

**NUCLEAR ARMAMENTS**  
**The Christian Faces the Issues**  
**Dr. George O. Wood**

Our heavenly Father, we realize when we approach the subject of nuclear holocaust, a sentence of death rests upon the whole world. That literally in a moment's time major cities could go up in fire and the world itself within a matter of hours could be destroyed. Never in the whole history of the human race have we had the kind of firepower to destroy the planet as exists now. Even as there is a sentence of death that hangs over the human race because of the nuclear potential and possibilities there is also a sentence of death that hangs over all persons. We come to you, Lord, this evening because you are a merciful God. Because long ago before men ever had the fire power you could have destroyed the world. Indeed you destroyed it once by water and will destroy it yet again by fire. We come to you in whom is our strength and our hope. In whom is all mercy. We acknowledge you, our Lord. We're glad that we can sing songs in a troubled time that speak of you as our solid rock. And our hope is in you and you're so great. You're above any power. You're above the power of the United States and its armaments. You're above the power of the Soviet Union and all the combined powers of this world. Your word is truth; your word is powerful. You created the worlds and you reserve for yourself the right to end them. We thank you that in you we live and move and have our being. That our hope is not in any political solution to problems on the horizon today. That our hope is not in some strategic negotiations that may occur. But our hope is in you. You are the God who does all things well. Give us a spirit of peace this evening as we consider this vital topic before us. We ask in the name of our Lord. Amen.

This is the fourth in the series "The Christian Faces the Issues." We have looked already of the Christian facing the issue humanism and homosexuality and abortion. Tonight another issue that faces Christian today, the issue of nuclear armament.

Perhaps there's no more polarizing issue in the world today than the issue for nuclear armament. Of course I think we're all familiar with sights and sounds of the peace movement and the voices on the other side that are calling for a credible nuclear deterrents.

When evangelicals, born again Christians, speak on this issue they do not all speak with one voice, as we will see tonight. I was helped greatly in preparation for this message by reading Michael Novak's book Moral Clarity in a Nuclear Age. Novak is a Catholic scholar and his responds to the pastoral letter of the bishops of the United States in regard to nuclear armament. Novak makes three very critical points about the three spears of gospel teaching as they apply to human life. He applies them to the history of Catholic doctrine. But I'll transpose a few words as we go along and change them to evangelical thought on the subject.

He says first of all the first sphere of gospel teaching regards the life of the spirit, human life in the light of eternity. Therefore when the scriptures (or his term, bishops) speak on issues that have to do with the human spirit with human life in the light of eternity they speak with clear and supreme authority. We would simply translate that to say that when the scriptures speak to us in a clear way in regard to eternal life and how we may obtain eternal life they speak with clear authority and are not therefore a matter of discussion as to whose opinion is better than another.

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Obviously when the scriptures speak clearly in the area of eternal matters they speak with finality.

The second sphere of gospel teaching, Michael Novak points out is areas in the social order in which the gospels and catholic teaching (his words) speak and touch. For example he is talking about what comes out through the papacy or through international councils of bishops which declared church teaching in areas ranging all the way from abortion to birth control to world peace to nuclear disarmament and the like. His position is when the church speaks in its teaching office, one of these areas of social application of the gospel to human life; it also speaks with authority albeit there may be some ambiguity when it speaks.

There is this pattern as well when we apply the teaching of scriptures not only to issues of eternal life, our salvation. But these past weeks we've tried to teach the scriptures as they relate to issues like humanism, abortion and homosexuality. We have sought therefore to make application from the scriptures to the social order of man. We've indicated that when the scriptures speak again very clearly in these areas we need to give heed to them.

The third level of gospel teaching that Novak points out is what he calls the worldly interpretation of social reality and fact. Tactical and strategic judgment oriented to results in the concrete world of history, choices among various possible means, practical detail and in general questions of prudential judgment.

Basically what Novak is saying at this point in lay language is that there are matters open to us for prudential judgment. When the decision or recommendation does not come to us in this case from bishops or popes, in our case from the scripture. But it is a matter left to the individual reasoning of Christians responsible for fulfilling their calling in this world. A great statement that he makes is in this third sphere that God of the last judgment will not be satisfied by the claim that a Christian followed the general authority of his bishop or anyone else. Each will be judged by what he or she did in the light of his or her own concrete moral reasoning in particular cases. From such personal responsibility there will be no escape in the encompassing light of the final judgment.

