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CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY IN THE NUCLEAR AGE

Introduction

The horrors of nuclear warfare were disclosed to the world with the detonation of the atomic bomb over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August of 1945. The bomb was developed by the United States as a countermove to its potential development by Nazi Germany; it was completed and then used by the United States against Japan to avoid a protracted and bloody invasion and to provoke an "unconditional surrender". The destructive power of a single device, with effects so different from any weapon that had been known before, meant that a new age had dawned in the history of human warfare. (See Appendix A, "Effects of Nuclear Weapons.")

The generation since 1945 has been characterized by escalation and proliferation of nuclear arsenals, but has mercifully been spared their further actual use. What is our responsibility as Christians now in the second generation of the nuclear age? What are we to think about nuclear deterrence, nuclear disarmament, nuclear defense? God calls us to apply His Word to all areas of life, including the military posture of the government of the nation to which we in God's providence belong. From a biblico-ethical perspective, what course should we advocate to reduce the risk of nuclear war without capitulating totalitarian aggression?

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A. This Age in Theological Perspective

The momentous events of August 1945, for all their bearing on the subsequent affairs of men and nations, did not radically alter the course of this age. The truly decisive events are rather the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, and his session at God's right hand. These events, together with the next in the series, namely, the return of the Son of Man from heaven in power and glory, give us as Christians our fundamental perspective on the present. The "nuclear age", with its undeniably

profound challenges, nevertheless falls within the inter-adventual period; our thinking about it is governed by the even more profound perspective of the history of redemption.

As we contemplate the possibility of a nuclear holocaust in our generation, the words of Psalm 46 bear a special significance to us.

God is our refuge and strength
an ever-present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.
God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.

Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.

The LORD Almighty is with us,
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Come and see the works of the LORD
the desolations he has brought on the earth.
He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth;
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear,
he burns the shield with fire.
"Be still, and know that I am God,
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth."

The LORD Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

The Psalm expresses the quiet confidence of the people of God, whose transcendent hope is in the Most High God, the LORD Almighty, whose sovereign will is supreme. The Church's primary responsibility is to offer this hope to the world, the hope of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. Nuclear war may or may not be averted; but the wrath of God may be averted through the substitutionary work of Christ on the cross. This accounts for the confidence of believers; whatever happens, "The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."

There is confidence, too, in the knowledge that ultimately God will be exalted among the nations, for he is sovereign over all the earth. Of particular relevance is the assurance that he makes wars cease to the ends of the earth (vs. 9). One of the most stirring visions of the prophets expresses this hope for the future.

In the last days
the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established
as chief among the mountains;
it will be raised above the hills,
and people will stream to it.

Many nations will come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD
to the house of the God of Jacob.
He will teach us his ways,
so that we may walk in his paths."

The law will go out from Zion,
the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
He will judge between many peoples
and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide.
They will beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not take up sword against nation,
nor will they train for war anymore.
Every man will sit under his own vine
and under his own fig tree,
and no one will make them afraid,
for the LORD Almighty has spoken.

The passage quoted is Micah 4:1-4; the same vision with slight variations appears also in Isaiah 2:2-4. The vivid image of beating swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks is well-known; not so well-known are the preceding verses which are the basis for it. The Lord will make wars cease by drawing all nations to himself, teaching them his law, causing them to walk in his ways, and sovereignly ruling over them. Ideological differences between nations, and the need to defend against aggression or to rectify injustice by armed force, will have all passed away. Hopes for total disarmament and an end to war apart from such a context are bound to be disappointed.

The vision is "eschatological"; it belongs to a future that has not yet arrived, although it has been set in motion by the first coming of Christ. Through the missionary preaching of the gospel, God is presently taking from among the nations a people for his Name (Acts 15:14). In this way the nations have already begun to stream to the exalted mountain of the Lord's temple, the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22). In the carrying out of the Great Commission, the discipling of the nations has begun as God's people are baptized and taught to observe Christ's word (Mt. 28:19-20). But the full effect is yet to be realized.

This provokes a twofold question: When may we expect the prophetic vision of peace among the nations to be fulfilled, and what is our responsibility as Christ's disciples with respect to war and peace in the meantime?

Christ's own perspective on this age between his first and second advent is set forth for us, so far as it has pleased him to make it known, in the portion of scripture commonly called the Olivet Discourse (Mt 24, Mk. 13, Lk. 21). Some of the details of

the discourse are notoriously difficult of interpretation, but the gist is clear enough, Jesus tells his disciples not to be alarmed when they hear of wars and rumors of wars: "Such things must happen, but the end is still to come." He thus prepares them for a period in which "nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom." Such events, along with famines and earthquakes in various places, are to be viewed as "the beginning of birth pangs," from which a better world will in due course emerge. In the meantime, "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Mt. 24:5-14).

