

rediscover Christian faith and one's own faculty of judgment.

In conclusion, he warns that following the collapse of Marxism, we are threatened by an equally serious danger, namely the "risk of an alliance between democracy and ethical relativism, which would remove any sure reference point from political and social life, and on a deeper level make the acknowledgment of truth impossible" (¶101).

Conversion

The encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* radiates an intense inner strength. It is a magnificent refutation of all relativist conceptions of morality, including that of John Locke, Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Karl von Savigny, and Carl Schmitt. And in its own way, it also confirms St. Augustine's recognition that a government which has rejected natural law and has devoted itself to liberalism and democracy, necessarily will tend toward violence.

There can also be no doubt that with this epistle, the pope is making a dramatic attempt to convert civilization—at a time when its continued apostasy from natural law has already brought it to the brink of its own destruction.

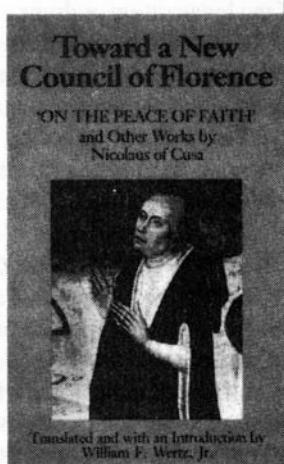
Reading the text of this encyclical is bound to make all those happy who are not slaves of the *Zeitgeist*, but rather who think seriously about the meaning of life. Those who seek to grasp the more profound truths of human existence will gain a sense of inner peace upon reading it, and will be strengthened in their optimism.

Toward a New Council of Florence

'On the Peace of Faith' and Other Works by Nicolaus of Cusa

The Schiller Institute has just released this new book of translations of seminal writings of the 15th-century Roman Catholic Cardinal Nicolaus of Cusa, who, through his work and writings, contributed more than anyone else to the launching of the European Golden Renaissance. The title of the book, *Toward a New Council of Florence*, expresses our purpose in publishing it: to spark a new Renaissance today.

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Free Lebanon to assure lasting Mideast peace

by General Michel Aoun

Translated from Italian and reprinted by permission from the Milan newspaper Avvenire, of Oct. 14, 1993:

The developments of the situation in the Middle East and the great dangers which derive from them for Lebanon, impel me to insist again on the necessity of a rapid and concerted action for the purpose of helping Lebanon to recover its freedom of decision, as the necessary prelude to the reclaiming of self-determination by its people, and as the condition for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

From the outset of the hostilities in Lebanon, the international community never stopped denouncing the cycle of violence and stressing its attachment to the territorial integrity of Lebanon and its sovereignty. Yet events went against these principled positions. Never were the declared intentions accompanied by appropriate actions, and even less by the necessary means for their enforcement. This flagrant contradiction between what is said and what is done not only indicates the defeat of international law and the institutions which derive from it, but it attacks the spirit of the Lebanese people, mocked and betrayed, who continue to suffer the bitter reality of occupation, aggravated by an unprecedented economic and social crisis.

In the present international system, and in the face of the general incapacity to enforce the law, the silence of nations, especially the major ones, acts as a cover for others who multiply their aggression and give free rein to their hegemonic impulses. The law, thus diverted from its principle aim, becomes a back-up for crime. This is how, on Oct. 13, 1990, while the liberation of Kuwait was being readied, to enforce the resolutions of the Security Council, Lebanon was consigned, land and people, to Syrian occupation under the Taif diktat, which was called an accord and backed up by the concert of nations. This text never mentioned Syrian withdrawal, and legalized the occupation of Lebanon.

If some believed then that the Taif compromise could be a step toward peace, today no one doubts that it was biased in favor of the Syrian occupation of Lebanon. In fact, the "accord" begat a series of measures and "accords" with the aim of preparing the institutional framework for integrating Lebanon into Syria. By designating the officials of the three

prime magistracies and setting up fraudulent legislative elections, which were boycotted by 87% of the population, the Syrian regime mortgaged political decision-making and created a de facto state, on the eve of a process of normalization at the regional level. In this way it intended to consecrate the de facto annexation of the Land of the Cedars. The Lebanese Army, target of a systematic restructuring and victim of the lack of free and independent political decisions, became totally paralyzed and unable to carry out its national mission. Security became risky, peace impossible.