I think Novak has a point. There are certain issues we speak on where what are at stake is prudential judgment – what is prudent. The church may speak to us to inform us of basic principles. But in the last analysis it is a matter that does not separate Christians from non-Christians. But it is a matter for Christians themselves to decide which way they're going to go on the issue. I say that at the beginning because born again Christians do have different positions on the Christians response to nuclear armament. It seems to me this is rightly a matter of prudential judgment. In fact there is a Sunday school class on Sunday mornings that analyzes the previous Sunday night sermon and has kind of a debate/discussion about it. Certainly that class is more free to discuss this subject than they were the other three subjects which I understand they went ahead and freely discussed anyway! That's the kind of church we have where a Sunday school class can meet the next week and tear the pastor's sermon apart!

Matters of prudential judgment, I place before you. What I will say this evening will be to reflect an evangelical position first of all those calls for unilateral or one-sided nuclear disarmament. And then attempt as an individual and private Christians to raise some objections to that point of view.

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I speak tonight not as an expert in nuclear armament. Not do I speak as a scientist. Nor do I speak as a military strategist. But I simply speak as a humble Christian wrestling with the issue of nuclear armament and what if anything the scripture has to say to us about it.

I want to begin by presenting to you the case for unilateral nuclear disarmament as proposed by the evangelicals in the book Nuclear Holocaust and Christian Hope.

At the beginning of the book the author raises three questions:

His first question, Can Christians support government policies, which rely on the threat of nuclear war. The position basically is that no Christian should support a government policy that relies on the threat of nuclear war. In fact not only is nuclear war immoral but even the possession of nuclear weapons in itself is an immoral act.

Second question, Given the realities of modern war and the ethics of Jesus (in terms of non retaliation and non violence) can followers of Jesus Christ support or engage in war in any form? The answer to that question from their perspective would be no. The only option permissible for a Christian is pacifist position.

The third question is, How can Christians act for peace in today's world? They spell out a number of alternatives that evangelical Christians ought to be carrying on to act for peace in the world today.

The book does the best job of describing to us what nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union would do to the planet. They point out the studies that have been done in the event of nuclear war. Large portions of countries would be covered by radioactive fall out, which would cause sickness and death for years to come.

Full scale nuclear war you'd see casualties of 70 million to 160 million Americans. And up to 100 million Soviet citizens. If population centers as well as military and economic targets were hit America death could even go as high as 190 million people, 86% of our total population. As many as 130 million Soviet people would die. The deaths would be accompanied by incomprehensible levels of injuries and the physical destruction of a high percentage of both countries economic and industrial capacities.

There are three basic ways that the United States and the Russians operate with nuclear armaments. One is from missile firing submarines which cruise the oceans of the world. The United States count that is releasable is 41 nuclear submarines. Between the US and NATO there are 5000 submarine atomic warheads ready to be deployed. Russia has 64 nuclear subs.

It takes 15 minutes from launch to target.

In addition to missile firing submarines which are a threat to both countries there are land-based missiles.

In addition to submarines and land based missiles there are bombers and air launched missiles. In a full-scale war the United States and Russia have the capacity to unload over 15,000 atomic

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bombs on one another. That's strategic weapons only – weapons which go from continent to continent in contrast to tactical weapons, which are within a continent.

We can destroy every major Russian city with our nuclear armaments 35 times. And they can destroy every one of our major cities 20 times.

The current policy in respect to nuclear armament is the policy of deterrence. That simply means we need to keep building nuclear armaments in order to stay current and in order to deter Russia. And they need to keep developing to deter us. If either side ever got the advantage the other side would fear that the game would be over.

The idea behind this is what is called the MAD policy of deterrents. Mutually Assured Destruction. MAD. Meaning if you shoot at us be prepared for the fact that you're going to pay for it so you better not do it if you don't want it done to yourself.

To even threaten to do this, to animate another nation with nuclear armaments and cause the kind of suffering that would be caused would in itself be immoral. We should never even intend to do this. Yet nuclear deterrent philosophy is built upon intention. Here the Catholic scholar Novak helps greatly. "Those who intend to prevent the use of nuclear weapons by maintaining a system of deterrents in readiness for use do intend to use such weapons but only in order not to use them and do threaten to use them but only in order to deter their use."