From this it is natural to conclude that war will continue to be a liability until the return of Jesus Christ. Clearly the world in which we live is still a world in travail. It is as true for us as it was for the apostle Paul that "the whole creation has been groaning in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time" (Rom. 8:22). We enjoy the first fruits of the Spirit now, but we are saved in the hope of a harvest yet to come.

It would be wrong, however, to conclude that no mitigation of the effects of the fall is possible in the sphere of international relationships. Just as Christians may work to limit the suffering caused by natural disasters, so they may work to limit the suffering caused by unjust and unnecessary wars.

B. Discipleship and Citizenship

Christians are called in this age to announce the good news of the coming kingdom of God and to exhibit its reality in their lives. The realm of politics is not excluded. So we must ask: As disciples of Christ, what are our political responsibilities with respect to the issues of war and peace in our time? Does Christ require his disciples to renounce all use of the sword for the sake of his kingdom, or are there at least some uses of the sword that he requires his disciples to maintain for the sake of His kingdom?

At first glance, many passages in the gospels seem to make renunciation of the sword a requirement of Christian discipleship. "Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Mt. 6:39). "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven" (Mt. 6:44-48). "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to Peter "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Mt. 26:52). But what is forbidden to the church as an institution, or to the individual Christian as an individual, is not necessarily forbidden to the state, or to the individual Christian as an agent of the state. Individuals may not avenge themselves (Rom. 12:19), but the civil magistrate is "God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer" under appropriate circumstances (Rom. 13:4).

That soldiering is not in itself inconsistent with discipleship is evident from the gospel records themselves. The two groups singled out by name in the preaching of John the Baptist—tax collectors and soldiers—represent two of the most characteristic and necessary functions of civil government. John tells neither group to forsake their occupation; instead he calls for justice within their respective spheres of service. The tax-collectors are not to collect more than is required, and the soldiers are not to extort money or accuse people falsely (Lk. 3:12-14). The Christian church has long observed the positive attitude toward civil government and its legitimate coercive power implicit in these instructions.

The same is evident from the way in which both Jesus and the apostles relate to various centurions in the Gospels and Acts. Of one Jesus said, "I tell you, I have not

found such great faith even in Israel" (Lk. 7:9). Later Peter is sent, bearing "the good news of peace through Jesus Christ who is Lord of all," to the house of Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment (Acts 10:1, 36). While Peter was giving his message, the Holy Spirit came on Cornelius and the others, and they were then baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. A gentile centurion was thus added to the church without being required to give up either his ethnic identity or his military vocation.

The involvement of God's people in military affairs dates from the time of Abraham and the first armed conflict between kings recorded in the scriptures (Gen. 14:lff). Abraham we know "was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Heb. 11:10). At the same time, he entered into a political alliance with Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre the Amorite, near whose great trees at Hebron Abraham had come to dwell. When four kings engaged in a war of conquest under the leadership of Kedorlaomer, king of Elam. defeated the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah and their allies, carrying off Lot and his possessions in the process, Abraham moved into action with his 318 trained men. With his allies he pursued and defeated the forces of Kedorlaomer, recovering all the goods and captives, including Lot.

On his return from defeating the four kings, Abraham is met by Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High, who blesses Abraham with these words:

Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Creator of Heaven and earth.
And blessed be God Most High,
who delivered your enemies into your hand.

The blessing constitutes divine approval of Abraham's course of action in that situation. With respect to Melchizedek, the writer of Hebrews points out, "First, his name means 'king of righteousness'; then also, 'king of Salem' means 'king of peace' " (Heb. 7:2). What Abraham did in rescuing Lot by military force was consistent with the demands both of righteousness and of peace. The cause was manifestly just: defense of life and property against unwarranted aggression. It was conducted by competent civil authority, rather than being simply the improvisation of an aggrieved relative. The goal was the restoration of peace; Abraham rejected the "spoils of war" offered by the king of Sodom, refusing to take so much as a thread or a sandal thong beyond the expenses of his men in the field. This limited use of armed force to restrain aggression when necessary God approves, lest the earth again be overrun with violence as it was before the flood (Gen. 6:11).

The sanction for the use of the sword to the extent of taking human life in retributive justice for human life sinfully taken is found in connection with God's covenant with Noah: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed." The ground for such an extreme measure immediately follows: "For in the image of God has God made man" (Gen. 9:6). It is the supreme value of human life as belonging to creatures made in God's image that, paradoxically to some, is enhanced and guarded by the institution of capital punishment for murder.

