Monday for this very special event, hosted by the Boisi Center for Religion and Public Life here at Boston College.

We got the idea – in fact, it was Patty Chang, who is sitting here, who got the idea that the Boisi Center should sponsor an annual lecture on the theme of prophetic vision of American religion. And that once a year we would invite a prominent American religious figure to talk about the prophetic role of the church and in various faith traditions. Next year, for example, we've already had agreement for our speaker, and he will be Richard J. Mouw, the President of the Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, the largest institution for the training of Evangelical Protestant ministry in the United States.

But this year, to begin, and to have our first and inaugural lecture on the prophetic vision of American religion, we really couldn't think of anyone more appropriate than Father Hehir. I do want you to know though, however, that the very title of this talk, and the invitation to Father Hehir, went out long before the name of John Geoghan was on the minds of most people in the United States of America. I felt almost like calling Father Hehir and saying well, maybe you want to even change the title or rethink your appearance here. And he said, absolutely

not. That he wanted very much to come and address the subject. But I just feel that I should make – and take some of the burden off of his shoulders by saying that the invitation long preceded these events in Boston. And it's entirely up to Father Hehir whether he wants to address the situation here and more generally or not.

We know him, of course, as someone who has many things to say about other issues we're also facing at the moment. None more important than issues about warfare and just war and the just war tradition, about which Father Hehir is probably America's leading expert. I've done a kind of random sample throughout the audience and you all know who he is. You all know that he was the Dean of the Divinity School at another university in the Boston area, although he wouldn't even take the title of Dean, and you know that he's the President of the Catholic Charities, USA. And it is just a great honor for us at Boston College to welcome Father Hehir back to Boston and back to Boston College.

HEHIR: First of all, let me express my appreciation. I regard it as an honor to begin this series at the Boisi Center on the prophetic tradition in American religion. I have the privilege of serving on the board of the Center, and therefore, when I was invited to come to speak, it was an obligation, but a pleasantly fulfilled obligation. And of course, I really have a quite lively interest in the topic and its surrounding dimensions. I'm appreciative of Alan sort of setting the context for the lecture, so let me address that right away.

Let me say two things about what I will do here tonight. The series is about the prophetic tradition in American religion as a whole. You will be happy to know I will not try to cover that, not only because it would be too long, but because I don't know enough to cover that. So I will speak from what I know something about, which is the prophetic tradition and how one thinks about that in Catholic theology, in the life of the Catholic Church, and in the Catholic tradition, generally. Secondly, as Alan indicated, we are *in medias res*, in a sense, in this diocese, and now in the country. I can tell you it is not simply this diocese. This new assignment that I have puts me on the road 100 days of the year, and I have been across the country in the last 10 days probably twice – two and a half times – and it is everywhere. So there really is no choice. You have to address it and I intend to tonight, as part of the wider framework of what I will be dealing with.

So let me propose to you that I propose to talk about the prophetic tradition, and locate it within the context of the wider Catholic social

tradition, and I propose to do that in the following way. First of all, I simply want to locate my definition of the prophetic within the Roman Catholic theological tradition. Secondly, I want to turn to a series of issues that are facing the country and religion, and illustrate how those issues invite you to make choices about being prophetic in different ways.

And then thirdly I will turn to not issues facing the country, but the issue facing the Roman Catholic Church, the fallout and consequences of the sexual abuse scandals. So that's what I propose to do tonight, and then I'll open it up and you can move in any direction you'd like.

First, let me talk a little bit about locating the prophetic within the wider Roman Catholic theological tradition. I think there are three senses in which one can talk about the prophetic as a means of religious expression. I think you can talk about what I will call the prophetic tradition. Secondly, one can talk about the prophetic style. And then thirdly, one can talk about prophetic individuals. Now, I should say that I am going to focus on the dialectic between the first two. The prophetic tradition and the prophetic style. The Catholic tradition has known through the centuries, right up into our own, a number of prophetic individuals. And one way to give a lecture like this would be to work through those lives, the lives of various people from St. Francis to Joan of Arc to Archbishop Romero to Dorothy Day. You could take individuals and see where you would go, if you will, through the life of a single person, in terms of opening up a prophetic approach. But I will not concentrate on individuals, although I'd be happy to take commentary and question about individuals.

I want to look at the relationship between the prophetic tradition and the prophetic style. And what I mean by this, generally, is that the prophetic tradition is the broader conceptual category. Prophetic style is a specific way of manifesting, embodying and carrying forward the prophetic tradition. In my view, the church must be broad enough to encompass both. Indeed logically, I think the relationship is that the prophetic style always is part of the prophetic tradition. But the prophetic tradition, as I will explain it, does not always find a manifestation through what I'll call prophetic style.