He goes on to talk about three levels of intention. The policeman who carries a weapon intends deterrent with that weapon. But intended deterrents he intends not to use it. It is not the intention of the policeman to go out and fire it at somebody. He only carries it in the event that he needs it. He intends not to use it. But its actual use is governed by justice and the disciplines of his profession.

A burglar on the other hand may carry a weapon and he may intend to use it if threatened. His use of it is conditional use, that is if threatened. And if he uses it, it will be outside of justice.

The third person that carries weapon is the murderer. His is not a conditional intention. He intends to use it. His is a willful, unlawful use of it.

Novak indicates that the policy of nuclear deterrents is built upon the idea of the policeman carrying the weapon. He carries it as a moral act, to deter crime, to deter aggression. It is not immoral for him to carry the weapon to defend himself and to defend the society he has been sworn to protect.

It's been pleaded for the disarmament of all peacekeeping personnel whether they are keeping the peace inside of a nation, or keeping the peace from outside foreign enemies.

The fundamental moral intention in nuclear deterrents is to never have to use the deterrent force. Part of the whole Christian under girding of the current policy of nuclear deterrents and part of the Catholic feeling toward this is based upon what has been called the just war tradition. It's through the centuries of the existence of the Christian church a rather detailed moral philosophy has been worked out as to when a nation can be justified in going to war. That even as there is a just act of self defense there is also a just act of corporate defense for a nation when it gets

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involved in resisting an unjust situation. The seven basic elements of a just war do not fit the nuclear age.

A just war is one where war first of all is taken as a last resort. All other means have failed to stop the aggressor from doing evil. All other solutions are exhausted. Therefore war is the last resort. If that is the case then the war may be just.

Secondly, a just war must have a just cause. The goals must be just and the opponent must be unjust. You cannot fight a just war just to take somebody else's territory. You must be resisting evil. Your cause must be just.

Third, you must have the right attitude toward the war for it to be a just war. Your attitude should be the restoration of justice and not retaliation. This by the way, has marked both post World War I and post World War II American philosophy and the restoration of Europe and Asia that our attitudes as the victors in that war was not to impose retribution but to instead to seek a rehabilitation and a restoration of justice. That's why when you look at the Eastern block, their economy has never been rebuilt to the degree the western economy has been rebuilt because America has basically had an attitude not of retaliation but of restoration of justice.

Fourth necessary condition for a just war is a prior declaration of war. You don't sneak up on somebody and start shooting. You act like a gentleman and tell somebody when you're going to fight them. That's what made the invasion of Pearl Harbor so ignominious. As Roosevelt said it would be a day that would live in infamy. The war had not been declared before it was launched. And that is reprehensible.

Fifth, there should be reasonable hope of success. It would not be a just war if a smaller country is sure that it's going to get licked when it fights the war and it sends undermanned troops into a situation and it has no hope of success. There must be a reasonable probability that what you're fighting for will not be destroyed in the process. This is why we look at Iran and get so upset about the Iatola sending 13 and 14 year olds into battle as human waves. That kind of thing offends our sensitivity to what is involved in a just war. It must have a reasonable hope of success.

Sixth, non-combatant immunity. That is civilians, persons not directly engaged in the battle ought to be given a degree of immunity realizing that there's always going to be civilian casualties and the like. But there should not be a specific targeting of civilians. There should be non-combatant immunity.

The last principles in a just war is proportionality. The good results of the war are expected to exceed the horrible evils involved. What you want to gain from the war will be greater than the evil resisted.

In a nuclear war these conditions cannot be met. The first two can but the others cannot be. The nuclear war would obviously be a last resort and it may be for a just cause but if you launch an all out nuclear effort then you cannot ever restore justice because the nuclear war of necessity brings retaliation. There is no time to launch a prior declaration of the war. There is no reasonable hope of success because everybody's going to get wiped out. There will not be non-combatant immunity because civilian targets will most obviously be hit and aimed at. And there

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can be no sense of proportionality because the horrible evil that is going to occur as a result of the nuclear holocaust is greater than any perceived good that could be gained from it.

In addition, three other objections to nuclear war. One is that if the U.S. drops the bomb on Russia then we are involved in Christians killing Christians. If we claim to be a Christian country we recognize that there are many millions of people in the Soviet Union who are our brothers and sisters in Christ. We would not want their blood on our hands.

