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Christian Soldiers in the Nuclear Age

A Research Paper by John Todd Stewart

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CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS IN THE NUCLEAR AGE

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The Christian Ethics of War and Peace
As Seen from the Roman Catholic,
Mainline Protestant, and
Evangelical Protestant Traditions

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Senior Seminar
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Politics are an extension of ethics.

Aristotle

Show us not the aim without the way.
For ends and means on earth are so entangled
That changing one you change the other too;
Each different path brings other ends in view.

Ferdinand Lassalle
Franz von Sickingen

The head of the astronomy department [at an Ivy League school] was speaking to the dean of the divinity school. The astronomy professor said, "Now, let's face it. In religion, what it all boils down to very simply is that you should love your neighbor as you love yourself. It's the Golden Rule, right?" "Yes, I suppose that's true," replied the dean of the divinity school. "Just as in astronomy it all boils down to one thing--'Twinkle, twinkle, little star.'"

Bruce Larson
Faith for the Journey

SUMMARY

Given the strong influence of the Christian religion on American culture, it is likely that the value systems of policymakers are based in part on the church's ethical teachings. For this reason, an examination of Christian ethics may shed some light on a source of U.S. foreign policy. This study focuses on the most important issue in international relations today--the ethics of war and peace in superpower relations--from the perspectives of the Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant and Evangelical Protestant traditions.

There are three basic attitudes toward war and peace in the Christian ethic: pacifism, just war and the crusade. Since the time of Augustine, the preponderance of Christian thought has supported the just war doctrine, which begins with a presumption against hostilities but justifies war if certain conditions are met. The most important of these criteria are discrimination (the immunity of noncombatants) and proportionality (the damage inflicted must be strictly proportionate to the ends sought).

The invention of atomic weapons has caused theologians to question whether a nuclear war can be just. All-out nuclear hostilities are generally considered morally unacceptable, and most commentators believe that even limited nuclear war must be condemned because of the probability of escalation. Current deterrence strategy receives limited acceptance from more church leaders, but often only as a step to progressive disarmament.

As an alternative to deterrence, many churches have recently called for active programs of peacemaking. Here, however, there is a difference among theologians about man's capacity to create true peace. Related debates concern the theological implications of destroying the earth through nuclear war and the moral authority of church leaders to speak on public issues like nuclear weapons.

A Christian's attitude toward nuclear issues may well be affected by his understanding of God's plans to end history. One widely read scenario, based on Biblical prophecy, suggests that the Second Coming is imminent. This view contains important implications for U.S. foreign and defense policies.

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I INTRODUCTION

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In my experience, there is little explicit discussion of ethics in the counsels of the U.S. Department of State or the Foreign Service. Yet, all policymakers bring to their work some ethical values, even though these values may not be coherently stated or systematically developed. Given the strong influence of the Christian religion on American culture, it is likely that the values are based in part on the church's ethical teachings, despite the fact the policymaker may not be a churchgoer or even a nominal Christian. For this reason, an examination of Christian ethics may shed some light on a source of U.S. foreign policy. To make this study more manageable, I have focused on the most important issue in international relations today--the ethics of war and peace in superpower relations.

The scope of my study has been narrowed still further by limiting research to the Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant, and Evangelical Protestant traditions. I chose these three traditions to the exclusion of, say, the Eastern Orthodox and Latter Day Saints simply because of their comparatively greater influence on American public life. As this paper will make clear, however, these traditions are hardly monolithic, and no clear line separates individuals and congregations between the mainline and Evangelical Protestant traditions.

The English word evangel literally means "the Gospel,"¹ and Evangelicals place particular stress on the Bible as "the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God."² The principal Evangelical umbrella organization is the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) with over 45,000 churches from 78 denominations, including 45 member denominations.³ Its counterpart is the National Council of Churches, whose membership includes the mainline Protestant denominations (e.g., the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the United Methodist Church, the Protestant Episcopal Church, and the United Church of Christ), plus the Eastern Orthodox churches.

The paper begins with an exposition of three aspects of Christian theology--the nature of man and his institutions, peace, and eschatology--which form a basis for the ensuing discussion. I then review traditional Christian attitudes toward war and peace before proceeding to the paper's central question, the ethics of nuclear weapons. Following that discussion I examine three related questions--peacemaking as an alternative to deterrence, the moral authority of the church in the nuclear weapons debate, and the influence of eschatological doctrine on public policy analysis in this area. Finally, the

paper's conclusion contains some of my own perspectives on the issues raised.

But first, a disclaimer. I am by no stretch of the imagination an amateur theologian but only a Foreign Service officer who began his investigation with a potential interest in the relationship between theology and public policy. Wading into my specific topic, I was almost engulfed by the volume of material which has been written since World War II, and especially in the last 10 years, on the ethics of war and peace in the nuclear age. The number of scholars and public policy organizations interested in this subject was equally daunting, and I was only saved from drowning in a sea of material by the uniformly helpful responses of the experts I approached. Space does not permit separate thanks to all, but I must express special appreciation to Dr. Alan Geyer, Executive Director of the Churches' Center for Theology and Public Policy, Washington, D.C., who met with me on three occasions and steered me to a variety of other sources, including some whose positions are far from his own.

Despite this help, however, I have no doubt made mistakes of omission and commission. More books were recommended to me than I found time to read, and several more months would have been necessary to visit all the American scholars whom I was urged to interview. Even more serious are my probable failure to understand the subtleties of some arguments and my probable oversimplifications of others in a field which has engaged some of humanity's best minds for 2,000 years. I must make clear, therefore, that this paper is not intended as a contribution to scholarship but rather as the attempt of a layman to come to grips with a very complex and challenging subject.

Finally, a note on terminology and sources. I wrestled with the term "mainline" to describe one Protestant tradition in recognition that Evangelicals might find the adjective offensive and that in terms of membership trends the Evangelicals could be placed on the main line and the "mainline" churches on a siding. Nevertheless, I acquiesced in this general usage when I could find no better adjective and one NAE official confided that he used the term himself. Elsewhere I have eschewed theological jargon wherever possible (e.g., using interpretive instead of hermeneutic), but where there is no everyday English equivalent for an unfamiliar theological term, I have included a definition in the text or a footnote. Liberal and conservative and right and left are used solely in a political sense as I find their theological connotations too ambiguous. Finally, all Biblical quotations are from the Revised Standard Version,⁴ not because of some supposed superiority of its translation but because it is the Bible I have at home.

II THEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

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To lay the groundwork for an exploration of the ethics of war and peace, particularly in the nuclear age, it is necessary to explore three concepts which loom large in Christian theology--the nature of man and his institutions; peace; and eschatology, "the branch of theology dealing with last things, such as death, resurrection, judgment, etc." and "the doctrines concerning these."⁵

1. The Nature of Man and His Institutions

According to traditional Christian theology, man and his institutions are fallen as a result of man's decision, as recounted or symbolized in the story of the Garden of Eden, to rebel against God and know good and evil.⁶ In the words of an NAE publication, "... evil is the result of sin, estrangement from God, which is a constant reality in the human condition. Sin is prevalent in the individual mind and heart, it distorts our relationships, our institutions and decisions, and its effects become entrenched in the structures of society and culture."⁷ According to Pope John Paul II, "For Christians, peace on earth is always a challenge because of the presence of sin in man's heart."⁸ Two mainline Protestant theologians, Waldo Beach and H. Richard Niebuhr, observe that this theme makes explicit the difference between Christian ethics and the ethics of many other communities. "The former does not begin with the assumption that man is morally healthy and needs only knowledge in order to do the right thing. It begins rather with the understanding that man is morally ill and needs to be made well before he can act as a normal human being should and would act."⁹

Traditional Christian theology also holds that sin is an abiding condition on earth short of an eschatological reign of Christ. According to the NAE, "'Biblical realism' urges us to be skeptical--on theological grounds--of all schemes of social perfectability short of the final Kingdom. Such schemes often reflect a human pretentiousness which is a contemporary expression of the sin of Adam and Eve."¹⁰ The U.S. Catholic bishops noted in their 1983 Pastoral Letter on War and Peace, "It is precisely because sin is part of history that the realization of the peace of the kingdom is never permanent or total."¹¹

Reinhold Niebuhr, probably the most influential mainline Protestant theologian of this century in America, explored the

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ethical nature of men and institutions in Moral Man and Immoral Society,¹² a book published before the dawn of the atomic age. Niebuhr's thesis is that "a sharp distinction must be drawn between the moral and social behavior of individuals and of social groups . . . and that this behavior justifies and necessitates political policies which a purely individualistic ethic must always find embarrassing."¹³ The dichotomy exists because "from the perspective of society the highest moral ideal is justice. From the perspective of the individual the highest ideal is unselfishness. Society must strive for justice even if it is forced to use means, such as self-assertion, resistance, coercion and perhaps resentment, which cannot gain the moral sanction of the most sensitive moral spirit."¹⁴ "Love, which depends on emotion, whether it expresses itself in transient sentiment or constant goodwill, is baffled by the more intricate social relations in which the highest ethical attitudes are achieved only by careful calculation."¹⁵ The influence of Christian love is weakest in international relations, Niebuhr maintained, as the individual is remote from his fellows in other nations, and in his own, "patriotism transmutes individual unselfishness into national egoism."¹⁶

2. Peace

In his short book Peace and Freedom: Christian Faith, Democracy and the Problem of War, George Weigel, a Catholic lay theologian, quotes the following three definitions of peace by Benjamin Seaver of the Quaker tradition:¹⁷

- Spiritual peace: "an inner state, that serenity of soul, that serenity of mind and conscience, which arises from a proper relationship between the individual and his Creator. Religious organizations ought to encourage their members to seek this inner peace," Seaver maintains, "but in no sense can it be considered a proper object for social action."

- Shalom: A Hebrew word meaning "the complete absence of all conflict, a state of being in which all men live in harmony with each other in a world governed by love and understanding." According to Seaver, shalom is "a concept of peace as an ultimate goal, the kingdom of God on earth, a goal attainable in terms of eternity rather than in terms of time . . . [which] will always be there to give man guidance and direction in his eternal search for perfection." This concept has attracted considerable attention in recent denominational studies of war and peace questions. For example, the Peace

Theology Development Team of the United Church of Christ translates shalom as "just peace," connoting "wholeness, healing, justice, righteousness, equality, unity, freedom, and community."¹⁸

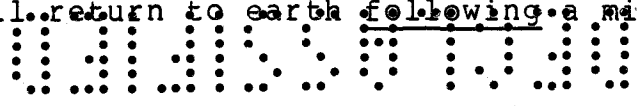
-- Public order and security commanded by the laws of a sovereign government: The antonym of war, this is "the only sort of social peace man has ever known, the peace of the governed community." Seaver points out that the size of governed communities has grown over the course of human history from tribes to nation states. The title of Weigel's later book Tranquillitas Ordinis is the expression Augustine used in The City of God for this kind of peace, which Weigel translates as "the peace of public order in dynamic political community."¹⁹

3. Eschatology

Few topics are as controversial in Christianity as the interpretation of prophetic passages in the Old and New Testaments where the authors purport to describe God's plans to end history. Although many texts are at issue, the debate focuses on Revelation 20, which describes the author's vision of an angel coming down from heaven to imprison Satan for a thousand years while Jesus reigns on earth. However, the author continues, "when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be loosed from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth . . . to gather them for battle And they marched up over the broad earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city; but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever."²⁰

"Amillennialism," the dominant Christian interpretation of this chapter from Augustine to the present, rejects a literal thousand-year reign of Jesus on earth but holds instead that we are now in the millennium, a period of unknown length.²¹ The souls of dead believers are now living and reigning in heaven, and Jesus will return to earth to close history with the Last Judgment. Today's Catholics and mainline Protestants still generally subscribe to amillennialism.