Let's take that distinction and push it just a little bit. The prophetic tradition, I think in its broadest meaning, is the teaching ministry of the church. One thinks about Jesus being described as priest, prophet and servant, and the church, the whole church, all the baptized, are baptized into that prophetic legacy. So in its broadest sense, it is the church's teaching function. More explicitly it is the church's teaching function in the arena of social teaching, social justice, and the macro moral problems

that affect society. I will talk about the prophetic tradition in this sense, as the pedagogical manner. That is to say, the characteristic of this view of prophetic is that the church carries on a pedagogical effort around the questions that are embodied in the social tradition.

The prophetic style is a very concrete way of manifesting the prophetic tradition. It is a way of addressing social issues. Now, the contrast between the prophetic style and the prophetic tradition can be looked at, I think, in three senses. First of all, the style of analysis used, and the address to issues. Secondly, the objective of addressing issues. And then, thirdly, the method of addressing issues. Now, here I'm trying to summarize a lot of material.

The style of analysis in the prophetic tradition, I think, is always drawn with great clarity – thus sayeth the Lord and then the Lord speaks through the prophet. It is usually – it does not usually take a lot of Xerox paper to put a prophetic statement down. You do it clearly, concisely, you have come to a conclusion, you draw the line in the sand, thus sayeth the Lord and you are convinced that you carry the Lord's word. The pedagogical style tends to, in a sense, emphasize complexity over clarity. It is more about on the one hand and on the other. There are three opinions, all of them have some validity to them, all of them must be contrasted one with the other. There is a lot of stress on how little one captures in general principles and how the reduction to the specific in the style of the prophetic style is always a journey that is fraught with some possibility of error. And therefore, one comes to the conclusion in the pedagogical manner with much more tentativeness than the prophet usually does.

Secondly, the prophet has, as the object of his or her address, an immediate goal. Prophets ask for conversion. They confront you with the truth of God's message and they ask you to stand before it and be changed and to do something. Now again, here I'm overstressing to a point, but not totally to the point. Think of the Baptist. He was not into long syllogisms and he stood in the prophetic tradition and he gave direction quite clearly and concisely. And therefore, there is as the objective of the prophetic approach, conversion of the era, conversion of the society, because the Lord has spoken, the time is short, the urgency is great, the price of injustice is too high, and it is time to change what is going on. The pedagogical style, I think, aims more at persuasion, a sense over time of bringing people to see things in a given way. A long, almost conversational dialectic that goes on, where one seeks to change, but one thinks of change not as an event, but as a

process, a long, complex process in the life of an individual, and even more complex, in the life of a society as a whole.

Finally, the method. The prophetic style, I think, is given to the dramatic gesture, in many different ways. One finds it in some of the Hebrew prophets. One has found it in our generation, in our time. The Berrigan's burning draft cards, blood on draft cards, Martin Luther King going to jail, purposely writing the letter on Palm Sunday. These are very orchestrated events that are carefully chosen, precisely to bring the society and individuals face-to-face with a moral crisis, and to say in a sense, at least implicitly, as I have done, I expect you to do.

The pedagogical method is much more given to university lecture halls, sermons and homilies, debates and committees. Prophets are usually not welcome people in committees. They make the running of them very difficult and they make the possibility of a unanimous report well nigh impossible, unless you let the prophet write the report, and everyone else signs it. So there is here a different style.

Now, once again, I think the church, the Catholic Church, the Christian church generally, needs to be big enough to incorporate both within the totality of its life. And that's not a question of sort of civility and courtesy. It's nice to let everybody in on the party. The point is that as one looks at the biblical tradition and the articulation of that tradition in further theological and ethical argument, if one look at the role of the church in the world, there is a way in which it is likely it will not fulfill its role, unless you can mix, if you will, the pedagogical and the prophetic style, unless you have an ongoing continuous effort of cultivating a broad tradition, complex in its style, diffuse in its origins, and yet at the same time, able to be reduced to the particular and the concrete by those who have the vocation to do so.

Now this brings me to the next question. The church should be able to incorporate the prophetic and the pedagogical; the prophetic broadly defined and specifically defined. But the question of – in a sense, when prophecy is called for, and who should carry it out, these are not simply questions, I think, of tactics. To some degree, they are. Someone committed to the pedagogical tradition could be moved to the prophetic gesture, the prophetic call in a very specific instance, maybe once in a lifetime. But someone else may be, in a sense, by certain charisma, gifts, maybe called to this style of action on a regular basis. So the question of how you mix these two dimensions of prophetic, it seems to me, is not purely a question of tactics and strategy, although there is some of that. It is also a theological question. It's a question about vocation. It's a

question about how one sees the responsibility of embodying biblical truth, religious truth and conveying it in the life of the wider society. When one says that, you come then to the next step in the argument. After you have distinguished two meanings of prophetic, then it becomes clear, at least in the Catholic theological tradition, that one of the things that distinguishes these two different understandings of prophetic are what you might call implicit ecclesiological assumptions. Implicit assumptions about the life of the church and how it is to carry out its ministry in the world. More specifically, these implicit ecclesiological assumptions are not just about carrying out the ministry. They are also about the very nature of the church itself. How you think about the life of the church itself.

