

# Centering on Ministry



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## PEACE AND NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

### *Introduction To This Issue*

by

**Merle D. Strege**

An editorial published in the April 9, 1982 issue of *Christianity Today* carried the sub-title, "for all Christians there are values that should be more precious than life itself." The writer of this editorial rejected pacifism on two grounds: (1) it "... invites the most selfish and least conscientious power to pursue its wicked way without fear of punishment," and (2) "I am my brother's keeper. It is my duty, therefore, to protect his life ... his freedom, especially his religious freedom ... [and] ... his dignity as a human person."

Most, if not all, Christians would agree that some values are more important than life. But when the conversation then turns to a discussion of supreme values and life in the context of nuclear arms races and the aspiration for world peace, agreement dissipates faster than a chain reaction. Recent events in the Church of God illustrate the variety of opinions on peace and nuclear arms. Last spring the Commission on Social Concerns drafted a statement calling for mutual reductions in nuclear weapons in the United States and Soviet Union. This statement was ratified by the Executive Council and brought before the General Assembly. The ensuing floor debate graphically demonstrated that

while Christians may agree that some values are more important than life, we are not agreed in the means by which those values may be expressed.

In response to growing concern over nuclear arms proliferation and out of its own conviction that a statement on nuclear arms was in order, the faculty of the School of Theology expressed its desire that an issue of **Centering on Ministry** be devoted to a discussion of the issues pertaining to nuclear arms. **Centering on Ministry's** editor, Jerry Grubbs, invited Merle Strege, Assistant Professor of Historical Theology, to serve as guest editor for this issue. Like the contemporary participants in society's discussion of nuclear arms, the contributors to this issue form a rather broad spectrum. Dr. Cole Dawson is Associate Professor of History at Warner Pacific College, Portland, OR. Sharon Clark Pearson is a homemaker and student at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA. Dr. Walter Froese is Associate Professor of Church History at the School of Theology. Together their contributions to **Centering On Ministry** offer important information and sensitive perspectives on this most awesome of issues which must concern all peoples of the earth.

# War and Peace: Historic Christian Positions

by  
Walter Froese

During the early decades of the Christian era the followers of Christ believed that their Lord would return soon. They paid much attention to a life of complete personal surrender to their Master, but they had little concern about the political, economic and social issues of the Roman Empire. Since there was no compulsory military service in those days, Christians were not forced to reflect on the problems of national or international war and peace. In the New Testament we find no uniform attitude, either completely for or totally against, military endeavors. The soldiers we meet in the Gospels and Acts were generally seen as exemplary people, not, however, for their military, but rather their Christian stand.

The early believers saw themselves as "soldiers of Christ" (Eph. 6:11-17) and any awareness of a contradiction of the life as a Christian and as a soldier was based on the conviction that one could serve only one lord, namely Christ or Caesar. Hippolytus wrote about 200 A.D.: "A soldier . . . must be taught not to kill men and to refuse to do so if he is commanded, and to refuse to take an oath; if he is unwilling to comply, he must be rejected [from being considered a church member]."<sup>1</sup>

Even though there was strong opposition to being a soldier, many Christians did join the army throughout the early centuries of the church. By 300 A.D. such a large portion of the Roman military openly claimed to be adherents of the Christian faith that the Emperor Diocletian began his great persecution by purging the army of all Christians. Along with other people these Christian soldiers could not imagine an ordered and civilized world void of wars, without an army.

When Emperor Constantine issued the edict of toleration for Christianity in the early fourth century, many leaders of the Christian church enthusiastically took up the obligation for maintaining order in their world. At the Council of Nicea (325 A.D.) important theological discussions were held under the auspices of the Emperor and the council's decisions were later enforced as state laws. The close cooperation between church leaders and state officials became even closer during the following centuries when the western church Christianized the north European tribes and became vitally influenced by the natural Germanic joy of fighting. Those Christians, however, who could not fully participate in such developments found a way of separating themselves from normal life by "fleeing the world" into a monastery.

Augustine of Hippo, the great and influential Christian theologian of the late fourth and early fifth centuries, realized fully the tensions between the Christian faith as a religion of love and the earthly state as a power for order. He defended the state's use of the sword in a just war.<sup>2</sup> For Augustine a war was just if it fulfilled certain conditions, namely: if it was an act of a legitimate government, if its cause was a violation of or a threat to the legitimate order, and if its aim was the full establishment of legitimate rights and peace. Augustine's position, with refinements in later centuries, has remained the Catholic stand until today.