The authority to carry out this mandate has been given, not to individuals, but to the civil government, as is explicitly stated in Romans: "For he is God's servant to do you good . . . he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, and agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer" (Rom. 13:4). When a Christian magistrate, or agent of the civil government, carries out this God-ordained function, he

or she does not violate the law of love, as the late John Murray, following Augustine argued in his *Principles of Conduct* (1957).

The demand of love, unrelenting and all-pervasive as it is, does not abrogate the demand of justice. Love is not inconsistent with the infliction of punishment for wrong. Love is first of all love to God, and therefore love of justice. Hence, when we view the demand of love in its broader proportions, the demand of love and the demand of justice are really one. A just war is simply war undertaken and conducted in the defense and promotion of the dictates of justice; there can be no incompatibility between the demands of love and the conduct of such a war. The wounding and killing involved are the use of the sword which God has put into the hand of the civil magistrate as the instrument of maintaining justice and punishing evildoers. The sword is never intrinsically, and should never be in practice, the instrument of vindictive and malicious hate. Whenever a nation, or even a soldier on the field of battle, uses the weapons of war as the instruments of vindictive revenge rather than as the instruments of retributive justice, then the dictates of both justice and love are desecrated. It is hate that contradicts the love, and it always does. But war in the protection and vindication of justice is not prompted by hate but by the love of justice, and such love never contradicts the love of our enemies which the Lord himself always and unequivocally demands (p. 179).[footnote 1]

The purposes for which God has ordained the state and armed it with coercive power are set forth in Psalm 82:1-4.

> God presides in the great assembly;
> He gives judgment among the 'gods':
> How long will you defend the unjust
> and show partiality to the wicked?
> Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless,
> maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed.
> Rescue the weak and needy;
> deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

It is the function of civil government in a fallen world to maintain justice and peace, and especially to defend those under its jurisdiction who otherwise would be trampled upon by the wicked. In pursuit of these ends, which Augustine rightly understood to be a social dimension of love for our neighbor, Christians "may lawfully, now under the New Testament, wage war, upon just and necessary occasion" (Westminster Confession of Faith, XXIII, ii).

The right of the civil magistrate to wage war *(jus ad bellum)* in order to maintain justice and peace is subject to a twofold limitation: lawful wars must be *just and necessary*. Inasmuch as the state has been ordained by God to protect human life, to secure human rights, and to promote human values, its use of the sword must be consistent with these ends, and always proportionate to them. The "just and necessary" principle applies to the means by which a lawful war is waged *(jus in bello)* as well as the occasion for it.

C. Theocratic Warfare

In developing a biblico-ethical approach to modern warfare, it is crucial to recognize the distinctiveness of ancient Israel and her unique function in the history of

redemption.[2] Israel as a nation-state was the people of God. In fulfillment of His covenanted promise to Abraham, God redeemed His people from bondage in Egypt; at the exodus "they were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (I Cor. 10:2); at Sinai they were constituted a theocracy through the covenant God made with them there, "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6). Later on, in a prayer of response to a further covenant establishing his dynasty, King David reflects on the uniqueness of Israel in these words:

> And who is like your people Israel—the one nation on earth that God went out to redeem as a people for Himself, and to perform great and awesome wonders by driving out nations and their gods from before your people, whom you redeemed from Egypt. You have established your people Israel as your very own forever, and you , O LORD, have become their God. (2 Sam. 7:23-24).

When God made His covenant with Abraham and promised his descendants possession of the land, it was with this word concerning the current inhabitants: "In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, *for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure*" (Gen. 15:16). When in God's eyes it reached its full measure, he summoned his servant Israel to execute his wrath. "Even the land was defiled: so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants" (Lev. 18:25). This provides the rationale for the warfare of utter destruction *(herem)* prescribed for Israel in such passages as Deuteronomy 7:1-6.

> When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations ... and when the LORD your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, *then you must destroy them totally.* Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy . . . For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

Because of Israel's unique national calling as the people of God, and God's purpose in that stage of history of redemption, the conquest of the land of Canaan does not provide a model for the conduct of warfare in general. It was a special manifestation of God's retributive justice, which in its severity and totality was a prefiguration of hell. Israel's use of the sword at the Lord's command in *herem* warfare goes beyond the restraint of evil mandated to other nation-states; it is the prototype of the judgment of the Lord himself at the last day.