Now, the doctoral students in ethics here will know all about the classical treatment of this issue in the two volume work of the German philosopher and historian, Ernst Troeltsch. But since I don't recommend Troeltsch for reading at the beach, I do not work on the assumption that everyone here has read it. And you're probably lucky if you haven't, if you didn't have to read it. But it is rewarding in the way boot camp is rewarding. You can always say the rest of your life, "I did Troeltsch, every word of it." And what one finds there is, in broad strokes, an argument by someone outside the Catholic tradition, but certainly inside the Christian tradition, about the historical evolution of the Christian church and how it understood precisely these questions about the inner life of the church, what kind of community should we be? And then the external witness of the church, how should we stand in the society, in the area of social justice, social teaching, social witness?

Troeltsch, as I will not try and make this whole argument, but broadly speaking, Troeltsch saw three broad tendencies in the Christian church. One of them he called the mystical tradition, which really doesn't speak to us tonight. But the other two do, because the tension between prophetic broadly defined, and prophetic specifically defined comes into play again. Troeltsch saw one version of the Christian church as a church that thought of itself as universal in its calling, in the sense that it thought of its obligation to bring everyone somehow into the light of the gospel and the kingdom. And that this broad-based, sort of big church view, translated into a social conception that said, that the church, as part of its ministry, must exercise responsibility for the whole society. So the church thought of itself not only as open to everyone, it also thought of itself as being responsible for collaborating with many different groups and institutions in the society, particularly the state, and so the focus on church and state as a major question is part and parcel of this first view.

This view of witness to justice, is one that I think fits best the broad

understanding of prophetic as the ongoing teaching work of the church, pedagogical work of the church. It is a conception of both how you evaluate disciples and how you witness to the gospel that has about it the style I articulated earlier. That is to say, it is bound to be pluralistic, both internally, there's room for varying positions and it is used to dealing with social pluralism. It seeks to move the society but it does it, understanding this as a long and complicated process in which the church is only one player.

The other view of the church is much more tightly drawn. The church is, in a sense, open to those who can really take the gospel message and live it fully in one sense, and rather than thinking that everyone in principle may be destined for life in the community, it is very clear that this view of the church does not think that everyone would be capable of living up to the gospel. So the demands for discipleship are highly stringent. A signal for that is usually that disciples are accepted only when they are adult, not through infant baptism. You don't take any untested products here, you take someone after they've been through a full look at the gospel and you think they can live it out.

And this view of how the church is to witness to the society emphasizes strongly witness. The church is much less in a collaborative mode with the state, much less in a collaborative mode with other institutions in the society. The church, in a sense, takes a position, stands over against the society and invites the wider society to see how life should be lived and, if they are persuaded by it, to come and join the community of the church. So it is much more a witness model.

This distinction that Troeltsch drew, in his time, in the early part of the 20th century, he drew it as an almost Catholic-Protestant distinction to some degree, with the first model being best exemplified by Catholicism, although, in fact, he thought Lutheranism and Calvinism fitted that model. And the sectarian model best exemplified in what we would today call the Peace Churches. The Mennonites for example, or the Quakers.

Now, what is interesting as we approach our topic tonight is that as Catholicism has evolved in the 20th century, to some degree, the Troeltschian debate gets carried on inside the Catholic Church. So it's not that the Catholic-Protestant split has no validity. It is that inside Catholicism, the debate that Troeltsch saw as Catholic and Protestant has emerged and surfaced and, as I will try and indicate in a bit, surfaces around many different issues. That is to say, how should we judge who belongs inside the community and how should we think about the

church's posture in the society as a whole? This debate has, as I say, surfaced much more in the latter part of the 20th century than I think was evident previously, except for one footnote. Troeltsch said, "Well, this broad conception of the church, that is Catholicism, how did it handle the inevitable quest for sort of sectarian perfection that you find in the Christian community?" And Troeltsch said, "Well, the answer to that is simple. It handled that through religious orders."

So the great moment for Troeltsch that showed what he thought was the wisdom of the Catholic church was when Saint Francis appears on the scene, who has many characteristics of the prophetic and the sectarian and it just so happened that Saint Francis appeared on the scene when Pope Innocent III was holding the chair of Peter. Innocent III, roughly speaking, was sort of the Pope and Kissinger combined. He had a modest conception of reshaping Europe as part of the papacy. And lo and behold, so you've got Innocent III governing the church and you've got Saint Francis out with the little band on the street. And Francis comes to see Innocent III to have a little dialogue about the gospel and how it should be lived. And Innocent III, Troeltsch says, in great wisdom, says to Francis, "We can both do this together." See. "You run the little band of brothers and I'll run Europe. And we will together put this church together." And Troeltsch said, that's exactly what Luther couldn't do when Luther was faced with the same challenge during the Peasant's War, where there was a sectarian push and Luther pushed the sectarians, Troeltsch said, out of the church. So for Troeltsch, Catholicism solved the problem by incorporating and co-opting the sectarian impulse into religious orders and then they were the sect within the wider church.