Since the time of Augustine many wars have been fought and not one seems to have been a truly just war. All wars have produced their own realities which always seem to have warped any original justice. During the later medieval centuries, the disturbances of heretics and reformers were seen as threats to peace and proper order so that church leaders could legitimately promote a holy war against almost any innovations. The crusades against the Muslims were largely motivated by the idea that Islam was a "Christian" heresy, but the success of these wars soon made them into a welcome means of European imperialism. And the crusade against the Waldensians was certainly not simply a just war; rather, a cruel slaughter of peaceful, reform-minded Christians.

The Protestant reformers of the sixteenth century adopted many of the basic medieval attitudes but they refined those concepts to conform better to the message of the gospel. Luther made a distinction between the person and his office, suggesting that Christ's call of unreserved love applies to the person's inner, spiritual life, and that God's desire of an orderly world applies to the individual's office and his visible professional work. In his writing about "Whether soldiers, too, can be saved?", Luther argues that killing can be a god-pleasing act.<sup>3</sup> Other leading Protestants agreed with him. The Swiss reformer Zwingli died in the company of soldiers fighting for their Protestant faith.

Quite different from the major reformers, the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century advocated radical pacifism. Such leaders as Hans Denk, Menno Simons, and Jacob Hutter saw the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world as opposites. According to the Anabaptists, the gospel demands a peaceful witness where evil is overcome by love. The steadfast Christian does not fight for his rights nor does he participate in

military endeavors, but rather, he suffers deprivation even unto death. By 1562 about two thousand Anabaptist martyrs had died for their stand.

The different positions on war and peace staked out in the sixteenth century have remained basically unchanged until the twentieth century. The church leaders who met in Evanston, Illinois in 1954 discussed at length the complex problems of war and peace, and finally affirmed the two views of millions of Christians; Christian pacifism as well as Christian participation in military ventures can serve the goal of peace among mankind.<sup>1</sup>

Having surveyed the diverse position of the church in past centuries, it seems obvious that there is not one, simple, clearly correct Christian stance towards war and peace. And no single view advocated in the past, seems to be fully satisfactory. The idea that the Christian lives simultaneously two distinct lives with diverse purposes and norms seems incongruous with the calling to be a new creature and to exemplify the new reality wrought by God through Christ. And the position that Christians should shun completely the secular realm seems to deny the goodness of a part of God's creation.

Despite all past differences, the Christian is to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world and, as such, is called to take the new into the old, the gospel into the world. Such a believer does not submit to two different sets of laws but brings the conditions of new life into the still existing old world. A Christian is fully aware of the tensions between the new and the old, but he does not despair since his duty is not to be God, only to be God's witness.

Such basic reflections on the historical Christian positions on war and peace seem almost dated by some very recent developments. Within the last few decades a radically new situation has emerged. The possibility of almost instant and total destruction of all earthly life through atomic, bacteriological, and chemical weapons has made the conventional view of war as a possible means of enforcing order and justice completely obsolete. Modern warfare is concerned not only with the total destruction of enemy life, including all innocent elements, but also with the possible undesired liquidation of oneself. At present the ignorance of possible effects of such weapons and the efforts of continuously developing more and more deadly weapons have frightened many people and restrained governments from engaging in nuclear warfare. The situation is often baffling to concerned Christians and still quite unclear as diverse reactions are being voiced. May the Christian witness of new life to the world be completely guided by God and thus fully adequate even in our troubled days.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>B.S. Easton (ed.), **The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus** (University Press, 1934), p. 42.

<sup>2</sup>St. Augustine, **The City of God** (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1958), Bk. XIX, ch. 7.

<sup>3</sup>M. Luther, "Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved," **Luther's Works**. American Edition. Vol. 46. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), pp. 93-137.

<sup>4</sup>"International Affairs, Christians in the Struggle for World Community," **The Christian Hope and the Task of the Church** (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), pp. 11-12.