Other interpretations are dominant in the Evangelical tradition, however. In the last century most Evangelicals and many other Protestants believed in "postmillennialism," which holds that Jesus will return to earth following a millennium



when the world will experience unprecedented well-being or shalom under the influence of an enlarged and vitalized Christian church, whose values and principles will dominate secular life. However, as the social optimism of the 1800's gave way to twentieth century pessimism, Evangelicals turned in increasing number to "premillennialism," which looks to a return of Jesus to inaugurate the millennium. In a recent sampling of its readers, Christianity Today, the leading Evangelical periodical, found that 60 percent believed that Jesus will come before the millennium, as compared with one percent "during," nine percent "after," 18 percent who did not believe in a millennium, and 12 percent who had no opinion.²²

The premillennialist school is itself split over the timing of the Rapture, an event anticipated on the basis of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, where Paul wrote, "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord."²³ Pretribulational premillennialists, the dominant faction known also as dispensationalists, believe that we are already in "end times" and that the Rapture will take place soon, immediately before the Tribulation, a period of war and persecution based on prophecies in Daniel 7-9, Ezekiel 38-39, Jeremiah 30:3-7, and Revelation 7-21. Under this interpretation Christian believers, who will have been "raptured" up to heaven, will be spared the horrors of an involved series of politico-military events leading up to the battle of Armageddon, when Jesus will return. As Chapter V will make clear, dispensationalist authors now identify the actors in these politico-military events with considerable specificity.

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III TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES

TOWARD WAR AND PEACE



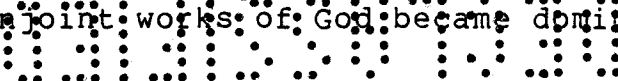
In his classic study Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace,²⁴ Roland H. Bainton, a professor of ecclesiastical history from the mainline Protestant tradition, identifies three basic attitudes toward war and peace in the Christian ethic: pacifism, the just war, and the crusade. As one will see from the following summary, which is based on Bainton's study, all three attitudes appear in both Catholic and Protestant theology so that present-day Christian ethicists hark back to an essentially common tradition. This circumstance is an important unifying factor in the debates over the ethics of nuclear war.

1. Pacifism of the Early Church

Bainton argues that the New Testament has little to say specifically on the ethics of war and peace, particularly to those charged with administering the power of the state. While both Jesus and Paul dealt to some degree with the relationship between the believer and the state, neither appeared to envision the assumption of political power by Christians. Even the passages on an individual's relations with the state do not explicitly address the question of military service so that early Christians attempted to apply what they took to be the mind of Jesus from injunctions such as "Do not resist one who is evil,"²⁵ and "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you."²⁶ The conclusion seemed obvious so that until the age of Constantine no Christian author is known to have approved of Christian participation in battle. Following A.D. 170, increasing numbers of Christians appear in the Roman armed forces without sanction by the church, but ecclesiastical authors before Constantine condemned Christian participation in warfare.

2. Just War

The conversion of Constantine in A.D. 313 presented Christian ethicists with a daunting challenge in advising their coreligionists responsible for administering the power of the state. They were also obliged to reassess existing church teaching on relations between a believer and the state as temporal authority was now wielded by Christians. Not surprisingly, an earlier minority view that Rome and Christianity were conjoint works of God became dominant under



Constantine so that the Christian shalom and the Pax Romana supported each other. By the early fifth century, the earlier pacifist ethic had eroded so substantially that only Christians could serve in the army, but pacifism survived in monasticism.

The "just war" doctrine, the prevailing ethic up to the present in both the Catholic and Protestant churches, was first sketched by Ambrose (340?-397) and then elaborated by Augustine (354-430) at a time when the Roman Empire was beginning to feel the full effect of the barbarian invasions. Writing after the sack of Rome by Alaric in 411, Augustine defended the use of lethal force by the state with the argument that the duty to defend an innocent neighbor takes precedence over the obligation to do no harm to an enemy attacking the neighbor. However, to be justified, the use of military force must meet a series of criteria with regard to both intention and application. As further elaborated by Aquinas and other moral philosophers, these criteria have come down to the present in substantially the same form in all denominations. I quote the version appearing in the 1986 Fundamental Document on war and peace of the Methodist Bishops:²⁷

Just Resort to War (Jus ad Bellum)

- (1) Just cause: A decision for war must vindicate justice itself in response to some serious evil, such as an aggressive attack.
- (2) Just intent: The ends sought in a decision for war must include the restoration of peace with justice and must not seek self-aggrandizement or the total devastation of another nation.
- (3) Last resort: This tradition shares with pacifism a moral presumption against going to war--but is prepared to make exceptions. Every possibility of peaceful settlement of a conflict must be tried before war is begun.
- (4) Legitimate authority: A decision for war may be made and declared only by properly constituted governmental authority.
- (5) Reasonable hope of success: A decision for war must be based on a prudent expectation that the ends sought can be achieved. It is hardly an act of justice to plunge one's people into the suffering and sacrifice of a suicidal conflict.

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Just Conduct of War (Jus in Bello)

- (1) Discrimination: Justice in the actual conduct of war requires respect for the rights of enemy peoples, especially for the immunity of noncombatants from direct attack. Such respect also rules out atrocities, reprisals, looting, and wanton violence.
- (2) Proportionality: The amount of damage inflicted must be strictly proportionate to the ends sought. Small scale injuries should not be avenged by massive suffering, death, and devastation. The war's harm must not exceed the war's good. (Proportionality is also a criterion to be applied to jus ad bellum--the decision whether to resort to war in the first place.)

Bainton calls Augustine's handiwork "the code of Plato and Cicero, with Christian additions."²⁸ The criteria of just cause, just intent, proportionality, and discrimination all are found in rules proposed by Plato to govern military conflicts among the Greek city-states, where common cultural values and a sense of community obtained. Cicero contributed the criterion of legitimate authority. Faced with the absence of ethical guideposts from the Christian tradition, Augustine apparently drew on his extensive background as a teacher of rhetoric and appropriated these classical criteria to serve in far different cultural circumstances against the barbarians. Not surprisingly, the criteria have frequently been ignored in practice from Augustine's time to the present.

3. The Crusade

The formal moral presumption against war and what Bainton calls "the Augustinian mournfulness in combat"²⁹ continued through the chaotic breakup of the Roman Empire into the Middle Ages, when the church attempted to restrain warfare in the eleventh century through the Peace of God, which enormously increased the categories of exempt persons and institutions, and the Truce of God, which limited the time allowed for military operations. However, these efforts culminated in 1095 in the successful effort of Pope Urban II to eliminate warfare in Europe by diverting the energies of its fighting men to capture the Holy Land from the Saracens. The Augustinian code was placed in abeyance for the crusades, and troops and clerics alike found inspiration in Old Testament texts such as Jeremiah 48:10, "Cursed is he who keeps back his sword from bloodshed." In the crusades, the godliness of the end justified the brutality of the means, and even such a paradigmatic pacifist as Francis of Assisi did not condemn the fifth crusade, which he accompanied.