Well, what's interesting in the second part of the 20th century in American Catholicism, is that that won't hold, because not everybody who wants to witness in the prophetic manner narrowly defined, if you will, or specifically defined, wants to go in the monastery. They want to live as lay people in the world, but as Christians committed to the gospel, and they want a voice inside the church and they want the church to represent their angle of vision in its broader teaching. Meanwhile, the wider church, which has neither most people wanting to go into religious orders or go into the sectarian option of prophecy, is carrying on what Troeltsch would normally expect the Catholic church to do, a broadly-based conception about who belongs, many belong inside, and secondly, a view of the society where the church is to be a major social player and cooperate and collaborate with multiple institutions.

Now, the story here is long, longer than I can tell, but let me try and exemplify it to you. Because there emerge within the church views that

say the broad-based pedagogical style is not enough. It doesn't specify the issues clearly enough. It doesn't clarify the gospel clearly enough. It doesn't set out the choices that people need to make clearly enough. We've got to do it more clearly. That argument, interestingly enough, arises on both the left and the right of the Roman Catholic Church, only the issues differ. On the left, if you will, the issues oftentimes can be summarized in terms of war, capitalism and consumerism. There is a sense that there is a kind of inherent tension between modern war and Christian convictions, between accepting the going premises of global capitalism, and between living the sort of standard American consumerist life, and discipleship. And so the argument is from the left, that we ought to have a lot less truck with all three of these things than the wider church might be prepared to have. On the right, the argument usually focuses on abortion, sexual standards in society and secularism. And the argument here is that if you look at these three issues in different ways, there is a great gulf between what Catholics would expect or should expect and what goes on in the wider culture and society and therefore, the chance of common ground is very thin, very slim.

Now I will come back to John Paul II in a couple of moments, because the complexity of John Paul II is that some days he sounds like the broad prophetic tradition and some days he sounds like the specific prophetic tradition. So the question about what guidance he gives on resolving this question is at least complicated.

Well, let's stand back for a minute. I've tried to describe two ways of thinking about being prophetic. Let me try and lay the groundwork a little bit more fully under both groups. To talk about the prophetic and the Catholic. Because in fact, you can't approach this topic, it seems to me, without putting the focus on ecclesiology, at least within the Catholic framework. The prophetic witness of the church somehow has to get connected with a conception of what the church ought to be, as I say, internally and externally. And if you look back at the past century, one of the striking characteristics of the past century for Catholicism is that it would not be too much to call it the Catholic social century. That is to say, if you look at all the aspects of Catholic life, it would not be too much to say that no other area of Catholic life has seen as much sort of development, intensive teaching about it, and emphasis than this question of what it means to witness to the gospel in the world of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Now, the Catholic social century, I think, is the product of two broad components. On the one hand, you have the body of teaching that we typically call Catholic social teaching. Papal in origin, focused, on the

whole, on moral questions, very often a moral philosophy, more recently more a moral theology, but on the whole, it is about moral decision making on the macro issues of society. That is one component element of the Catholic social century. An extraordinary body of documentation, not simply to be weighed or counted, but to be seen as an effort by the teaching church, the pedagogical church, if you will, broadly defined, to emphasize the importance of this witness to the life of the church of a whole and to disciples.

But there is a second strand of the Catholic social century, and that is not moral in character. It is ecclesiological in character. The reflection here is less on what we should say about this issue, that issue, or that issue, and more on how we think about how all these moral issues feed back into the life of the church as a whole, and defined in great part what it ought to be.

Now, whereas the social teaching was papal in origin, the ecclesiological teaching was conciliar in origin. And that is to say, until you get to the Second Vatican Council, the ecclesiological dimension of the church's social witness was pretty thin, and not well attended to. One might argue that it was simply assumed. It was assumed that part of its pedagogical prophetic ministry would touch the social, but that was all that was given to the topic. The great example of this, of course, is one of the outstanding and mind you probably the outstanding social encyclical of the last century, and that was *pacem in terris*. John XXIII's *pacem in terris* in 1963 is an extraordinary document of moral analysis with virtually no explicit ecclesiology in the document at all. You can read it as a moral philosopher and be engaged by it and never come away with an ecclesiological question. But this changes dramatically at Vatican II, for at Vatican II, interestingly enough, if you look at the document that was most focused on how we should witness in this society, *The Church in the Modern World*, in fact, you find relatively little that is new from a moral perspective there It is much more a summation of many things that have been said previously. Save for the chapter on world peace and the contribution of the chapter on marriage to the wider debate that was going on about contraception. But what is decisive about the council is the ecclesiological grounding that it gives to the social ministry. And what does that do? Well, it takes the social and it locates it right in the center of Catholicism.

So the pedagogical tradition, the teaching tradition, is social in character and it is centrally located. Secondly, the council begins a process of not only placing the social in the center of what it means to be Catholic; it initiates a process of integrating the social within Catholic life. And in

the 40 years since the council that integration has moved along two lines. First of all, it has moved along the lines of how the conscience of the disciple is to be formed. What kind of questions should any disciple ask himself or herself about living in this society? Those are the questions which then lead people to start struggling with the prophetic broadly defined and the prophetic specifically defined.