## Peace . . . Now and Then

by

Sharon I. Pearson

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*The Mad Race of the nations for superiority in military power is at the present time an important subject of conversation . . . The nations have rushed madly in their vehement desire to outdo each other . . . The struggle between peace advocates and military men is . . . "the greatest of all wars—the war on war." The military officials and the manufacturers of armaments naturally love war and preparation for war; war is their business and to their personal advantage and glory. The peace advocates are desperately fighting for disarmament . . . The nations are by no means ready to disarm; they are not even ready to stop where they are . . .*

Is this a quote from an editorial on the six o'clock news? No, the date is April 17, 1913, and the editorial is by E. E. Byrum.<sup>1</sup> Yes, the times have changed, but the circumstances remain much the same.

"Should we go to war?" "Is it wrong to go to war when called on by the government?" "If I were called to war, should I go, and at the officers' command shoot down my brothers or friends?" "Is it wrong to be a soldier?" These questions were entertained in the **Gospel Trumpet**, the mouthpiece of the young Church of God. The respective answers given were as follows:

*We answer no. Emphatically no. There is no place in the New Testament wherein*



Christ gave instruction to his followers to take the life of a fellowman. In olden times it was "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy." In this gospel dispensation it is quite different. Jesus says: "But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you," etc. (Matt. 5:44). "Avenge not yourselves. If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink"—not shoot him (April 14, 1898).

As to going to war and fighting, there is one text that ought to settle this question for every spiritually minded person. It is in Romans 13:10. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (May 30, 1907). I should refuse to go to war or to obey an officer's command to shoot anyone. We are followers of the "Prince of Peace" and the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (April 1, 1909).

There is nothing wrong in being a soldier, but it is wrong to kill people. War is cruel, and devastation, with foul murder . . . We are not only opposed to war; but shall advise every Christian, especially, to refrain from going. (April 27, 1916).

The pacifist sentiment expressed in these answers has teased the Church of God through four wars. However, such a sentiment has remained subject to dialogue and controversy in the church. Leaders in the church have responded variously to the call to arms.

D. S. Warner recorded no obvious qualms concerning his own participation in the Civil War. However, he was so impressed by a visit with 105-year-old Jacob Rogers that he reported the incident in the October 1, 1883 issue of the *Gospel Trumpet*:

*He served under General Scott in the war of 1812-15 . . . Although he feels pardoned of the Lord, we could see a slight disturbance in his mind on account of having used the weapons of war, under the orders of his officers. Though he does not know that his fire ever took life. Let all who would have a cloudless sky and an unruffled peace in the evening of life eschew war and every other sin and walk in the light of perfect holiness.*

Henry Wickersham called the prohibition of war participation "extremely austere" and the result of "the most rigorous and literal" interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>2</sup>

E. E. Byrum, editor of the *Gospel Trumpet* during both the Spanish-American War and World War I, has already been referred to as a consistent witness to the pacifist sentiment of the early years of the Church of God. He did recognize that there were a "diversity of opinions" about the correct course of action for the conscientious objector who has no legal alternative to military duty.<sup>3</sup> Should the Christian in this special case obey the laws of the land and

submit to the "powers that be" or should he refrain from military duty which would involve him in the taking of life? Byrum encouraged the individual to be true to his own conscience even though military refusal to do military duty involved court martial and in some cases death.<sup>4</sup> Byrum, however, warned against the "extreme" efforts of some sects to establish an ideal social and religious community which would "invite needless persecution." The goals of such sects were "not the object of God's church on earth." In this case, Byrum condemned such idealists for ignoring the scriptures which exhort submission to government (1 Peter 2:13, 14, Romans 13:1-7).<sup>5</sup>

The third editor of the *Gospel Trumpet*, F. G. Smith, did not sympathize with what he called the "extreme attitude" of conscientious objectors in the first World War. However, he upheld that to punish those who thus seek to follow their consciences is to be "treading on holy ground in that the law of conscience is held sacred by the almighty God himself."<sup>6</sup>

Despite the fact that the early pacifist sentiment was not universally accepted in the church—the majority of Church of God young men who were drafted in World War I fulfilled their military obligation<sup>7</sup>—it was sufficient to motivate official church action. The Missionary Board of the Church of God, no other agency having the authority to do so, issued a "Religious War-Exemption Claim" for young men of draft age.