Although not all of the wars of Israel feature the strict requirements of the *herem*, they are all holy wars—the military records are called "the Book of the Wars of the LORD" (Num. 21:14)—and thus bear a typological significance. Various elements are distinctive. A campaign against an enemy with superior forces (horses, chariots, a larger army) is undertaken in the assurance that the Lord will be with his people whom he brought out of Egypt (Dt. 20:1). As the battle is joined, the priest addresses the army in these words:

> Hear, O Israel, today you are going into battle against your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid; do not be terrified or give way to panic before them. For the LORD your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory. (Dt. 20:3-4).

Following this promise of victory, the officers send home any whose lives are as yet unfulfilled in significant respects (house, vineyard, wife), as well as all who are simply afraid (Dt. 20:5-9). Possibly there is some general principle involved in the dismissal, but it is conditioned by the context of assured victory against superior forces, a promise given uniquely to Israel.

Promises of victory, of course, were made with the condition of faithfulness to the covenant. This entailed ritual cleanness of the military camp, another distinctive feature of theocratic warfare (Dt. 23:9-14). The camp had to be holy, "For the LORD your God moves about in your camp to protect you and to deliver your enemies to you" (vs. 14).

In light of the overall context, the conduct of warfare described in Deuteronomy 20:10-15, while not involving the *herem* (as in verses 16-17), should nevertheless be read as provisions of holy warfare unique to Israel, and not taken as normative for the conduct of warfare in general. Moses' final blessing of the twelve tribes (Dt. 33:29) views all theocratic warfare from the perspective of the history of redemption, with its distinctive purposes and provisions.

> Blessed are you, O Israel!
> Who is like you,
> a people saved by the LORD?
> He is your shield and helper
> and your glorious sword.
> Your enemies will cower before you,
> and you will trample down their high places.

This being the case, reliance on certain types of armaments, specifically horses and chariots, is incompatible with theocratic trust (Dt. 17:16, Is. 31:1), partly because the source of these weapons is Egypt. Why should the redeemed people of God look to their former oppressors for deliverance? To show that he would always be their deliverer, instead of providing his people with chariots of iron God commissioned trumpets of hammered silver.

The sons of Aaron, the priests, are to blow the trumpets. This is to be a lasting ordinance for you and the generations to come. When you go into battle in your own land against an enemy who is oppressing you, sound a blast on the trumpets. Then you will be remembered by the LORD your God and rescued from your enemies. (Num. 10:8-9).

In due course, theocratic Israel is succeeded in the history of redemption by the Christian church, the new form of the people of God. With the full accomplishment of redemption in the Person and work of Christ, the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Eph. 6:12).

> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Eph. 6:12).

> For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we live with are not the weapons of the world. On the

> contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (I Cor. 10:3-5).

The promise of divine victory attaches now to this warfare (Mt. 16:18; 1 John 4:4, 5:4), and not to military engagements even on just and necessary occasion. The purpose of the Book of the Wars of the Lord is theological, written for the instruction of the church in its warfare, and not as a basis today for any nation presuming to make a "holy war" against its enemies.

This is not to say that the Old Testament contains no principles that are relevant to national policy on military affairs. For one thing, for all its evident non-pacificism, the Old Testament does not foster the spirit of militarism which glorifies war and cultivates the martial arts as the supreme cultural achievement. The most dramatic evidence of this is the Lord's refusal to allow King David to build the temple: "You are not to build a house for my Name, because you are a man of war and have shed blood: (1 Chron. 28:3). Instead the privilege goes to David's son, King Solomon, "a man of peace and rest," during whose reign God granted Israel peace and quiet (1 Chron. 22:9), so that the nonmilitary aspects of the culture were allowed to flourish. The principle is that while national security through an adequate military defense is a necessary and worthy goal, it is rightly pursued in the interest of other goals that more appropriately form the center of national life, especially piety, justice, and peace (cf. Westminster Confession of Faith, XXIII, ii).

Another thing to observe in the biblical record is the principle of the solidarity of human societies. Wars are between nations; kings in making war put their people as well as their armies at risk. Siege warfare in particular inflicted great suffering upon the civilian population. This is indeed tragic, but the solidarity of a people means that in warfare an *absolute* distinction between combatant and noncombatant cannot be maintained. On the other hand, the opening oracles of the book of Amos condemn all *unnecessary* acts of violence in war, whether directed against soldiers or civilians (cf. Amos l:3,1:6,1:11,1:13,2:2).

Finally, all nations should recognize the limitations of military prowess. To make adequate provision for the common defense is a necessary governmental obligation in a fallen world, but the security of a nation is ultimately in the hands of the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, "the One who gives victory to kings" (Ps. 144:10).