The other thing that happens in the integration of the social into Catholic life is institutional developments within the church. We begin to have ministries. We call them justice and peace ministries, which break out all over the church. They become integral parts of religious orders. Religious communities particularly spend an extraordinary amount of effort and time institutionalizing these themes into the community. And then religious communities face questions, like St. Francis's question, of what is our role? Pedagogical in the broad sense. Pedagogical in the specific sense within the church and within the society. But institutions within dioceses committed to the question of justice and peace.

So we center the social ecclesiologically. We start a process of integrating the social into the life of the Catholic. Thirdly, we redefine roles in the church. The Troeltschian view of the church had very clear distinctions between the hierarchy and the laity, and who represented what. And then in the early 20th century there was a clear definition of roles. The social arena was for lay people, and the religious and priests were what are sometimes called second order actors here. Their function was to teach, but not to explicitly witness out front in the world. That was the role of the laity in the church. That really was shaken up a good deal at Vatican II. And by the life of the church right after it. Shaken up not only by the council, but by nuns marching with Martin Luther King in Selma. All of a sudden the notion of clear distinctions about who was to do what was swept away in a sense that the whole church needed to be part of this broad prophetic tradition, and some part of the specific prophetic tradition.

And then, finally, and a question I will come back to that was raised right after the council, ecclesiologically, was the question of how does the internal life of the church bear upon, influence, get connected to its external witness? Because, again, to use the Troeltschian model, the big church picture, the broad prophetic tradition thought of the social teaching as something that you told the civil society to do. It seldom worked backwards so that you began to analyze the inner life of the church by those very categories of moral analysis that you used for civil society. So that's sort of just to exemplify this, it is one thing to stand for the living wage, it's another thing to pay it to the church janitor.

Second kind of question. The first question was clear in the social teaching. The second is still not too clear. And so there is this question of what the internal life of the church says to its external witness.

Finally, let me finish up this theological section by saying that as you look at both *gaudium et spes*, Vatican II, its conception of the church in social witness and then look at John Paul II, what do you get to sort of bring us up to the present? I think the conciliar document is clearly a document that sees the church as prophetic in the broad sense. The emphasis is on a big church model. A church that collaborates, cooperates with all parts of the society. A church that emphasizes more than previous teaching had that you had to learn from the society. A church that has about it a certain modesty of what it knows about the world, and therefore a little hesitant to say, thus saith the Lord too many times. There is here a broad church position, a kind of confident modesty, I would say, enough confidence to think you have something to teach, enough modesty to know you've got a lot to learn, and some of your teaching will always be in evolution.

John Paul II who is attached to this document, *gaudium et spes*, both in its authorship and in his ministry, he is the more complex grid to look at and when we try and think about how the broad and the specific tradition relate. In one sense he represents the broad church style. He plays on the world stage. He deals with the powers that be, if you will. He functions across every level of society, but there certainly is about him some of the specific prophetic style. He has, at times, a sense; he communicates the sense that maybe there isn't a lot of common ground between the church and modern culture. Maybe, in fact, that there is much more of the cross than the shared resurrection vision. He invites us to think about martyrdom as something that would not be unusual, and conscientious objection as something that we ought to have near at hand as a way of thinking about what we won't cooperate with in society. He is a Pope that has taken the social message and pushed it hard, but he pushes it, I think, in both the broad and the specific tradition. And so it is not surprising that as people debate these traditions within Catholicism both sides call upon the Pope in different ways.

Well, let me leave that behind as the framework. Let me turn to some issues facing the church and the nation for the purpose not of analyzing them in detail, but highlighting this question of how you come down prophetically on the issues. Because my point in this second section is to say that the question of how you use the prophetic, broadly or specifically, is not only rooted in distinct conceptions of the church and ecclesiology, it's also shaped by the nature of the issues you face.

Certain kinds of issues may bring the whole church to a point that it is convinced that it only can say, thus saith the Lord, because the answer is so clear or the evil is so great that all you can do is stand against it. Whereas other issues may be filled with moral consequence and moral dimension, but not at all clear exactly where you ought to put your foot on the ground, and say this is where I will stand. So let me just sort of use exemplary case studies for the point of not analyzing issues, but trying to analyze this question about how Catholics would debate prophetic witness.