*It is in the general teaching and practice of the Church of God as a body that its members should be loyal citizens and servants of the government in so far as its requirements do not conflict with their duty to God as taught in the New Testament and as enforced by the law of the conscience; that human life should be considered sacred; and that, therefore, active participation in war is inconsistent with our religious standard. These principles have for years been definitely expressed in the standard literature of the church, including our official church periodical, the GOSPEL TRUMPET (for examples see "The Better Testament," pp. 341-349 (1899); "Evolution of Christianity" p. 269 (1911); GOSPEL TRUMPET issue of Apr. 14, 1898; May 30, 1907; April 1, 1909; April 27, 1915, etc.).*

*Executive Committee of the Missionary Board of the Church of God, Anderson, Indiana.*

*(signed)*

*F. G. Smith, President*

*(Editor of the GOSPEL TRUMPET)*

*E. E. Byrum, Vice President*

*J. W. Phelps, Secretary-Treasurer*

*(Registrar of Clergy Bureau)*

This "official" claim supported the "declaration form" which was used by the conscientious objectors.

By the close of the first World War, the Church of God was "officially" recognized as a pacifist body. **The Yearbook of the Churches** (1924-1925) stated of the Church of God that "as a body they do not believe in participation in war." The Church of God was also recognized and registered by the United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census as a people who "do not believe in participation in war."<sup>9</sup>

The General Assembly that met on June 22, 1928 passed a resolution which included the statement that "war as a method for settling international disputes is contrary to the principles and teaching of Jesus." The fact that this conviction was not adhered to prior to the anguish of World War II was confessed in the resolution passed by the General Ministerial Assembly of June 23, 1932:

*War is unchristian, futile and suicidal, and we renounce completely the whole war system. We will never again sanction or participate in any war. We will not use our pulpits or classrooms as recruiting stations. We will set ourselves to educate and lead youth in the principle and practice of good will, justice, understanding, brotherhood, and peace. We will not give our financial or moral support to any war. We will seek security and justice by pacific means.*

It is probable that these pacifistic statements accepted by the General Assemblies did not in fact represent the developed conviction of the majority. Of the many Church of God young men who were drafted in the second World War, comparatively few registered as non-combatants or as conscientious objectors.

Participants in the International Youth Convention held just prior to American involvement in World War II passed a resolution expressing pacifistic sentiment:

*WHEREAS, We believe that both the spirit and teachings of Jesus are opposed to militarism . . .*

*RESOLVED, That we shall not bear arms in any war of aggression. August 22, 1936. (Similar language was used in the resolutions passed on August 29, 1938 and August 24, 1940.)*

World War II seems to mark the end of pacifist expressions in the official language of the Church of God. The General Assembly Resolution of 1947 merely objected to peacetime conscription of youth and a national militarism which could only provoke future wars.

In October of 1950, the Commission on Peace and Conscription of the Church of God issued a leaflet entitled "Deferment Under the Selective Service Act of 1950," which was issued to young men of draft age. The leaflet noted that nothing in the pamphlet is to be interpreted as an argument for or against the position of the conscientious objector," but did include the resolutions passed by the General Assembly in 1928, 1932, and 1947. The pamphlet also included the fact

that the Church of God was registered by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census as a body of people who "do not believe in participation in war."<sup>10</sup> Thus, the conscientious objector still had every support for his position.

The shift from a pacifist sentiment to a position of support for the individual conscience was most clearly expressed in the Resolution passed by the General Assembly of June 16, 1966. This resolution recalls the Church's "historic conviction about war and participation in military service" but does not "condemn or reject that person who differs with our position or participates in war . . . but this is never to be construed as approval of war." This statement was included in the *Yearbook of the Church of God* from the year 1966 through the year 1973, when the draft system was abolished in the United States. This shift in official position has recently been acknowledged in **Profiles in Belief; The Religious Bodies of the United States and Canada** (1979). The book contains a statement composed by Dr. John W. V. Smith, chairman of the Department of Church History at Anderson School of Theology; "Most members of the Church of God are not opposed to military service, but the church supports the position of those of its members who are conscientious objectors to war and to participation in the armed forces."<sup>11</sup> Most major denominations also leave the issue to determination by individual conscience.

Now and then . . . the church has struggled to express the gospel in its doctrine and conduct. Now and then . . . the church still exhibits the sentiment for peace on earth. Neither history nor modern dilemmas can determine final moral answers for the Christian. Questions of conscience must be submitted to continual biblical scrutiny. From the basis of the Word of God, which both transcends history and is lived out in history, come the theological convictions that can not be challenged by the many circumstances of human experience.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Gospel Trumpet, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Henry Wickersham, **A History of the Church**, p. 178.