D. Nuclear Weapons in Moral Perspective

The sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," requires "all careful studies, and awful endeavors, to preserve the life of ourselves and others," and forbids "all taking away the life of ourselves, or of others, except in case of public justice, lawful war, or necessary defense" (Westminster Larger Catechism, qq. 135-136). Nuclear weapons obviously pose an enormous threat to human life; the duty to preserve the life of ourselves and others requires careful inquiry into the best strategy consistent with morality for preventing their use. To qualify, a strategy must intend nothing intrinsically sinful, and promise a lesser amount of harm than any available alternative, The major proposals may be categorized as strategies of disarmament, deterrence, or defense.

1. Nuclear Disarmament

The case for nuclear disarmament is argued on two grounds: (1) that any use of nuclear weapons, including their threatened use as a deterrent, is immoral per se, and (2) that the best way to prevent the use of nuclear weapons is to work for their reduction and eventual elimination. It is important to distinguish the two grounds; the first entails *unilateral* disarmament as a moral imperative; the second is open to the condition of multilateral agreement.

(1) Immoral per se

Nuclear weapons are said to be immoral because they are necessarily indiscriminate, threatening civilian populations as much more than legitimate military targets, and because any use of them would be disproportionate, running the risk of escalation to a "holocaust" that could destroy the earth. Nuclear weapons thus fail on both counts to meet the moral criteria for just conduct in warfare (*jus in bello*) necessitating a stance of nuclear pacifism. The two reasons require separate discussion.

a. The Ideal for Noncombatant Immunity

Is the immunity of noncombatants from direct attack a moral absolute according to biblical principles of justice?

Clearly, the Bible forbids and condemns all unnecessary killing. The circumstances under which human life may be taken are always exceptional; the burden of proof falls upon those who kill another human being to show that it is morally justifiable as an instance of *public* justice, lawful war, or *necessary* defense. Otherwise killing is murder, and pits one against God on the side of the devil, "who was a murderer from the beginning" (Jn. 8:44).

It follows that killing as an act of personal retaliation, making war on other than just and necessary occasion, and killing that is not strictly necessary in defense of oneself, one's family, or one's nation—even in a lawful war—are murder. On the other hand, putting war criminals to death as an act of public justice, going to war to defend a nation and its cultural values from totalitarian aggression, and unavoidable killing in self-defense are not murder, but are rather commanded or permitted precisely out of regard for the sanctity of human life.

In a war undertaken in the just and necessary defense of a nation, enemy soldiers may lawfully be attacked and killed, so long as they represent a threat. But having been wounded, taken prisoner, or surrendered, their situation changes; it is no longer necessary to kill them since they no longer pose a threat. Counter-force has achieved its objective against the unjust use of force. Former combatants are as much protected by the law of no unnecessary killing as are noncombatants in general.

The principle of noncombatant immunity does not rule out their being killed as the foreseeable, unavoidable, and collateral result of a necessary attack on an enemy's military forces or war-making capabilities. Whether or not an attack is a "military necessity" is a relative judgment, dependent upon the degree of threat and the seriousness of the values at stake. In an extreme case, as a last resort, it might be necessary to subject enemy civilians to direct attack, if there were no other way to prevent the annihilation of country justly at war against a totalitarian aggressor. In view of the biblical view of the solidarity of human societies, this extreme measure cannot be ruled out absolutely as a matter of principle. However, this position ought to be held with the greatest caution and reserve, inasmuch as the general principle of

noncombatant immunity from direct attack provides an important limitation in the conduct of warfare that is designed to prevent unnecessary taking of human life.

b. The Principle of Proportionate Means
It is a settled principle of justice in warfare that the means must be proportionate to the end; that is, that the harm done must be commensurate with the values being defended and maintained. Among other things, this follows from the *lex talionis* (law of retaliation) found in Scripture (e.g., Exod. 21:23-25), which limited harm by requiring punishment to fit the crime.

Are nuclear weapons necessarily disproportionate, so that any use of them is immoral on the grounds that they will do more harm than good?

Other things being equal, nuclear disarmament is desirable as a means of reducing the risk of nuclear war; but it is not in itself a moral absolute. One must consider not only how to avert a nuclear holocaust, but also how to prevent the loss of freedom of entire peoples.[3] Given the dilemma of possible escalation to an all-out nuclear war, on the one hand, and the near certainty of enslavement to a totalitarian power, on the other, it is not clear that the nonuse of nuclear weapons is an absolute moral obligation. The degree of risk must be weighed against the degree of threat; it is not certain that any use of nuclear weapons would lead inevitably to a holocaust that would destroy the earth.