One has to begin in 2002 with the war and peace issue, partly because this has always been the classical issue. This has been the classical issue perhaps more often than any other issue that divided prophetic broadly defined and prophetic specifically defined. I've already said that in Troeltsch, the great example of prophetic specifically defined is the peace churches. Peace churches who read the gospel as to say that the only way one could read the gospel is that the disciples of the Lord would not resort to force. And that that conception of the issue was enough to define specifically what it meant to be Christian. So it was clear that that was the issue that was to set you off from the wider society. It is even the case, I think, that in these traditions of the peace churches, sometimes I think they are misunderstood. They are misunderstood as being unrealistic, their goals are unrealistic. But I think it has always been the case that, for example, Mennonites in this country never thought you'd have a Pacifist Secretary of Defense. They were just sure you'd never have a Mennonite Secretary of Defense because that job was off the reservation. So the sense here of war and peace, one side of the issue was there is no common ground with the secular state. There is no common ground with the wider society. We witness to a way of life that will probably never be intelligible, but needs to be witnessed to.

The alternative vision said the use of force is always a problematical question for the Christian tradition. How could it not be if one read the gospel? But the question about whether the best moral answer is an absolute refusal to use all instances of force, was answered by saying, no, you need to morally distinguish between uses of force that fit within the moral order and uses of force that did not. And that left the church in the position of sort of constant dialogue with the secular sources in society who called on citizens to defend the society, to pursue certain moral objectives where force seemed to be the only way to pursue it.

Now, to give you just the sense of what I've been talking about, in the Catholic tradition I think it is fair to say that from roughly the 5th century up through Pius XII, the Catholic answer to the question was that the

peace church tradition was not Catholic. Pius XII, in 1956, faced with a debate in Germany, specifically about the German government's decision to house nuclear weapons on its soil, Pius XII said, no Catholic could be a conscientious objector. No Catholic could oppose the state on the basis that all uses of force were wrong, and therefore the state should be opposed in this instance. Now, that view articulated in 1956 was changed quite dramatically in 1965 in the document *gaudium et spes*. I have said this was a big church document and it was, but it allowed space, for example, for specifically conscientious objection within Catholicism. It had about it themes that resurfaced the discussion of war and peace in the church as a whole, and from that time until now, what one has found is that there are in the Catholic tradition broadly defined, more than one answer to what is the best moral witness of disciples to the use of force. Now I should say, again, in terms of prophetic individuals, even when Pius XII didn't think you should be a conscientious objector, Dorothy Day was sure she had heard, thus saith the Lord, and so she was respectful of Pius XII, and she was a conscientious objector, and there was no "that's it for her," there was not a major problem because she was convinced of the truth of this position. So there had been people who held that position, but to have a body of people to conduct the dialog within Catholicism, this is very much something that only the latter part of the 20th Century has given us.

We now find ourselves, just to concretize this issue, faced as a country with a return of war and peace as a major issue. One columnist whom I hardly ever agree with did have a striking statement. Charles Krauthammer said the 1990s were a time when Americans took a vacation from history, and the idea was that all the problems that we faced were internal, and the world wasn't with us. Well, the world is back and there are major questions of war and peace. Let me simply illustrate them but not play them out. It seems to me, as we face the opening decade of this century, there is now a return to the debate about the nuclear legacy as it exists today, a debate that had quieted down substantially with the collapse of the Cold War, but today the discussion is about nuclear weapons and non-state actors. A very different question. The debate is about a new architecture, how you think about nuclear weapons, whether they can be conceivably ever done away with or will be here forever and it's simply a question of how they are shaped.

There is a second debate, very different from the nuclear debate, on humanitarian and military intervention embodied what the United States did or didn't do in Rwanda. The point about this kind of debate is that many people would say, if you look at Rwanda, unless you simply want to acknowledge that you can't do anything about it, you would have had to use force in order to stop the genocide. So that then raises the ancient question, can force ever be used within the moral universe? And now

there is a debate among us, about terrorism where it is not a question of the United States, will it do anything about humanitarian and military intervention, but the United States has been the object of an attack. And so the question is almost a classical question of self-defense.

Now, you can see that if you broke out this debate of pacifism, prophetic tradition broadly defined and specifically defined, there would be really room for very complicated discussion. The nuclear age produced from people who belong to the broad church tradition, the tradition that acknowledged some use of force, nuclear pacifists, people who thought this kind of weapon could never be used. The problem of humanitarian and military intervention posed a major problem for many people who held to a non-violent pacifist position because you could empirically define cases where you almost were left with the conclusion, if you're not prepared to use force, you are not going to do anything about the situation, and the consequences may be hundreds of thousands dead. So is it prophetic in that point to hold absolutely to that position? The terrorism discussion is not a question about sort of generosity in extending yourself for Rwanda. It is much more a question of is self-defense legitimate for Christians? Is it legitimate to use force when your objective is to defend yourself and not others? A long ancient tradition about that question.

Let me turn to a different kind of question. Not the war and peace discussion, but questions like healthcare and welfare policy in the United States, and again I'm trying to illustrate how these traditions get worked out. The first thing to say about the church in the United States is, it looks like the big church tradition. We produce large social institutions, and we want those social institutions committed to healthcare, education and charity. We want them to be players in the society. We don't shrink from collaboration with the state. I have some responsibility for an institution now that gets 62% of its budget nationwide from federal, state and local governments. The debate about faith-based initiatives is not new news for us. This has been something we've been part of for a long, long time, consciously part of because you see the ecclesiology that stands behind it is, there are common problems in this society. The church should produce institutions to respond to those problems.