4. The Reformation

Luther accepted just war theory as he agreed with Augustine that war was an aspect of the police function of the state subject to the traditional moral criteria. As servants of the state, Christians must do in their official capacities what they must not do in their personal capacities. All other Reformation churches, with the exception of the pacifist Anabaptists, also endorsed the just war doctrine, but Bainton maintains (against some argument³⁰) that the Calvinist Reformed Churches moved beyond just war toward the crusade partly because of their involvement in wars of religion and partly because of the theocratic orientation of such leaders as Calvin, Zwingli, and the English Puritans. With none of Augustine's mournfulness, Calvin taught that God ordained the state inter alia to support the true religion and repeatedly said that no consideration could be paid to humanity when the honor of God was at stake.

However, the Reformation's emphasis on the Biblical roots of Christianity also inspired a return to the pacifism of the early church. The period produced the "historic peace churches"--the Anabaptists (now the Mennonites and the Hutterites), the Brethren, and the Quakers. Because of their harrowing historical experience of persecution, the Anabaptists and their descendants have generally stayed aloof from the political process. However, the Quakers, who enjoyed comparatively well-developed civil rights in Britain and America, have been willing to assume political office to the point of war. The Brethren have occupied a middle position.

5. From the Enlightenment to the Nuclear Age

The development of international law with Grotius (1583-1645) resecularized many elements of the just war tradition by transforming them from morality to law. However, the transformation involved a weakening in moral authority as the prescriptions became part of an implied contract which could be ignored by one side if it were violated by the other.³¹ These limitations were reasonably effective in the seventeenth and eighteenth century wars conducted largely by mercenaries but were much less effective in the later revolutionary and ideological wars fought by the people in arms. A crusading spirit, partly religious and partly secular, was present in all these conflicts, but it reached its apogee in the First World War, when churches in every belligerent gave support to their government. The Anglican Bishop of London called on young Englishmen in 1917 to "Kill Germans--to kill them, not for the sake of killing, but to save the world, to

kill the good as well as the bad, to kill the young men as well as the old As I have said a thousand times, I look upon it as a war for purity, I look upon everyone who dies in it as a martyr."32

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When the inevitable disillusionment set in after the armistice, American churches questioned the advisability of offering institutional support for any war, and the pacifist movement gained considerable strength in the United States. Even when pacifism largely collapsed after Pearl Harbor, the crusading spirit did not reemerge. In part, this was because of a shift in the theological climate from the naive optimism of the nineteenth century to the orthodox view of fallen humanity (described in Chapter II) portrayed by such theologians as Karl Barth and Reinhold Niebuhr. With a warless New Jerusalem logically excluded as a goal and pacifism dead, Christians were left with the just war doctrine to deal with horrific technological possibilities of mid-twentieth century warfare. The bombing of population centers presented the key moral issue, and public debate took place in Britain, and to some extent in the United States, on this question. The defenders of military necessity won out over those arguing that the criterion of discrimination forbade attacks on noncombatants. The stage was thus set for the debates of the nuclear era.

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IV THE ETHICS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

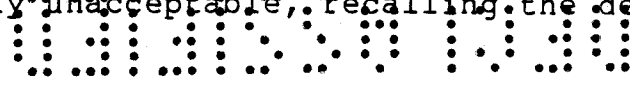


Since the first military use of atomic energy in the closing days of World War II, Christian ethicists from all three traditions have written extensively on the morality of nuclear weapons from both the just war and pacifist perspectives. Elements of the crusade have also entered the debate, but I have found no writer who identifies him or herself as an exponent of this doctrine. The debate has intensified in the 1980's, when the Catholic bishops, the National Association of Evangelicals, and a number of mainline Protestant denominations have taken formal positions on nuclear arms. In presenting the arguments, I will begin by examining the continued relevance of just war theory in the nuclear age, the approach most commentators have taken.

1. A Just Nuclear War?

The debate over the continued relevance of just war theory has generally focused on two of the traditional criteria--discrimination and proportionality, the latter ad bellum and in bello. Paul Ramsey, the leading mainline Protestant just war theorist,³³ considers that a nuclear war could be fought in conformity with these principles on the assumption that the combatants would restrict themselves to counterforce targeting (i.e., aiming only at bona fide military targets) and forswear countercity targeting where the victims would be primarily noncombatants. He regards noncombatant immunity as an absolute moral rule but is willing to accept collateral harm to noncombatants as long as such harm is not "direct and intentional."³³ Implicit in this conclusion are judgments that use of counterforce weapons would not lead to escalation up to an all-out nuclear exchange (negating the so-called "firebreak" argument, which posits a moral boundary between conventional and nuclear weapons) and that the outcome of such a nuclear war could be so far superior to the alternative of not fighting as to compensate for the damage done. The latter judgment would obviously require an extremely negative evaluation of the situation which would result if nuclear weapons were not used. Ramsey's logic also leads to support for the introduction of more discrete nuclear weapons, such as the neutron bomb and the single-warhead "Midgetman" missile, which would reduce collateral damage.

Addressing these same just war criteria, the U.S. Catholic bishops came to a different conclusion in their 1983 pastoral letter. The bishops agreed with Ramsey that countercity targeting was morally unacceptable, recalling the declaration



of Vatican II that

Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or of extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation.³⁵

No position was taken on the acceptability of collateral injury to noncombatants under the discrimination criterion, although the bishops commented that "it would be a perverted political policy or moral casuistry which tried to justify using a weapon which indirectly or unintentionally killed a million innocent people because they happened to live near a 'militarily significant target.'"³⁶ However, they found that in practice limited nuclear war was unlikely to meet the requirements of proportionality because of the "firebreak" argument. This conclusion was based on the testimony of former Defense Department officials, including former Secretaries James Schlesinger and Harold Brown, that it is improbable that any nuclear war could be kept limited. Therefore, the bishops concluded, "we judge resort to nuclear weapons to counter a conventional attack to be morally unjustifiable," as any use would likely escalate into an unacceptable counter-city exchange.³⁷

While not comparable in authority for congregants to the Catholic pastoral, the Methodist bishops' 1986 Foundation Document is indicative of mainline Protestant denominational analysis of nuclear war by just war criteria. The bishops found that whatever the intention of political and military leaders may be, the principle of discrimination is "bound to be horribly violated in any likely use of nuclear weapons not only because of the widespread effects of blast, fire, fallout, and environmental damage but also because of the unlikelihood that any resort to nuclear weapons by major powers can result in a strictly controlled or limited nuclear war. The consequences are likely to be global."³⁸ The proportionality criterion could not be met either, the bishops found, since nuclear war could not be realistically expected to do more good than harm.