These considerations apply to "first strike" as well as to retaliatory use to nuclear weapons. An absolute commitment to a policy of "no first use" of nuclear weapons. An absolute commitment to a policy of "no first use" of nuclear weapons no matter what the circumstances may be, is in effect a form of unilateral disarmament, entailing surrender to an aggressor equipped with superior conventional forces. "First strike pacifism," in distinction from nuclear pacifism as such, is an untenable ethical position; if it is morally wrong to strike first because of the risk of escalation, it is morally wrong to strike second for the same reason.

So far we have been discussing the case for nuclear disarmament as an absolute moral imperative. Our conclusion is that while noncombatant immunity and proportionality are profound concerns in dealing with nuclear weapons, they do not necessarily and absolutely rule out any possible use, though they do place tremendous burden of justification upon the user. We turn now from the strictly moral argument to the prudential strategy of multilateral nuclear disarmament.

The problem with unilateral disarmament may be concisely stated in the words of the psalmist: "I am a man of peace; but when I speak, they are of war" (Psa. 120:7). A nation might gladly disarm itself and use its treasure for peaceful purposes were it not for other nations with hostile intentions. A realistic strategy of disarmament must look to multilateral agreements in seeking to reduce the risk of nuclear war. But there are problems with this as well.

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3 The two dangers were highlighted by Pope John Paul II in his UN statement (June 11,1982). As noted by Cardinal Casaroli in his memorandum to the American bishops working on the draft of their pastoral letter on nuclear weapons, the two dangers ate "(a) the danger of nuclear conflict" and "(b) the endangering of the independence and freedom of entire peoples." Cited in Michael Novak, *Moral Clarity in the Nuclear Age* (Nashville: Nelson, 1983), 114.

Multilateral agreements on arms control are difficult to achieve, let alone verify and enforce, when nations are at war on the level of ideology. The current "arms race" between the United States and the Soviet Union is due to radically opposed sociopolitical theories and goals which can only be reconciled by conversion or capitulation. In such a situation the most that can be hoped for is arms reduction out of mutual self-interest

Arms negotiations that genuinely offer promise of a more secure and just peace should be supported by Christians and all persons of good will. Specific proposals, such as immediately to freeze the testing, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons, must be examined in the light of this criterion.

2. Nuclear Deterrence

Deterrence is a strategy designed to discourage and prevent an enemy from taking certain actions by posing unacceptable risks as a consequence. In one of Jesus' illustrations on counting the cost of discipleship, superior military force acts as a deterrent by reducing the prospects of success.

> Suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. (Lk. 14:31-32)

It should be noted that deterrence depends upon rational calculation of an enemy's military might and the will to use it. Also, it provides no guard against fanaticism for which no risks are unacceptable.

Aside from these problems, there is the question of the moral status of threats of nuclear retaliation. For a threat to be credible, it must be capable of being carried out. This means that the threatened action must be both militarily feasible and morally justifiable.

The mere possession of nuclear weapons without some clear policy regarding their use would be an unstable deterrent. In determining policy, the key question is whether the threat of nuclear retaliation is morally justifiable as a deterrent. In determining policy, the key question is whether the threat of nuclear retaliation is morally justifiable as a deterrent. In the debate on this question, a distinction is made between "countervalue" and "counterforce" strategic use of nuclear weapons.

Countervalue strategy targets cities, threatening massive retaliation to the industrial base, cultural achievements, and civilian population of an enemy nation. It is currently based on the idea that "mutual assured destruction" (MAD) is the best way of preventing a nuclear war between the superpowers; the risk of annihilation acts as a deterrent.

Counterforce strategy targets military installations, threatening sufficient collateral harm to civilians and society to deter an enemy from a nuclear first strike. The consequences, while short of annihilation, would nevertheless be disastrous to the military and horrendous for the general population. Nuclear retaliation as such poses an unacceptable risk.

Both strategies are intended to prevent the use of nuclear weapons by deterring the first strike; both are prepared to use nuclear weapons in a retaliatory second strike

should deterrence fail. Does the law of retaliation (*lex talionis*) allow "a strike for a strike" using nuclear weapons?

The law of retaliation is severely strained in its application to the use of nuclear weapons. The thought of killing masses of helpless people who are themselves at the mercy of their own government is abhorrent. Only if there were no other way to prevent an even worse catastrophe could nuclear retaliation ever be justified. This implies a conditional acceptance of the strategy of deterrence in the absence of any viable alternative.

If deterrence through threat of retaliation is not ruled out in principle, and there is no available alternative to prevent the use of nuclear weapons, which strategy is morally preferable: countervalue retaliation in kind, or the more limited counterforce retaliation?