Furthermore there are more persons in church in Russia on any given Sunday morning than there are in all of Western Europe, supposedly our allies. An interesting statistic.

Another thing is that the just war tradition has been notably ineffective in preventing unjust wars and we need to scrap the whole concept of the just war.

The church before Constantine did not support Christian participation in war.

The authors of Nuclear Holocaust and Christian Hope. At the close of the argument why we should unilaterally disarm the ultimately appeals to scripture. I could not figure out whether he appealed to scripture last because his weakest argument came from the scriptures or whether he was saving the best for the last.

He simply says as you look at the New Testament you cannot find a precedent for being involved in nuclear buildup to the extent that we are. He says in order to do this we must almost completely wipe out the position of the just war in the Old Testament context and simply say that the Old Testament established the nation of Israel for a specific mission in a specific place. And its purpose has passed away with the coming of Christ and therefore different standards apply.

He points us to the idea that Jesus' nonviolent life and teaching is the way we should take. He especially dwells on Matthew 5:38-48 where Jesus talks to us but non-resisting the evil one. If somebody compels you for your cloak you ought to give them your coat as well. If they want you to go one mile you should go with them two. You should give to those who ask. And those who beg you should also give to. There is to be, in the words of Jesus, no resistance to evil. He interprets this as non-violent. Resistance is allowed but violent resistance is out. Jesus obviously non-violently resisted in his ministry. He nonviolently overturned the tables of the moneychangers. He was non-violent in his passive resistance to Pilate's authority. But he did resist. But he didn't resist in any kind of violent or physical way. The author deduces from this that police ought to devise non-violent ways of restraining criminals. And law courts should apply disciplinary rather than reattribute justice.

That's an important concept. It's part of the whole pacifist coherent philosophy.

When I use the term retributive justice I need to define that. It means that when you give retribution it's because that person did wrong and they deserve three years and that's it. You serve three years in the pen. The whole idea is you did a wrong and you paid the sentence.

The author is basically saying that that kind of justice is wrong from a New Testament and a moral sense. The kind of justice that the New Testament approves is rehabilitative justice. If somebody needs to pay the consequence for an act you only give them the kind of sentence in

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order to have them go through a rehabilitative process. The author takes Romans 13 and sets it in the context of Paul's non-retaliatory love towards hostile government officials.

He closes the book of encouraging evangelical believers to take certain steps towards peace. He asks us to pray for peace. He asks us to reconcile interpersonal relationships. I think that's an extremely valid point. In talking about nuclear war we need to recognize that there are many small wars going on because we are a fallen people. Christians have wars with other Christians. We need to lay aside the wars and the conflicts.

He tells us we need to learn all we can about nuclear armaments. We need to act. We need to oppose military activity and plans. We need to promote conscientious objectors. We need to renounce military jobs. If you're working in a civilian military job you need to pay the price as a Christian and not work in that job. He indicates that there should be permission for those who desire to withhold some of their income tax that the government is spending for national defense. He encourages the possibility of war tax resistance. And that there be peace mission groups established in churches, political action committees. He proposes a whole concept called trans-armament. That's a term coined which would transform the United States from its present military system into a non military defense system – CBD. Civilian Based Defense. It would require large-scale participation, non-cooperation with injustice, refusal to kill, resistance to evil and good will toward opponents.

At the close of the book, the author is honest enough to face up to the consequences of what he is proposing. He realizes that since the world is fallen and since that would include the Soviet military apparatus that such a call to the nation that would be headed by America to unilaterally disarm and to form a civilian based defense which would be non military and would renounce all use of weapons would result in the invasion of America by the Soviet Union.

Whether you agree or not I think that this book is going to be the book read by evangelical college students in the next 10 years. I feel as Christians, part of our responsibility to be informed Christians is to consider the effects this may have on the generation that is coming.

The author assumes that the Soviet Union is the invader. If invaded Americans would respond non-violently. Two basic principles would underlie the stance of every American resisting aggression.

The invaders' orders are illegitimate and are not to be obeyed. Our allegiance is to our own constitutional system and to our God.

We will follow our consciences and the laws passed by our democratically elected representatives. We will not follow the decrees of foreign despots who would alter our way of life without our consent. We will die rather than surrender.