In 1986 the National Association of Evangelicals adopted Guidelines for a program of peace, freedom, and security studies. While the "Guidelines" offer directions rather than conclusions, they do address the question of proportionality and give more weight than the Catholic or Methodist bishops do to the harm which could result from a failure to use nuclear weapons. The relevant paragraph is quoted in full:

Within the just war tradition, the question of the justice of the cause always preceded the question of the

appropriateness of the means. What is being defended, and against what, had to be evaluated before the morality of the instruments of defense was considered. This makes the problem even more complex. In terms of sheer numbers, more people have probably perished internally in totalitarian regimes in the 20th century than in international wars during the same period. Where then lies the greatest prospect for the loss of human life: Is it in preparing for war to deter an aggressor, or is it in rejecting the use of weapons because of their destructive potential? Does our responsibility require that we ignore numerical calculations and insist on adherence to certain fundamental affirmations whatever the consequences?³⁹

2. Deterrence

Even though the great majority of Catholic and mainline Protestant theologians reject or have grave misgivings about the use of nuclear weapons, their views regarding deterrence are more complicated. Although traditional Catholic theology holds a wrong intention to be as sinful as a wrong act,⁴⁰ preexisting just war theory did not deal extensively with the morality of threatening to take an impermissible action. Most theological consideration of deterrence seems based, at least in part, on the authors' nontheological judgments concerning the likelihood that a deterrence strategy will lead to nuclear war.

Most American theologians accepted deterrence in the early 1950's, when the United States enjoyed superiority in nuclear weaponry, but attitudes began to change in the 1960's coincidental with the Soviets' drive for parity. In a lecture delivered in 1965, John C. Bennett, a leading mainline Protestant theologian, concluded:

... there is no way of escaping from the moral burden of possessing nuclear weapons, of seeking to preserve a precarious balance of nuclear power in the world We are left with an appalling dilemma. We may have to say 'yes' to the possession of these weapons but, if they are ever used in a general nuclear war, they will destroy all that their possession is intended to defend When nations are caught as they are today in a moral trap in connection with the structure of deterrence, this fact should bring upon them the strongest possible moral pressure both to find ways of reducing tensions and of limiting the danger of nuclear war under existing conditions and to change the conditions by seeking radical disarmament and institutional alternatives to violence."⁴¹

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Seventeen years later Bennett's position was endorsed by Pope John Paul II, who advised the U.N. General Assembly:

In current conditions "deterrence" based on balance, certainly not as an end in itself but as a step on the way toward a progressive disarmament, may still be judged morally acceptable. Nonetheless in order to ensure peace, it is indispensable not to be satisfied with this minimum which is always susceptible to the real danger of explosion.⁴²

However, by the mid-1980's the lack of recent progress toward arms control encouraged many mainline Protestant leaders to urge a more radical approach. While not proposing unilateral disarmament, the Methodist bishops wrote in 1986:

It is the idolatrous connection between the ideology of deterrence and the existence of the weapons themselves that must be broken. Deterrence must no longer receive the churches' blessing, even as a temporary warrant for the maintenance of nuclear weapons. The interim possession of such weapons for a strictly limited time requires a different justification--an ethic of reciprocity as nuclear weapon states act together in agreed stages to reduce and ultimately to eliminate their nuclear arms. Such an ethic is shaped by an acceptance of mutual vulnerability, a vision of common security, and the escalation of mutual trust rather than mutual terror. It insists that the positive work of peacemaking must overcome the fearful manipulation of hostility.⁴³

While also rejecting unilateral full-scale disarmament as a "currently acceptable path out of the present international dilemma," the XV General Synod of the United Church of Christ in 1985 rejected "any use or threat to use weapons and forces of mass destruction and any doctrine of deterrence based primarily on using such weapons."⁴⁴ And a lay-clerical Committee of Inquiry on the Nuclear Issue of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington found in 1985 that the use of nuclear weapons was intrinsically wrong but considered that a morally acceptable but practically effective deterrence could be maintained by holding the weapons without the will to use them.⁴⁵ This policy, called "bluff" or "clergy" deterrence, would be morally acceptable in traditional theology.⁴⁶

Even a politically conservative commentator such as George Weigel, the Catholic lay theologian, does not defend the status quo, although Weigel stresses the need to substitute other forms of security in order to defend the real values in American civilization. He writes:

There is no question that the deterrence system poses hard moral questions for those who wish to think ethically within the just war tradition. That tradition is one of "moderate realism," avoiding neither the moral questions of consequence nor the moral gravity of a national security system whose premise is our capacity to obliterate an adversary's society. In that moderate realist tradition, deterrence cannot be made a moral absolute. The clear Christian imperative is to move beyond deterrence to other forms of security. But the paradox of our situation, from which there seems to be no escape, is that moving beyond deterrence requires the maintenance of deterrent stability in order to succeed. The chasm between today's situation of mutual vulnerability to nuclear attack and a preferred future in which legal and political means for resolving conflict are in place, credible, and effective, cannot be crossed in a single leap Questions of moral responsibility must also be answered by those who would immediately dismantle the deterrent system and, thereby, most probably heighten the danger of war.⁴⁷

3. The End of Creation?

Secular debates in the 1980's have led Christian ethicists to consider a new question, the theological consequences of threatening the world's existence. Consideration of this issue was fostered by the publication of Jonathan Schell's book The Fate of the Earth,⁴⁸ which postulated an all-out nuclear exchange, and intensified by discussion of Carl Sagan's "nuclear winter" scenario, which suggests that dust clouds from far fewer nuclear explosions would block sunlight and lower the earth's surface temperature to the point that most forms of life would be extinguished. The question has no antecedents in just war theory since such widespread ecological damage previously was not a technical possibility.