<sup>3</sup>Gospel Trumpet, April 27, 1916, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>Gospel Trumpet, "Conscientious Objectors Still in Prison," January 30, 1919, p. 16. The article reveals some of the hardships suffered by the CO's of WWI.

<sup>5</sup>Gospel Trumpet, "The Doukhobors", July 17, 1913, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup>Gospel Trumpet, "Conscientious Objectors Still in Prison," January 30, 1919, p. 16.

<sup>7</sup>There were very few CO's in WWI. Some of the more well known are Burgess McCreary, Mack Maurice Caldwell, and Adam Miller. Adam Miller's request for CO status was rejected, but the military placed him in an office job and allowed him to function as a chaplain.



<sup>8</sup>*The Yearbook of the Churches*, ed. E. O. Watson, published for the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, 1924-1925 and subsequent issues.

<sup>9</sup>"Religious Bodies," 1926, Vol. II, p. 356-370, and also in Bulletin form 149.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>Arthur Carl Piepkorn, *Holiness and Pentecostal*, vol. III, part 1 (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publ., Inc., 1979), p. 22.

Quoted material is drawn from the most accessible public sources and is in no way exhaustive.

## Christians and the Nuclear Dilemma

by

Cole P. Dawson

The presence of nuclear weaponry, the reality of potential extinction of life as we know it, casts a new and ominous light on the issue of Christian response to war. The classic **Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace** by Roland Bainton and a publication from *Sojourner's* magazine entitled "A Matter of Faith"<sup>1</sup> are effective tools in generalizing the dilemma which Christians face while living in a temporal world of conflict. But a compelling new book by Jonathan Schell captures the deeper meanings of the potential tragedy in his title, **The Fate of the Earth**,<sup>2</sup> and in his text. A generation ago Adolph Hitler used the term "final solution," to describe how he would deal with the "problem" of the Jews in Germany. Today, we have created our own "final solution," not for Jews, or for Russians, or for Americans, but for all of humankind. We possess the capability to destroy finally and forever God's great gift of life.

Three themes must be considered in addressing this reality: a statement of the problem which nuclear weapons pose; the setting of the historical and contemporary contexts in which these problems arise; and finally a brief description of the range of alternatives which have been open to Christians facing war in the past. It is intended that a balanced presentation will follow, yielding food for thought for all who continue to grapple with the magnitude of choices in the nuclear age. In truth, however, complete impartiality is impossible when pondering such enormities for we are talking not of light and trivial matters, but of nothing less than the survival of the planet.

It is apparently difficult for people to understand fully the magnitude of destruction wrought by nuclear weapons for if naked statistics could move people to a nuclear freeze there are none more chilling than those produced by our modern weapons. Presently, the United States and the Soviet Union together possess more than fifty thousand (50,000!) nuclear warheads with the power of twenty billion (20,000,000,000!) tons of TNT.<sup>3</sup> At last count the world is populated with but four billion humans, meaning that each of us, somewhere, has five tons of TNT with our name on it. In more graphic terms, the bomb dropped on Hiroshima amounted to "less than a millionth part of a holocaust at present levels of world armament."<sup>4</sup> Let that impress you for a moment.

Rhetoric about the possibility of limited, tacti-

cal, nuclear war, is little more than that—talk. The all-out exchange that would eventuate upon the detonation of the first warhead in anger would wreak havoc to the earth on three fundamental levels: individual life; human life; the natural environment.<sup>5</sup> If we think of ourselves, our loved ones, our neighbors being consumed by the shock wave, fireball, and radiation we sense only the first loss. Beyond this lay the possibilities of the eradication of the entire human species from the face of the earth, including enemy and friend, stranger and dear one. Finally, we face the realization that the United States and the Soviet Union hold the power to reduce this planet to a smoldering cinder, void of all meaningful life and unusable for even the most mundane functions of modern life.

To be sure, there are those who suggest that not all life would be extinguished, that survival is possible, and that nuclear deterrence is the best hope for freedom in the world. Scientists, politicians, and analysts frequently offer new data on "life with the bomb." The process is not unlike the parade of doctors testifying to the sanity or insanity of a murderer. Indeed President Reagan and the Congress are now debating the appropriate levels of deterrence and the costs of that system to the national budget. The point of this talk of survivability, however, is not quality but quantity of life; i.e. no one doubts that people and parts of the ecology would be extinguished, the only question is how much if not completely. The president recently conceded that nuclear war, even on a limited scale, would be madness, and that no one could possibly win.