The invaders troops and functionaries are children of God made in his image. Therefore we will not harm them but seek to show them good will. We will use every opportunity to convince them to give up their oppression.

The initial invasion might be met with a non violent blitzkrieg, an all out demonstration of our will to resist. A general work stoppage would be called. Masses of people would quietly fill

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the streets and go to the docks and airports and other areas where soldiers would be landing. The enemy's jumbo jets would disgorge heavily armed combat infantry, tanks and armored cars. Parachute commandos would move quickly toward key points. Sea-born troops would spread out through coastal cities and towns. Behind them would come administrative staff with supplies to support further operations. The landings would be peaceful. No American artillery would fire. No jets would stray. Instead of American soldiers crunching behind tanks and pointing guns at them the invaders would see tens of thousands of unarmed people carrying signs with messages in the invader's language: Go home. We won't harm you. Don't shoot. We are your brothers and sisters. Your life is precious. You are a child of God.

Americans would climb up on tanks and try to talk to soldiers. Why have you come? Why are you invading a peace nation? Loud speakers would explain that the troops are welcome as tourists but would be opposed as invaders. Demonstrators would hand out leaflets in the invader's language countering the propaganda for the reasons they have been fed for the invasion. The leaflet would explain that the invaders would not be harmed and that Americans would suffer and die rather than give up their democratic way of life.

I think I've give you a sufficient idea of the scenario. Let me take a moment to deal with some problems of this scenario as I see it. Then come to wrestle a little bit with the biblical text.

Four problems I see with the author's position on unilateral disarmament and surrender to an invading force.

One is that in spite of any attempt to meet an invading force with non-violent resistance the Soviet Union may go ahead and nuke us anyway. There would be no restraints in their use of power in such a case. That is, if they simply don't like what Christians are doing in southern California and they do not appreciate the non violent way we're resisting authority rather than messing with us, simply pull their troops out and nuke southern California.

The problem is you still haven't dealt with the horrors of nuclear warfare. You have simply taken the weapons away from one side and the other side becomes totally free to use them at will. That's one of the massive problems located in the peace movement and in the book.

A second kind of problem associated with this position is that it assumes that clockwork order will prevail among American citizens in a time of panic. That everybody's going to remember their leaflets and remember to do their thing. You cannot account what people will do in a time of massive panic.

A third thing that the author fails to do is anticipate Americans turning against Americans. He is assuming that all of the Americans will march under the peace banner and show Christian love to their oppressors which would be great. If the author's idea could be pulled off it would probably be a magnificent thing. We'd convert the invading force in his scenario.

The one thing the author doesn't account for is the fact that there are going to be people who turn against Americans, people in it for their own skin, for the buck and the power that might be involved. That will compound problems.

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Perhaps one of the things he most notably fails to mention is the tremendous violence that may and probably would be committed against persons. It is one thing for there to be violence that occurs as result of an act of war. But when there is violence against civilians with rape and murder of family members you're in a whole different scenario.

I have some logical problems with the author's position independent of the biblical reasoning that is employed.

I am attracted to slogans like "the Christian's response should always be love rather than power." And "Love always wins the day," and "Power never wins." That is attractive and there is a great element of truth to that. But that is not the whole truth of the matter.

I have many problems with the biblical reasoning behind the pacifist position. At the same time no one likes to be cast as a militarist. The real question before us is that this issue is debated among evangelical Christians is what position is most likely to save lives, promote justice and secure the peace? That's the issue. The issue even more than should we unilaterally disarm or should we continue to mount massive expenditures for nuclear deterrents the issue that should lie s a moral base for the discussion is what position is in the long run the most likely to save lives promote justice and secure the peace.

In looking back historically at World War II a question might be asked as to whether Hitler would have begun had he respected the threat of a strong deterrence. It was Nevil Chamberlain's Peace in our time philosophy that probably allowed the Holocaust to occur. There has not been a global war conflict in forty years. Precisely the length of time there has been a nuclear deterrent. That fact is often overlooked in the discussion.

Looking at the author's position from what I as an independent Christian remember now when I speak on this issue tonight I'm not speaking with the authority of my office behind me. There is doctrinal authority that impinges upon eternal life, there is social application of the gospel in terms of our moral behavior that mandates how we behave in life. Then there's those matters of prudential judgment. I speak as an individual Christian having been invited by the pastor of the church to occupy the pulpit. I believe there is charity among Christians to disagree on this issue and have dialogue on it.