In their postscript to a series of essays prepared for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Ronald H. Stone and Dana W. Wilbanks ask rhetorically, "Is there anything that could be more blasphemous than building a global network of destruction that places God's creation, Earth, at such risk?"⁴⁹ They quote Gordon Kaufman of the Harvard Divinity School, who asks what the possibility of annihilation means for our views of God, and of human sinfulness and responsibility, and then comments:

For traditional eschatology there was always some positive meaning--some humanly significant meaning--in the consummating events of history... But our situation is

.....

V RELATED QUESTIONS

The last chapter presented a preponderance of Christian voices claiming that current deterrence strategy is incompatible with the requirements of just war theory, with some commentators maintaining that nuclear war would be a blasphemous attack on God's creation. It is reasonable, therefore, to examine what general alternative these critics offer to the current strategy and how this alternative is grounded in Christian theology. Second, I will explore the sources of moral authority with which church leaders--and their critics--speak on these questions. Finally, I will investigate the possible effect of eschatological doctrine on public policy analysis in this area.

1. Peacemaking as an Alternative to Deterrence

The Catholic and mainline Protestant churches have emphasized peacemaking as the strategic alternative to military deterrence. Their statements posit a shalom-like peace, as defined in Chapter II, as an ultimate goal and consider possible the attitudinal changes necessary to make significant progress toward its achievement. They emphasize that arms reduction is necessary, but not sufficient, since reformed social relations, both inter-and intranationally, are required for a just peace. Evangelical and other critics take a different view, however.

The 1986 report of the Peace Theology Development Team of the United Church of Christ provides an explicit example of this reasoning. The team contends that "... the coming of Christ really changed human history. Humanity can overcome sin, create Just Peace. It also means that this power for change is useless if human beings do not bond together to participate in changing the world." Its report continues:

In traditional theology, human beings have been regarded as prideful, self-seeking, and individualistic. It is assumed by Pentagon planners and many Christian theologians that because violence has saturated human history, violence is innate to the species. Only by terror, whether of hell or mutually assured destruction, can human beings be kept from destroying one another. This and other one-sidedly negative views of human nature have undercut Christians' sense of themselves as capable of moral agency.

But humanity has been decisively redefined by the Advent of God in history, ~~God's coming in Christ.~~ Through the grace

that is made present to humanity by the Holy Spirit, we are all enabled to recognize the human possibility genuinely available for constructing our world on the principles of justice.⁵⁴

Pronouncements of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches also reflect these themes. In 1980 the 192nd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church adopted a "Call to Peacemaking," which said in part, "We know that there can be no global security without political and economic justice.... Peace is more than the absence of war, more than a precarious balance of powers. Peace is the intended order of the world with life abundant for all God's children."⁵⁵ After asking how peace will be achieved, the authors mention disarmament, global economic reform and a change in political structures, but then add, "Basically, at the heart, it is a matter of the way we see the world through the eyes of Christ."⁵⁶ In their Fundamental Document, the Methodist bishops note that "Peacemaking is a sacred calling of the gospel, especially blessed by God, making us evangelists of shalom--peace that is overflowing with justice, compassion, and well-being,"⁵⁷ and comment later, "Peacemaking is ultimately a spiritual issue. Without conversion of minds and hearts, the political systems of this world will remain estranged from shalom."⁵⁸

The prescriptions of the Catholic bishops are similar. The bishops recognize that peace will be fully achieved only in the Kingdom of God, but "realization of the kingdom... is a continuing work, progressively accomplished..."⁵⁹ Although the existence of sin poses a continuous challenge, "peace is possible" according to Paul VI and John Paul II.⁶⁰ Quoting Vatican II, the bishops found that "peace is not merely the absence of war" but "an enterprise of justice," which results from "that harmony built into human society by its divine founder and actualized by men as they thirst after ever greater justice."⁶¹

However, misgivings were expressed about this Catholic-mainline Protestant analysis by the National Association of Evangelicals, whose Guidelines contain the following comment on the concept of peace as the fruition of justice:

Advocates of this view, with its eschatological vision of "shalom," are in effect stating that only a thorough commitment to the principles of "shalom" can prevent war. But since the Scriptures also teach that the establishment of the full justice of the eschatological kingdom will be an offense to those set on rebellion against God, we must expect that the pursuit of such justice would elicit

violent reactions from the enemies of truth and righteousness. Not all nations share the vision of "shalom"; many wars erupt because of conflicting notions of the nature of justice. If we postpone efforts to limit the recourse to war as a means of resolving conflict until we are satisfied with the progress of justice, we may well serve the interests of those concerned neither for justice or peace as we understand them.⁶²

George Weigel, who served as a consultant to the NEA in formulating its Guidelines, commented elsewhere, "One great misunderstanding found in church social action, thought, and work today is the belief that this peace of the completed Kingdom, Shalom, can be created solely by human hands . . .," when "in the mainstream of the Christian tradition such complete justice and peace will only be revealed in the coming of the Kingdom . . ."⁶³ Until that time the world will continue to be marked by sin, and the best that Christians should aim for is the tranquillitas ordinis described in Chapter II. Attempts to do more are bound to fail, leaving society worse off than it would be by working toward realistic goals.

Although he was associated with a denominational antecedent of the United Church of Christ, Reinhold Niebuhr's "Christian realist" theology seems much closer to Weigel's than to that of the UCC team quoted above. As Niebuhr wrote in 1932:

There are both spiritual and brutal elements in human life. The perennial tragedy of human history is that those who cultivate the spiritual elements usually do so by divorcing themselves from or misunderstanding the problems of collective man, where the brutal elements are most obvious The history of human life will always be the projection of the world of nature. To the end of history the peace of the world, as Augustine observed, must be gained by strife. It will therefore not be a perfect peace. But it can be more perfect than it is. If the mind and the spirit of man does not attempt the impossible, if it does not seek to conquer or to eliminate nature but tries only to make the forces of nature the servants of the human spirit and the instruments of the moral ideal, a progressively higher justice and more stable peace can be achieved.⁶⁴

2. Moral Authority of the Church

Mainline Protestant religious groups have long been active in American public life, but participation by the Roman Catholic and Evangelical churches is a comparatively new

phenomenon. Catholic concern for social issues was spurred by Vatican II, and this renewed concern roughly coincided with the coming of political age for American Catholics with the election of John F. Kennedy as president. A similar process occurred in the Evangelical community when leaders such as the Sojourners on the left and Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson on the right encouraged more attention to social issues and the election of Ronald Reagan as president brought political influence and prestige to conservative Evangelicals. As the result has been a marked upswing in the volume of pronouncements by religious leaders on public issues, one can reasonably question the theological sources of their authority.

