Simply to read or listen to the world news is to learn of a wide variety of instances where violence by states or other political organizations occurs. So, too, is it common to find people engaged in efforts to prevent, stop, or heal such violence. It should be no surprise, therefore, that moral theologians are engaged in reflection upon the tragedy of war and the hope of peace.

In what follows I discuss two aspects of the moral architecture of war and peace that Catholic moral theologians are writing about today. The first topic I address is called *jus post bellum* (JPB), justice after war, which is a third piece of the normative framework known as the just war tradition (*jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* being the others). Although it is the least developed part of the just war tradition, JPB has received considerable attention in recent years. Following my remarks on JPB, I discuss a second topic, peace building.

**Justice after War: Jus post Bellum**

One reason for the interest in JPB is the emergence of humanitarian intervention. Many wars in modern history have been fought because of a conflict between the perceived self-interests of rival nation-states. Humanitarian interventions, however, involve the use of military force not for the self-interest of the intervener but for the sake of people suffering at the hands of their own government. The rationale is that some government actions, genocide for example, are so intolerable that other nations have an obligation to step in and protect people from violations of their basic human rights.

Since the stated aim of humanitarian intervention is to improve the lot of people who have been living in extreme situations, its defenders must address the actual outcome of a conflict. Has life gotten better for those on whose behalf one took up arms? In other words, advocates of humanitarian intervention cannot ignore the many challenges of a post-intervention situation: replacing or reforming a government; damping down tensions among sectors of the population with mutual animosities; protecting the troubled country from neighbors who may be a threat; making sure basic needs of economic development, education, and health care are met.

A second factor that raised up the issue of JPB was the Iraq war. Once it became
evident that the United States and its allies would be mired in a long transitional era from the fall of the Hussein regime to the withdrawal of troops from Iraq, a host of questions emerged. What are the responsibilities of the United States to Iraq after the war? (This was the so-called “Pottery Barn” rule: if you break it, you buy it) What are the duties of an occupying power? How does one end an occupation and transfer power to a local regime? Is there an “ethics of exit”—when and how to bring troops, policy advisors, aid workers home?

Even among supporters of the war there has been widespread acknowledgment that the United States did not do a good job in the aftermath of the invasion and that there was a failure to plan for what would be needed in postwar Iraq. A more developed and clear sense of the requirements of JPB could have avoided much of the tragedy that ensued with the end of the Hussein regime.

Then there is a third factor sparking interest in JPB, the realization that many contemporary wars do not end in some sort of textbook way. Often we think a war ends with a military victory by one side. However, wars of secession and civil wars often have different conclusions—negotiated settlements in which both sides agree to stop shooting in order to forge some sort of power-sharing arrangement; or ceasefires and stalemates that end violence temporarily while sporadic outbursts continue in the absence of a political resolution. The end of these kinds of wars is not neat and lasting but ragged and unpredictable.

War does not always settle who is in charge and whose politics win out. Instead, one side figures out a new way to continue fighting and resisting the politics of the other side; whether that is insurgency, acts of terrorism, sabotage, street crime, or other methods of disrupting and harming social life. So what does peace look like in the case of stalemate or ceasefire? How does one move forward with governance, economic life, and everyday routines when war is not really over, even if armies are not engaged in formal battle? Such questions have fed interest in JPB.

All three of these factors—calls for humanitarian intervention, the Iraq war and occupation, atypical kinds of war—have made the end of war and the transition to peace topics of great interest to moral theologians. One resource for analyzing the issues has been developing the just war tradition to include JPB.

Yet working within the categories of JPB may not be fully adequate. Any effort to establish a stable and lasting peace after war requires a broad array of strategies and goals. With this in mind many Catholic scholars are now engaging in studies of peace building.

**Peace Building**

This is the second development that I observe among Catholic moral theologians, a growing interest in processes related to peace building. In its early decades the United Nations was involved with peacekeeping missions, which entailed deploying UN forces in war zones after ceasefires were achieved. The aim was to monitor the situation for violations of the ceasefire and to keep opposing sides separated while negotiations progressed toward a political settlement.

As decades passed the UN mandate expanded in Cambodia, El Salvador, Liberia, Namibia, Nicaragua, Mozambique, and Rwanda in a way that meant the UN was attempting to do more than simply keep disputants at bay. Now the traditional peacekeeping charge was accompanied by efforts at economic development, promotion of negotiations and dialogues, support for civic organizations, oversight of elections, as well as other tasks believed to be vital to creating a lasting peace.
Since the mid-nineties in Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor, Burundi, and Sierra Leone, there has been even more direct engagement in the work of state building as a form of peace building. UN-sponsored administrators have taken direct roles of governance in nations where local bureaucrats and public officials have been deemed not up to the task.

In the context of the United Nations, peace building is understood as a fourth moment in the work of peace. First, there is preventive diplomacy that tries to avoid disputes erupting into violent conflicts. Then there is peacemaking, trying to bring hostile parties back into dialogue by brokering ceasefires and truces. Peacekeeping entails the deployment of UN personnel—military or civilian—into regions to monitor and maintain a ceasefire. Finally, peace building, in this usage, is post-conflict work to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into violent conflict. Peace building is about developing relationships that make further violence less likely.

However, the UN usage is not always the preferred understanding of peace building. Many NGO workers and religious communities talk of peace building as an inclusive term that embraces all the tasks of prevention, peacemaking, and peacekeeping as well as the post-conflict agenda. Peace building is understood as an array of practices that remove obstacles to peace and that promote relationships and institutions that incarnate peace.

In Catholic teaching peace is not understood negatively, merely as the absence of war. Rather, the biblical tradition upholds a vision of peace that is positive; the creation of communities where justice, solidarity, and human well-being prevails. In that sense peace is something to be built; it is not some-thing that simply flows when violence ebbs. Economic development, conflict resolution, reconciliation processes, restorative justice, and other challenges await those who would build peace. Developing moral norms to guide the disparate tasks that make up the work of building peace will be a crucial agenda item for Catholic moral theology.

For insight into the multiple tasks of peace building Catholic moral theologians will be enriched by dialogue with colleagues from the historic “peace churches,” such as the Quakers, Mennonites, and Church of the Brethren. Catholic moralists are well versed in the just war tradition; therefore, the framework of JPB will be familiar. Whereas the churches steeped in the tradition of non-violence have a rich spirituality, moral disciplines, strategic principles, and pastoral experience in the practice of peace building. There is much that Catholic moral theology can learn from ecumenical dialogue with these communities.

Recapturing the Vision of Peace

The agenda of peace building suggests that devising norms for JPB is important, but may be too limited. Certainly greater clarity and consensus on moral norms for the termination of conflict and the transition from war to peace will be welcome. To that end the emergence of JPB as a category for moral reflection is an important development in the just war tradition. Recapturing the positive vision of peace that is part of the heritage of Christian believers, however, calls for more. Greater study and promotion of the elements of peace building is required, and the growing interest in the topic is a good sign that moral theology continues to address issues of vital importance.