Counterforce strategy has the advantage in that it does not target an enemy population as such, and attempts to show a greater respect for the preservation of civilian life. The toll of lives taken collaterally, however, is admittedly great, and is in act an essential component of the effectiveness of the strategy as a deterrent. Thus, the difference between the two strategies with respect to the ideal of noncombatant immunity is a matter of degree, with counterforce targeting being relatively superior, other things being equal.

The disadvantage of counterforce targeting is the liability of its being perceived as preemptive, rather than retaliatory, in intent, making nuclear war more likely by inviting a first strike in a moment of crisis. There seems to be no way to negate this liability inasmuch as counterforce strategy contains an inherent ambiguity in that *defensive* weapons are deployed for their *deterrent* effect.

3. Anti-nuclear Defense

Should deterrence fail there is at present no defense against nuclear weapons, with which the superpowers are heavily armed. If total nuclear disarmament is an unrealistic and unachievable goal, should support be given to the development of an anti-nuclear defense as an alternative to the present policy of deterrence?

A strategy of defense is morally superior to strategies of deterrence on two counts: it does not concede in principle a first strike against one's own people and nation, and it does not depend upon threatening mass destruction to the people of another nation placed at risk by an aggressive and reckless government. A defensive strategy that holds out a reasonable hope of neutralizing nuclear weapons should certainly not be rejected out of hand. The enormous cost of an anti-nuclear defense may simply be the price of the just protection of liberty in our time.

E. Intercession and Evangelism

Christians, according to their gifts and opportunities, are called to political service, and the church should teach this as an area of discipleship that follows from the Lordship of Christ over all of life. The church itself has been given the ministry of intercession and evangelism, and this is highly relevant to the topic of Christian responsibility in the nuclear age.

Christians should seek to influence policy that promises to make the world a more secure place to live; but in a world of oppression, aggression, paranoia, hysteria,

and nuclear weapons, there is a limit to the security any merely human policy can hope to achieve. The church's role as intercessor must be taken more seriously.

Jeremiah 29:7 encourages intercession for peace: "Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." *Shalom* (peace) in Jeremiah stands in contrast to war, evil and pestilence (e.g., 28:8-9), and to the word as a metonymy for war (e.g. 4:10, 14:13, 34:5). *Shalom* connotes security and prosperity both of which are dependent upon the providence of God. The church has a unique role in having access to the God of peace to intercede for the nations.

1 Timothy 2:1-4 coordinates intercession for rulers and evangelism:

> "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

The primary task of the church in this age is the preaching of the gospel to all nations; since God controls the circumstances that are conducive to the fulfillment of this mandate, He bids us to pray especially for those who have been ordained to maintain piety, justice, and peace. The church in its intercession for peace appeals to God's mercy and patience to give further opportunity for evangelism (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9). We pray that the world may be spared either the enslavement or the killing of masses of people who should be the objects of evangelism, in which the church offers, on the authority of Christ, peace with God, reconciliation between people, and the hope of world redemption.

Signed,

RE David Coffin, Jr.	RE David W. Forslund
TE David C. Jones	TE D. James Kennedy
TE Robert B. Needham	RE Kenneth L. Ryskamp

APPENDIX A.

Effects of Nuclear Weapons

This discussion is meant only to highlight some of the important differences between nuclear weapons and conventional weapons. It is not meant to be a comprehensive discussion of modern warfare. Much of the discussion is based on the book *The Effects of Nuclear Weapons* by Glasstone and Dolan, Third Edition, 1977. Contrary to popular opinion, there is a considerable base of information on nuclear explosions and their effects on the surrounding environment. It is our hope that a better understanding of the properties of a nuclear weapons will allow a more reasoned approach to the understanding of how we, as Christians, are to deal with them.

Although the explosion of a nuclear weapon is in many ways similar to a conventional or high-explosive weapon, there are five major differences. First nuclear weapons can be many thousands or millions of times more powerful than the largest of high-explosive detonations. Second, the mass of a nuclear explosive is much less than a high explosive for a similar amount of energy released. Third, the temperatures reached in a nuclear explosion are much higher than in a conventional explosion which results in higher "thermal radiation" which causes burns and fires over very large distances.

Fourth, there is a prompt "initial nuclear radiation" from the nuclear blast which is very penetrating and has no counterpart in conventional weapons. Finally, there is a "residual nuclear radiation" from a nuclear weapon which is emitted over an extended period of time. The basic source of energy for a nuclear weapon, of course, is from the change of a small fraction of the nuclear mass into energy, be it from fusion or fission. In a conventional explosion the energy sources is the chemical bonds which are much weaker than the nuclear bonds. All of these differences in the properties of the explosion stem from this difference.