Explanations vary in the church documents themselves. While their report had no binding force, the UCC Peace Theology Development Team asserted that "the church must constantly provide a prophetic critique of the state when the state fails to implement policy aimed at the fulfillment of justice.... The church regards this prophetic critique as a contribution to public policy debate because the church is capable of offering an alternative view to the prevailing understanding of national security as the supreme justification of the use of any amount of force in the protection of the nation-state."⁶⁵ The Methodist bishops describe their message, which was also not morally binding for church members, as "both a pastoral and a prophetic word. It is pastoral in that we as bishops will seek to lead the church in study, prayer, and action related to this issue and this theme It is prophetic in that the Foundation Document is our response to the Word of God. It faithfully states our understanding of that Word to our world at this moment in history."⁶⁶ In their pastoral letter the Catholic bishops carefully explained:

... not every statement in this letter has the same moral authority. At times we reassert universally binding moral principles (e.g., noncombatant immunity and proportionality). At still other times we reaffirm statements of recent popes and the teachings of Vatican II. Again, at other times we apply moral principles to specific cases.

When making applications of these principles we realize ... that prudential judgments are involved based on specific circumstances which can change or which can be interpreted differently by people of good will (e.g., the treatment of "no-first-use"). However, the moral judgments that we make in specific cases, while not binding in conscience, are to be given serious attention and consideration by Catholics as they determine whether their moral judgments are consistent with the Gospel.⁴⁷

In its Guidelines, the National Association of Evangelicals addresses the assertion that the church should stay out of politics by affirming that "the church is inevitably involved with the great moral issues of our time," ... which "require political as well as non-political action The Church cannot ignore such matters, even though the Church must constantly remember that its own weapons are spiritual, not temporal." According to the NAE, "A major purpose of this program is to encourage the kind of critical thinking that will distinguish between policy options that violate Christian principles and those that embody them. That act of making distinctions may violate arbitrary principles of 'neutrality,' but we believe Christian obedience requires making such choices."⁶⁸

Conservative critics have been forthright in their opposition to ecclesiastical involvement in the public policy debate. Commenting on the Methodist bishops' pastoral, Paul Ramsey charged that "no degree of competence bestows 'competent moral authority' on a Council of Bishops, acting as such, to say anything without clear Christian warrants." He added that "when the Light of the World no longer distinguishes between two or more choices we have as a nation, then churches, and bishops, ought fully to present all sides."⁶⁹ Kent Hill, Executive Director of the conservative Institute for Religion and Democracy, has lamented the "unholy alliance developing in the Protestant world marrying a social and political agenda with religious rhetoric He who marries the spirit of the times will find himself a widower."⁷⁰

According to Richard John Neuhaus,⁷¹ a Lutheran pastor who is Director of the conservative Center on Religion & Society, Vatican II made clear that the Catholic hierarchy must defer to the "apostolate of the laity" whose vocation is the particular social issue under consideration. According to Neuhaus, the pastoral leadership is obliged to support the role of laypersons dealing with a policy question, challenge them to consider whether they are making a decision consonant with their calling, provide a forum where concerned laypersons can consider the morality of their decisions, and offer forgiveness for their sins in the knowledge that wrong decisions will inevitably be made. In Neuhaus's view it is "massive apostasy" for church leaders to try to "play with the big boys in the real world." He conceded that Augustine and Luther had been politically active, but he pointed out that unusual circumstances forced both to play political roles and that there was a considerable difference in stature between such giants of Christian history and the current church leadership.

DISCUSSION

3. Influence of Eschatological Doctrine.

In his popularly written book The Late Great Planet Earth⁷² Hal Lindsey, a dispensationalist, lays out a detailed scenario for the ending of history, a series of events he believes are upon us. Basing his predictions primarily on the Old and New Testament texts listed in Chapter II, Lindsey explains that the independence of Israel in 1948 triggered a process which could lead to the Second Coming of Jesus within 40 years or so of that date. Following the Rapture of Christian believers, a strong and popular leader, the "Antichrist" or "Beast" of the Bible, will take control of the European Community and then negotiate an alliance with Israel. The Antichrist will successfully promote a Middle East settlement and then bring peace to the whole world through his political and economic policies. He then will go to Jerusalem to proclaim himself to be God, but almost immediately thereafter an Arab-African confederation led by Egypt will attack Israel, and Russia ("Magog" in the Bible) and its Eastern European allies will launch an invasion of the Middle East by land and sea.

According to Lindsey, the Red Army will sweep over Israel and then doublecross the Arabs by invading Egypt. However, the Antichrist will apparently then mobilize his Western European forces and allow the Oriental powers, headed by China, to mobilize in the belief they would be loyal to him. Learning of this mobilization, the Russian forces will retrace their steps to meet the Western European counterattack in Israel. The Red Army will be completely destroyed in the ensuing battle, and "fire" (possibly nuclear weapons) will rain down on Russia and perhaps on the United States, which may be allied with Western Europe. Then the Chinese-led Oriental army, 200 million strong, will arrive in Israel to engage the forces of the Antichrist, which will be strengthened by expeditionary forces from all other countries on earth. When these two titanic armies meet at Armageddon and the world's cities are destroyed in a further nuclear missile exchange, it will appear that all life is destined for extinction when Jesus returns to stop the carnage and begin his 1000-year rule.