The height of irony was the turning over of the fate of an entire people to Syria, a state deemed terrorist by the highest international bodies. Syria, which had taken turns playing in Lebanon the role of singing-master and pyromaniac-fireman, was entrusted with the mission of gendarme of peace. Right now the peace talks for the Middle East are proceeding full-tilt, which are a decisive phase in the history of the region. In these negotiations, Lebanon, while it is present, might as well not be there; the Lebanese delegation is completely subjected to the will of Damascus. This was why it found itself incapable of giving a response to the latest Israeli proposals.

Bound and gagged, Lebanon has become a card in the hands of the Syrian regime. The latter manipulates it at its whim, as it did with the hostage card or the Hezbollah card. Let us be clear: Only a free Lebanese decision can assume the voice of Lebanon and speak in its name. And the legitimate task of negotiating the fate of the nation belongs to a coalition of free national forces which are not vassals of the occupier. This should prepare the way, then, for free elections from which a legitimate and representative power would emerge—capable alone of establishing a true and irrevocable security and of taking part in a just and lasting peace.

In this Middle East hotbed where all sorts of passions burn, Lebanon is a necessity for peace. This is why it becomes urgent that its freedom of decision be restored. If I appeal to you, it is to ask you to use all necessary efforts to oppose the process of absorption of Lebanon by Syria, so that my country may benefit from what belongs to it by virtue of a Charter to which it is a signatory.

We understand very well that politics is made up of interests which sometimes impose difficult choices. But I still believe that respect for the rights of man goes hand in hand with a nation's long-term interests, and that the country which commits itself to enforcing them enjoys an excellent image in the eyes of the world, a winning card which becomes more and more important in our times.

This vision of the international system is not utopian. Because it conforms to the law, it is quite realistic. Every day, events in Somalia, in Georgia, and in Bosnia offer us the irrefutable proof that human progress and the future of peace are strictly tied to respect for cultural differences and to the right of peoples to self-determination.

Gore Vidal unveils oligarchs' genocidal 1990s blueprint

by Mark Burdman

Gore Vidal is the attack dog for what might be called the "Southern Confederacy" wing of the American political-cultural establishment. He says, out loud, what many oligarchical figures only dare to say, in private, at their country clubs and posh parties. Over the years, the themes of his novels have ranged from hysterical anti-Christian propaganda (*Live from Golgotha*) to idolization of the Roman-Byzantine imperium (*Julian*), to a series of historical fictions which have portrayed American history as an inevitable evolution toward world empire, and in which Abraham Lincoln is subjected to a barrage of gossip, slander, and bile (in the novel *Lincoln*, most notably). In March 1987, Vidal told a São Paulo, Brazil audience that the rapid spread of AIDS would have positive features, since it would lead to mass contraception and undermine resistance in the Catholic world as well as in India and China to birth control, and, in this way, "reduce the world's population, which is about 6 billion today, to 2 billion in a generation." On Dec. 19, 1988, he recommended on West German television that the Soviet Union and United States cooperate on such "soluble" problems as the world "population explosion," since "there are 4 billion people too many." He was also one of the earlier figures to pronounce in favor of the legalization of drugs.

In the past days, Vidal has been hyperactive on the London scene, expounding on several of these themes and coming up with a series of outrageous new proposals. Perversely, Vidal is usefully revealing the *oligarchical mind-set and strategy* in the most undiluted way imaginable, as the world heads toward the mid-1990s.

Call for a 'white race confederacy'

On Oct. 10, he authored an article for the London *Sunday Telegraph*, which was the basis for a speech he was to give the next night to the *Daily Telegraph*, in which he called for the creation of a "northern white race confederacy" to defend the white race, economically and otherwise, from the Asian and other non-white races, attacked the 15th-century Golden Renaissance for causing an increase in world population, and castigated Europeans for exporting their "crude, savage, and hostile-to-life monotheism" to countries they were to colonize.

On Oct. 17, British Sunday newspapers highlighted ex-