Faith has responsibilities to respond to those problems and it is not out of order for the church and the state to work together collaboratively to deal with these questions. But when you start to deal with the state, as Troeltsch would tell you, you make lots of compromises. You never quite get everything you'd like. You don't design the program in sort of pure lines of the best moral answer. You often have mixed answers. So some feel that the large scale collaboration of our healthcare and charitable

institutions with the state itself compromises Catholic identity, Christian identity. Compromises because the argument is how can you possibly expect that a secular state responsive to a pluralistic constituency, with all that that means, is ever going to live up to the gospel. So if you collaborate with it, aren't you collaborating with something that's always going to be less than satisfactory?

So we locate ourselves in a big church model, but there are ways in which, on both issues, we get pushed in a sense by the logic of issues into what are much closer to prophetic positions even as we play the big church model. Certainly in the healthcare debate today, it has become, unfortunately, literally a prophetic proposition to support universal healthcare. To support universal healthcare for every American citizen is something that virtually no member of the U.S. Congress is prepared to do at the present time. After the debate in the early '90s which was the fifth try to get universal coverage for healthcare for every American citizen, after that debate, that proposition was regarded, has been regarded as almost a third rail of American politics because the cost seems daunting. So therefore, the debate is all about – it's really all about marginal incremental changes of an existing system.

Affordability in healthcare. You can take it with you from job to job. Let's cover children. Let's not cover everybody, but let's cover children because children really make people guilty. So you can say you're going to turn down healthcare for children, that probably won't get you beaten in an election, but if you say healthcare for everybody, it's just a third rail. Prescription drugs, prescription drugs because that focus is on a voting population. Now there's nothing wrong with those three things, but they are marginal incremental changes in a healthcare system where we are now up to 40 million people without any basic healthcare coverage. And we hold the moral position that says that healthcare is essentially related to human dignity. And therefore, healthcare is not a need, it's a right. It is a moral plan that a society has a responsibility to fulfill.

Now notice what you've done. You locate the healthcare institutions of Catholicism in a big church model. They're part of the system. They play in the system. They have to play by the same rules as other people, but by holding on to one proposition you become a prophetic voice. Prophetic here may mean no one will ever hear you because right at the present minute, it is very difficult to generate any large scale support for this proposition. That is not the only thing we say about healthcare, but by saying it, a sort of mainstream institution has been pushed in a prophetic direction.

Let me turn my final point on this, and that is abortion and capital punishment. Both of these issues, now position us in prophetic posture in the American political system. Just the uttering of the basic position we hold on both of them places us where the Mennonites usually expect to find themselves on war and peace. That is to say, at the margin of the society. So you have a big church, the large big – I don't mean big simply in terms of numbers. Big meaning fits into the wider society, find the consensual position, work it out, compromise. You've got a big church with marginal positions in the American political process. Or if you take simply the standard, I don't mean any particularly radical view, simply the standard consensual teaching at the present minute that direct intentional killing of fetal life is wrong, and that the legal system should, on the whole, protect that proposition, that proposition is a marginal proposition, in terms of much of American political life today. And therefore, we are faced holding that proposition to resort to Mennonite tactics about living in this society. We have to negotiate conscience clauses for our institutions, and conscience clauses for individuals. Why? Because the broader social consensus runs in a very different direction. So just as you need conscientious objection to protect a Mennonite's view when you go to war, you need conscientious objection clauses in this arena also. Capital punishment often is an issue for a different part of the political spectrum, but once again this position, as it is held today, is held differently than it was held under the Pius XII. So again like warfare there's been change. But the proposition is that capital punishment is not a necessary instrumentality in this society. That one can defend the society, if broadly speaking, in both its moral needs and its security needs without resort to capital punishment. And the subordinate argument is that the use of capital punishment by the state, in fact, erodes respect for life in this society. That is a proposition that is a minority proposition in the Roman Catholic Church. It is the consensual teaching position for the minute, but minority. So in that sense, we look like prophetic in the specific sense even though we are advocating a proposition that is prophetic in the broad sense.

Well, let me finally come to a very different set of reflections, and then open myself to what you will do with me. And that is the question that I raised earlier about the internal life of the church and its external manifestation. The first point to be made about this was it was a non-issue until after Vatican II. We simply were at the other pole of what the sectarian Mennonite position ecclesiologically always was. A good strong sectarian Mennonite thinks of the social teaching of the church as prophetic for the church. The audience is the church. To teach it how to live in a society that does not share its assumption. We always thought the social teaching was what the church said to the wider society about how it

should live. Question about turning the social teaching inside the church is of relatively recent vintage for us. And so you find in 1974 this wonderful statement that says, "If the church itself is to be just, if the church is to teach justice, it, itself, must be just." Its internal life is part of its witness to the society. Seems self-evident, but the fact is the first time you hear it is 1971. So the text itself is new, and we've been grappling with it on and off on a variety of issues, but those issues have been trying to better our existence. We try to be more just by paying better wages. Try to be more just by being more faithful to our teaching on unions within our own institutions. Try to be more just in terms of looking at the position of women in church. In other words, it's an aspirational dynamic that was set loose from the 1970s.