Six confusions it seems to me from positions like this author's.

One is the confusion between the individual and the state. The author makes a great deal on Jesus' teaching on non retaliatory, non violent behavior from Matthew 5:38-42 where the Lord is saying to us do not resist evil and if anyone asks you for something give it to them. Then he translates this into a universal activity for Christians that not only applies to all areas of individual behavior but applies to all corporate or collective group activity. When we are a nation we're to practice the same philosophy.

When you look carefully however about Jesus' teaching on turn the other cheek and giving something to someone who asks you immediately recognize that Jesus himself intended some interpretation. For example, if your five-year-old child comes and asks you for the butcher knife, he's playing outside with his friends and you say, "I'm not going to give you the knife. You might hurt yourself." And he promptly hauls out Matthew 5: "Give to whom asks and do not

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refuse him who would borrow.” Are you under obligation under the literally rendering of that scripture by your 5-year-old to give him the knife?

When Jesus talks about striking the right cheek perhaps one of the simplest ways to understand that is – given the fact that most people are right handed – if I swing a haymaker at them what cheek do I hit them on? Their left cheek. How do you hit a person with the right hand on the right cheek? You can’t do it with a solid blow. You do it with a backhand. It is a gesture of contempt. Jesus is telling us that when there is personal matters of contempt poured upon us, our response is to be one of non-retaliation. We do not have the right as Christians of individual personal vengeance. But Paul in Romans 13:1-7 talks about the fact that the state or government is God’s deacon, God’s minister, to execute God’s wrath on the evil doer. If a person comes up and strikes me and blinds me for life because of his blow if I understand the Sermon on the Mount correctly I don’t get up and promptly slug him back! Because God has appointed the government, the police and the courts to fulfill the function of vengeance so that I don’t wind up as a vigilante committee of one. His power of wrath has been given to the state to execute justice.

Paul goes on to say that the government does not bear the sword in vein. Even to the government God has given the authority to take life when that life has acted in a capital kind of a crime or a capital offense. The baring of the sword grants the state power therefore to defend itself from enemies within and without. It seems to me that there is a massive confusion on the subject between individual non-violent response on a Christian when he is personally struck on the power that God has given to the government to promote justice and to also see that the wrongdoer I punished. If it’s true that the state has the power to bear the sword, to bear arms in order to punish a wrongdoer it is also valid to insist that the state execute justice not only on the singular wrong doer but a collective group of wrong doers who in evil come against the state or government.

A second confusion I see in the pacifist position is the confusion between internal and external authority. If God has given the state authority to punish evil doers and given it the power of the sword then the application of such authority and the sword can be used against those who worked evil within the state and from outside. However the author’s positioning indicates the state has the authority in a non-violent way restrain criminals. But basically not a corresponding ability to defend itself from criminals outside – foreign nations.

The whole idea of being able to restrain criminals with non-violent techniques is an interesting hypothesis. I’m not sure how many policemen would want to work or be able to work under those kind of restraints. I’m not sure you can restrain an armed person with non-military means. Maybe a case can be made that there’s sometimes an unwise use of arms. But to simply say that the state has no right or authority to use arms of any kind, that it’s resistance to evil must always be non violence is stretching the point. There’s confusion of the point of the state’s right to protect itself not only from internal enemies but also from external enemies as well.

A third confusion of the pacifist position is the confusion between rehabilitation and retribution. The idea that all punishment should be rehabilitative rather than retributive. We should never sentence anybody simply because they’ve done something wrong and say serve that amount of time. We should sentence them with the idea of making them better and reformed people. I agree that is a very enlightened position. We’ve been trying that in our prison system. We’re

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supposed to have a rehabilitation system in America. But it isn't working. Evil is difficult to educate. The only way the gospel recommends is that we convert people.

The Bible however in talking about judgment does not just deal with rehabilitative judgment. There is retributive judgment in society at large condoned by God. God did not practice rehabilitative judgment on Noah's world. The world was destroyed. He did not practice rehabilitative judgment on Sodom. It was retributive judgment. Sodom was destroyed.