Over 10,000,000 copies of The Late Great Planet Earth have been printed, making it the "number 1 non-fiction bestseller of the decade" according to the New York Times.⁷³ Lindsey has followed Late Great with a number of sequels, most of which have appeared for protracted periods on the bestseller lists. Other popular books, such as Tim LaHaye's The Beginning of the End⁷⁴ and Pat Robertson's The Secret Kingdom,⁷⁵ contain parallel predictions although Robertson's brief account is not time specific. Therefore, without guessing how many readers

accept how much of the message, it is not difficult to accept the appraisal of Vernon Grounds, a premillennialist writing in the newsletter of the liberal evangelicals for Social Action, that "books like these are shaping the mind-set and influencing the political outlook of millions ... of devout, well-meaning Christians."⁷⁶

It is impossible to say with any certainty how dispensationalist eschatology has affected the nuclear debate in the United States, but some logical inferences follow from a strong belief in the imminence of the Second Coming. First, there is no need to worry about destroying life on earth in a nuclear war. As Tim LaHaye, a San Diego Baptist pastor, has explained, "Although the world will be destroyed some day ..., it will not be accomplished by man, but by God himself. Furthermore, the earth will not be destroyed until after Jesus Christ comes back to this earth. In fact, the complete destruction of this world won't take place for over 1000 years after he comes."⁷⁷ This assurance means that the United States can pursue a policy of nuclear deterrence without regard to the threat of a nuclear winter. Nuclear weapons may be used without ultimately annihilating effect during the Tribulation as outlined above, but current believers will not be among the victims since they will have been raptured into heaven beforehand.

Second, a strong military posture is vital to deter Communist atheism and maximize the number of persons open to evangelization, the number one priority for Christians in the short time remaining. According to Grounds, "Premillennialists as a rule ... insist that evangelism is not only our overriding responsibility but really our sole responsibility."⁷⁸ Jerry Falwell justified his call in 1980 for a stronger military by explaining, "Evil forces would seek to destroy America because she is a bastion for Christian missions and a base for world evangelization."⁷⁹

Finally, the Soviet Union is an evil, rapacious barbarian power with whom a real peace is not possible. In Ezekiel 38 God tells the prophet to advise Gog, leader of the land of Magog, which dispensationalists identify with Russia, "Behold, I am against you, O Gog ... you will devise an evil scheme and say, 'I will go up against the land of unwalled villages; I will fall upon the quiet people who dwell securely ... to seize spoil and carry off plunder'" Later, however, God promises, "I will summon every kind of terror against Gog With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter judgment with him; and I will rain upon him and his hordes ... torrential rains and hailstones, fire and brimstone."⁸⁰ If God is against the leader of Magog, how could the U.S. Government seek an improved relationship with the leadership of the Soviet Union?

VI. CONCLUSIONS.

CONCLUSIONS

As I indicated in the Introduction, my modesty in matters theological is well grounded. I am not qualified to discriminate among the analyses described and will make no attempt to do so. Consequently, these conclusions contain only personal observations which are not intended to award the debate to one faction or another.

1. The theological argument over nuclear ethics is not a scholastic exercise but a debate which has--or should have--great practical significance. As J. Bryan Hehir, the intellectual father of the Catholic bishops' pastoral letter, pointed out to me,⁸¹ nuclear strategy can only be tested in the realm of ideas. If ethical analysis does not enter the thinking of the responsible strategists, the world is in serious trouble.

2. Perspectives cut across denominational lines. I came to this project expecting to find sharp distinctions among the Catholic, mainline Protestant, and Evangelical Protestant traditions regarding nuclear ethics. Instead, I found pacifists and just war theorists of all orientations in each tradition. Evidence of interdenominational interchange was provided by extensive quotation of the Catholic bishops' pastoral letter by mainline Protestant churches and advice by George Weigel, a Catholic, in preparation of the NAE Guidelines.

3. A basic theological question, the nature of man, is fundamental to the debate. Can humanity overcome sin, as the UCC Commission asserted, and create Just Peace? Or will history always be the projection of the world of nature, as Niebuhr maintained? This question has tremendous practical significance, for the UCC Commission's answer could open the way for sweeping initiatives to restructure the international order while Niebuhr's analysis suggests that progress toward peace, while possible, could only be made at the margin.

4. The seven just war criteria boil down to one--proportionality, ad bellum and in bello, and its application requires difficult valuations of the harm resulting from nuclear war, the harm resulting from a decision to avoid war, and the likelihood of each result occurring. The other frequently cited criterion--discrimination--has been rendered almost meaningless in the debate since no one seems to favor targeting noncombatants intentionally (a clear violation of the just war ethic), but all agree that they will suffer some degree of collateral harm from attacks on military objectives. Proportionality is the only ethical criterion left, therefore,

and its application in a given instance requires an assessment of the damage resulting from the use of nuclear weapons; the negative consequences of not using them (e.g., Soviet political advances), and the likelihood of each outcome. This calculus requires not only a technical analysis of probabilities, which will involve a high degree of subjectivity, but a completely subjective appraisal of damage from a nuclear war versus damage from political losses stemming from a decision not to fight. The analysis is hardly simple.

5. The crusade doctrine seems present in right-wing dispensationalism because of many dispensationalists' identification of Russia with Magog. As explained in Chapter III, just war criteria are suspended during a crusade, when any means are legitimate to defeat the enemy, who is also God's enemy. If the Soviet Union is indeed Magog, God is against its leadership and the crusade doctrine can be applied with perfect logic.

6. The strong anti-Communism of right-wing Evangelicals stems largely from Soviet promotion of atheism and denial of religious liberty. As explained in Chapter V, evangelism is very important to Evangelicals, who cannot be expected to look with equanimity on any country which restricts freedom to worship as a matter of ideology. In practice, however, state promotion of atheism has waned in the U.S.S.R. and the number of Christian believers seems to be on the increase. A Soviet government interested in better relations with the United States and willing to expand its citizens' civil rights would do well to respect the guarantee of religious liberty in the Soviet constitution and call attention to their decision.

7. Pacifism deserves more attention than it received in this paper. A number of religious thinkers have backed into pacifism in the nuclear age after finding that nuclear war could not be justified under the just war criteria, and the organization of this paper followed that path. However, the doctrine has a positive theological grounding in such recent works as Yoder's The Politics of Jesus,⁸² and some churches have called for the establishment of "peace academies" to consider means of nonviolent resistance.

8. Ethics deserves more attention by practitioners of international relations. Without ethical guideposts which have been worked out in advance by an individual, institution, or society, a decisionmaker easily lapses into situationism, where self-interest is all too easily justified. Law, medical, and business schools now offer--and sometimes require--courses in ethics, but I could not find any such offering in the 1986/87 catalog of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. I am also

not aware of any organized discussion of ethical issues in the Department of State or, for that matter, in any other foreign ministry. The absence seems strange in light of the importance of the decisions in foreign affairs.

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