At the present minute, American Catholicism is not dealing with aspirational dynamics. We are dealing with something that responds better to the language of scandal and sin. We are dealing with what *U.S. News and World Report* said last week is "a cancer sapping the moral authority, the public trust, and the financial resources of the Catholic Church." We are dealing, as Scott Appleby from Notre Dame said, with a danger that if we cannot get our own house in order, the possibility of being a moral voice in this society, in either the broad or the specific sense, is negligible. So that is our faith at the present minute. It is not about aspiration, it is about rooting out corruption.

There are five dimensions, in my view, to this problem, and you'll be happy to know they will all be two sentences and not played out. There is a moral dimension, a legal dimension, an administrative dimension, theological/juridical dimension, and a pastoral dimension. That is the depth of this issue. The moral dimension is this is about sin. It is also about sickness and abuse of children that can be described psychologically and the more we know about the psychology, the better off we'll be because we haven't known enough about it. But it's also about sin. It is about great evil done to other human beings, and great evil done to vulnerable human beings. And so the church ought to talk about it in a language that is not only psychological. There is here objectively at least sin and of a great order, and we ought to acknowledge that.

Secondly, it is a sin that is a crime, so it is a legal dimension. The church's responsibility here is not just to itself; it is to the wider civil society. We are a threat to the wider civil society in the way we have handled this case. We have placed into society threatening individuals and not warned anybody. And so that is not simply a failure of the moral order, it is a failure of the legal one. And we have to be accountable to

those who do not share our conceptions of faith or what we might hope to be as the church, but have a right to be able to demand that we meet minimal legal obligations.

Thirdly, it is an administrative problem in the sense that our failure to address it effectively in the first two levels has been due, in part, to our way of addressing. This has not been universally true. The problem we have, in part, is that we have a very pluralist system of addressing this question nationally. And I don't think we can afford pluralism anymore. We need a universal policy that people are held to and, as they would say in governmental structures, we need a transparent structure. A transparent structure that can be analyzed from the outside, precisely because the outside society has an interest in what we are about.

There is a theological/juridical set of questions about whether there are a whole set of issues surrounding the way we think about sexuality and ministry and church life that contribute to this issue or not. Now, here I think it is – these are large and broad questions, and if you just take three issues – homosexuality, pedophilia, and celibacy – the degree of confusion that operates around those three terms and the way they are brought into relationship with each other, both inside and outside the church, is testimony to the fact that these questions are not easily dealt with. But there are theological and juridical issues that bear upon ministry, sexuality, life in the church, what has been called a culture surrounding these issues.

And finally, there is the pastoral dimension. Pastoral dimension is about the consequences of these issues and the pastoral dimension, in my view, runs at two levels. The first level is the arena of the parish, where people are directly engaged and connected with their life of faith. There has been an explosion in the church, and what we have to watch out for is erosion that could follow the explosion. The people are driven to disconnect because of this issue. The polling data and the anecdotal data illustrate that that seems not to be the case for many people. They are angry, confused, disappointed, scandalized, but they say, I'm not going to leave. And that is good news, but we ought not take it for granted. We need conscious efforts to prevent that kind of disconnecting that can go on.

Finally, to tonight's talk, there is the public arena. Not the sort of authority and connectedness between a believer and his or her church, but the public role of the church in this society. What connects the pastoral issue with the public issue is the factor of trust. Unless you're trusted, people will neither listen to your teaching nor think you have anything to

tell them that is worth saying. So the public arena is the possibility that the internal life of the church could eviscerate its possibility for effective moral witness. And to some degree, while the first one, the question of the parishes, we have some data on, the second one we don't have any data on. We don't know what this has done to our capacity for public moral discourse. We may find it out, I or somebody else, before some congressional committee when we make a great transcendent statement and some tough congressman sits you on your ear, and tells you that it would be better if you spent more time getting your own house in order than telling him how the country ought to be run. That is a distinct possibility, as we try to deal with what was before self-evidently taken as our responsibility to speak publicly and morally to the country. My view is, of course, we can't give up on this one, but we ought to figure that we're pretty much close to square one, and have to build our way back.

That brings the final proposition I will make. That is that the prophetic witness, broadly defined and specifically defined, is one way that we might be able to help restore trust, credibility inside the church and out. That is to say, that we ought to demonstratively in a sense, almost in the sense of doing penance, be the protector of the vulnerable, the compassionate care of those who need care, a clear kind of moral voice done with modest humility on the difficult issues I've talked about.

Slowly, over time, we've got to hope that we can get people to look at us again, listen again, and believe not only that we can be trusted, but also that we have something to say in the great prophetic tradition of what the church might say to the society. Thank you very much.