Mosaic fines and the forfeiture of limbs was not involved in rehabilitative judgment. It was retributive judgment. The whole Mosaic system was built on retributive judgment. Jesus gave to Judas a retributive judgment. He went to his own place. Ananias and Saphira were not given rehabilitative judgment. They were given retributive judgment. When the devil and his angels and those who have born the mark of the antichrist are judged they are going to be damned and there will be no rehabilitative judgment. It will be retributive. God himself at the end of the age is a retributive judge. There is nothing immoral or unchristian or wrong in retributive judgment.

A fourth confusion in the pacifist approach between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The pacifist basically ignores the Old Testament or says it's been swallowed up in the New Testament. However when we look at the Old Testament we find God sanctioning war. The pacifist position is that Jesus brought in love and used non-military solutions. However Jesus himself told Pilate that his authority to govern came from him. Neither John the Baptist nor Jesus nor the apostles are ever recorded as telling a military person to leave the military. If indeed Jesus and the apostles were committed totally to a non armament approach there would have been a condition found in the New Testament that the centurions and soldiers as a condition of their discipleship to disarm.

Further Jesus indicates that all of human history until he comes will be marked by wars and rumors of wars. With ethnic group rising against ethnic group. And political alliance or kingdom against political alliance and kingdom. Ultimately Jesus himself will return. What is going to happen when Jesus returns? "With justice he judges and makes war." Revelation 19:11-16. The armies of heaven are following him. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." The problem with the Christian pacifist view of Jesus is that it is one-dimensional. It only focuses on Jesus' love. It does not focus on the ministration of his justice nor the upholding by his own power the moral authority that is in the universe. The New Testament is replete with illustrations that Jesus is not only the lover of the world but he is the judge of the world as well.

The fifth confusion is between love and wrath. The basic position that Jesus only loves and therefore no expression of military resistance or arms bearing which would enforce the judgment of the state is allowed. At the cross Jesus did show us that no tongue could ever tell the love of God by his non-resistance to evil. But Jesus' love on the cross is not even the full story of the cross. The Father carried out the sentence of death of the Son. The cross is not only God's love but God's justice reflected. God is committed to justice and because of that he executed judgment upon his son who stood in our place.

There is a death threat hanging over the whole human race. It is not the nuclear threat. It is the death threat "The soul that sins shall die." God is going to carry out that threat on all who do not get within the cross. The Christian therefore has a double calling to proclaim the love of God

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and the justice of God. Any position which purports to be the Christian position and only talks about God's love and never talks about his judgment or his justice is a one dimensional, one sided and incomplete view of Jesus.

The sixth confusion I see is between the role of man in ending planet earth and the role of God. Ultimately the scriptures teach us that man can do only what God permits. And men must live within the limits of God's sovereignty. Our approach therefore to the nuclear issue needs to be informed by the clear prophetic teaching. There is a great deal of latitude when we talk about prophetic traditions and teachings. But there is clear prophetic teaching in scripture. As Christians living in a nuclear age we need to rely upon what God tells us in his word. It seems to me when we look clearly at that word we have some very clear direction about what God is going to allow and what he is not.

Clear prophetic teaching, and there are several things I want to point out in this confusion between man's role and God's role that exists in the pacifist camp. The pacifist camp is certain that man is some irrational person or some computer machine is going to malfunction and ignite the world and end it all, civilization, as we know it. If you look carefully at clear prophetic teaching in the scripture, I think you can see and be committed to these points.

First of all God has reserved for himself the right to destroy the world by fire. 2 Peter 3 the apostle is contrasting the first judgment of the world which was by water and the judgment which is coming. Verse 7 "By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men." Verses 10-13 "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar. The elements will be destroyed by fire and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way what kind of people ought you to be. You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire and the elements will melt with the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness."

What is amazing about that scripture is that from the first century point of view there was no fire that could destroy the elements. There was no fire that could be started on earth that could destroy the earth. All human fires at that time ultimately burned out. They might even cover a million acres but they burned out. Peter through the Spirit sees that there's coming a time, really through the Spirit saw the nuclear age. That God himself is the possessor of the nuclear secret. He knew it long before man discovered either fusion or fission.