The difference in explosive power of a nuclear weapon as compared with a conventional weapon can be seen if we realize that the explosive potential of 1 pound of uranium is as much as 8000 tons of TNT, and 1 pound of Deuterium is as much as 26000 tons of TNT. Since the mass of a nuclear weapon for a given explosion strength is much smaller, the temperatures achieved are very much greater. For example, in a conventional high explosive the temperatures are as high as a few thousand degrees, whereas for a nuclear explosion the temperatures are as high as tens of millions of degrees. The portion of the explosion energy arriving at a point some distance from the explosion depends on the type and yield of the nuclear weapon as well as the environment (such as the altitude) of the explosion. Approximately 85% of the explosive energy of a nuclear explosion produces an air blast and thermal radiation and heat. The remaining 15% is divided into 5% in the initial nuclear radiation and 10% in residual nuclear radiation for a fission device. For a thermonuclear device the residual nuclear radiation is only about 5%. The primary form of the initial nuclear radiation is gamma rays which can travel great distances through air and penetrate considerable thicknesses of material. At low altitudes below 100,000 feet much of the thermal radiation goes into producing the air blast. At higher elevations more energy is directly released in the form of thermal radiation. An additional effect of nuclear explosion is the generation of a very large electromagnetic pulse which can severely disrupt electronic equipment and electric circuits.

1. Fallout

For many years the greatest concern of people has been the large and extensive "fallout" of radioactive debris from a nuclear weapon which can cover a much greater area than the immediate explosion. More precisely fallout is the descent of contaminated particles and droplets to the ground which make up most of the residual nuclear radiation. Generally speaking, the closer the explosion is to the ground, the more debris is thrown into the air and the larger the area of fallout. The time for radioactive debris to reach the extremities of the fallout region is about 10 hours, long after the visible explosion is no longer apparent. Important processes involved in fallout, called "scavenging", result in the removal of radioactivity from the cloud. One important mechanism here is rain which can wash radioactive debris from clouds from 10,000 feet to 30,000 feet. This can cause large variations in the fallout, increasing the concentrations in some places and decreasing it in others. Debris which is ejected to altitudes above 30,000 feet is subject to much less cleansing action than it is at lower altitudes.

2. Thermal Radiation

The bright thermal emission from a nuclear device comes in two pulses. The first is about a tenth of a second long and is mostly in the form of ultraviolet radiation.

Except for damage to the eyes, the second pulse which lasts for up to 10 seconds is a much greater hazard because it contains much more energy and is of a longer wavelength which penetrates the atmosphere over larger distances.

3. Initial Nuclear Radiation

The nuclear radiation emitted from the fireball and the radioactive cloud during the first minutes is called the initial nuclear radiation. It includes neutrons and gamma rays emitted directly from the device and gammas rays emitted by the fission products and other radioactive species in the rising cloud. The distance over which these are important is a few miles.

A variety of other less important phenomena have been observed in the series of nuclear tests done during the 50's and 60's in which nuclear devices were tested underwater, at high altitude and at various depths underground. The phenomena are well documented and reasonably understood.

4. Nuclear Winter

An additional effect which was not fully appreciated even at the time of above-ground nuclear testing was the potential ejection of smoke from primary or secondary fires produced as a result of the nuclear explosion. With a sufficiently large detonation in a densely populated area, such as a large city, large scale fires can be set up which will eject enormously more smoke into the atmosphere than is possible with nuclear weapons by themselves. If the smoke reaches very high altitudes, the effect of this smoke on the climate can be profound, resulting ultimately in what is known "Nuclear Winter". A number of factors will determine the importance of this additional smoke source. A particularly important one is how long this smoke survives in the atmosphere. There appears to be a competition between the rate of removal of smoke by precipitation and the rate at which the heating of the smoke modifies the structure of the atmosphere. This modification of the structure of the atmosphere can alter the removal of the smoke, itself. Although the "nuclear winter" effect appears to be valid, its magnitude is extremely uncertain and subject to considerable error, particularly with respect to the magnitude and uniformity of smoke emission and the ability of the atmosphere to clean itself.

It should be noted that the "nuclear winter" effect occurs because of the burning of a large number of cities, each of which may be comparable to the firestorming of cities in World War II with conventional weapons. It is possible that the "nuclear winter" effects could be achieved with conventional weapons, although the simultaneous burning of a large number of cities might be difficult logistically. Also the "nuclear winter" effect could be controlled to a large extent by controlling the targeting of the nuclear weapons. Thus the role of the Christian in influencing not only the choice of the state to have nuclear weapons but also the potential use of them is extremely important.