Using the motif of the city of Babylon which represents in Revelation the city of man in contrast to the city of God, John goes on to show us the destruction of the earth. Again not by man but by god. Revelation 18:21-24. You can see in reading these scriptural passages see the after effects of God's nuclear day. God has reserved the nuclear destruction of this age for himself. It's not man and no man is going to do it. Or the scripture is not telling us the truth. In which case we ought to chuck being Christians and join the peace movement!

The second thing that seems to me that scriptures tell us about the nuclear age and help clear up the confusions between man's role and God's role is that the destruction of the world by fire cannot occur until the antichrist has been revealed and judged. Either at the end of the tribulation

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or some would say at the end of the millenium. For the antichrist to be revealed there must be a world civilization in place with a functioning economy. Israel needs to be in the land. You can be assured that if the United States is destroyed in a nuclear holocaust that Israel will be destroyed as well. And if Israel is destroyed there cannot be the setting for the end time events of the tribulation period.

A third thing I think we need to keep in mind is that nuclear war may occur in the tribulation. Limited nuclear war may occurred. But the final holocaust again is reserved for God's action when he destroys the world by fire. There is a reference in Revelation 8 to a sequence of judgments which occur evidently at the beginning of the tribulation called the first four trumpets. A third of the trees and the earth's grass, a third of its sea is turned into blood, a third of the sea creatures are killed. A third of the ships are destroyed. A third of the earth's fresh water becomes bitter. And a third of the heavens' light is effected. That may describe a nuclear holocaust that occurs on a limited basis that occurs in the years of the tribulation period. But on the other hand these are more modeled after the plagues that broke out on Egypt rather than nuclear exchanges. So it's not even certain that the tribulation period itself calls for a limited nuclear exchange.

A fourth thing we say is just a repeat. In order for the tribulation to begin world civilization and world culture needs to be in place, not devastated, as we would have if we had an all out or even limited nuclear war. The Bible in talking to us about the tribulation period speaks to us of global communication, an international ID system, a world economy, a united world religious system, a united world political system in a very thriving and mass situation. The antichrist emerges from the sea, the teaming restless sea of humanity. That is not the kind of civilization that can exist after the United States and Russia have dropped their bombs on one another.

I think that the evangelical Christian has something going for him as a perspective on the nuclear age that no one else outside of Christ has. That is the clear prophetic word of scripture.

Final comments. Some responses to the peace issue and to nuclear deterrents.

I think one response I need to take as the individual Christian is not to fear those who hold the nuclear weapon but to fear God. Jesus himself said it eloquently, Matthew 10:28. And his words are binding upon us. "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell." The real issue confronting our day is not the issue of the nuclear war. But it is the issue of meeting God unprepared. Jesus says that is when you should be afraid if you're unprepared to meet him.

A second response we need to take is to pray for those in position of leadership and responsibility in the government. We need to hold our president, congress, judicial and executive branches up before God in prayer. Interceding as Paul tells us in the Timothy letter that we might pray for these persons in order that we might live godly and peaceful lives.

A third thing we need to do is to encourage the promotion of justice within governments and to resist evil.

A fourth position that we need to take is to pray for peace and especially hear the scriptural admonition to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. The real center of future world history is not

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going to be what happens in New York or Moscow or even Washington D.C.. It's going to be what happens in Jerusalem. When Jerusalem and Zion is at peace the world will be at peace.

A fifth response is we need to express solidarity with the suffering church. It is the presence perhaps of the western church, the church living in the free world that is able to give at times the pressure that's needed to keep even a rack of religious liberty open for the eastern church. We need to express our solidarity with them.

Another thing we need to do is to proclaim and demonstrate the truth and the love of God in our daily life.

Prayer:

We realize, Lord, that we live in an increasingly complex world. The issues facing our generation are issues never faced by any other generation in human history. We recognize the profound changes. We're taught by you to read the signs of the times. And as the age picks up its intensity towards wars and its destructive potential we're taught to begin to lift up our head for our redemption draws nigh. We pray for our country. We pray that people all over the world would have the privilege of having the same freedom of speech and thought and inquiry and faith as we have. We would pray that for people living under any totalitarian regime whether right or left would experience the glorious liberty of the sons of God in their internal life regardless of the political oppression. And that through the power of the Christian presence there would be a voice in the world for true peace. We ask that you give our leaders your wisdom and insight and you give them your heart so that they will understand how your character should be at work in their life in ministering to the needs within the human community for both love and justice. We ask this, Lord, in your name. Amen.