Frustration and despair over the "body-count" mentality of some policy-makers motivates many people around the world today to oppose nuclear weapons buildups. This is the context in which the problem described above must be seen. Within the past three years previously small, largely unheard of groups have come to the forefront of the world's attention by protesting against nuclear arms and the race for superiority between the superpowers. The current wave of demonstrations differ from similar movements in the past, often dismissed by some as made up of "peace freaks," "hippies" or "radicals," in that today's groups are cross-sections of the society and carry considerable political clout.<sup>7</sup> Europeans increasingly voice their disapproval over being caught in the middle of the two nuclear heavy-weights. They reason that regardless of

the direction from whence the bombs will come, east or west, the result will be the same; an incinerated Europe. Renewed attempts to work with the Soviets, as in the gas pipeline deal, signal Europe's intention to play nuclear freeze politics with little interest in ideology.

Ironical as it may seem, the strongest pressure for bans today comes from those countries, whom we consider allies, geographically closest to the Soviet Union and presumably under the greater threat of communist invasion, the very reason for the presence of the weapons in the first place. With little or no nuclear capability of their own, Western Europe questions the rationality of stationing Pershing II missiles in defense of their countries, when the missiles themselves immediately become new targets for the Soviet weapons against which they were intended to defend. The **Catch 22**-like conundrum is not lost on sensitive Europeans.

Ideology appears to play only a small role in the European anti-nuclear movement. Communists have not infiltrated and corrupted the groups, leaving Europe open to Soviet aggression. Fears and animosities for the Soviets have increased in the wake of the Polish crisis and there is no reason to believe that opposition to nuclear weapons stationed in their countries translates into being soft on communism. In Germany, for example, the largest opposition group, the Committee for Nuclear Disarmament, allows that conventional war may be necessary to stop the communists, but nuclear war would be out of the question. Perhaps because American and Soviet strategists have begun speculating on "tactical," limited uses of nuclear weapons, Europeans sense the possibility of their role as expendable pawns on a thermonuclear chess board.

Americans have been much less enthusiastic than Europeans in the early phase of the anti-nuclear movement. In truth, publicity for victims of atomic testing in Utah, observance of Ground Zero Day and most recently an attempt to blockade the Puget Sound base of a new nuclear submarine have caught our attention only briefly. Americans are more inclined to draw back in horror at the report of a mass murder, or vigorously oppose abortion or memorize the seven danger signs of cancer. At the same time, we live with the potential for the mass murder of the human race, the "abortion" of untold generations, and the creation of a myriad of deadly diseases through radiation.

This stark realization draws us to the final question of the role of the Christian in this threatened world. Roland Bainton, as noted above, suggests that three positions have emerged from the history of Christians confronted with war. The first, pacifism, is the oldest, holding strictly to the dictates of Christ concerning the care of neighbors, the treatment of enemies and the primacy of love. The second option, that of the just war, emerged as the

church won state approval and support. As explained by St. Augustine, a just war would be fought to restore justice and peace, be pursued with love, and be just in its conduct. Third, the crusade, was to be a holy war to purge the world of infidels.<sup>8</sup>

How might these categories apply to our world? Concerning the last option, the crusade, there is little support for a holy war against the Soviets. Godless as they may be, nuclear weapons are an inefficient tool in winning converts and might even reduce the number of believers in the retaliatory efforts of the Soviets. Similarly, the concept of just war, with its stipulations concerning restoration of justice and peace, and war lovingly waged, can scarcely apply to the potential annihilation of the earth. As one commentator puts it, "Can . . . nuclear holocaust which would obliterate all human life, be just in its intent, in its disposition, in its auspices, or in its conduct?"<sup>9</sup>

This leaves us with the option of pacifism, a term which rankles some committed Christians. Pacifism takes on a different dimension in nuclear warfare, however, because it is impossible to refuse to become involved **during** the conflagration itself. No one can say, "I am a conscientious objector and choose not to be incinerated in this fireball. You may take me to jail instead." What has emerged and is now finding expression is a kind of "preemptive pacifism" which seeks to end the war before it begins.

In this regard American churches recently have voiced their desires to see an end to nuclear stockpiling. During the last year American Baptist Churches in convention, the National Council of Churches and the leadership of the Catholic church voted to urge a bilateral freeze on nuclear weapons as an appropriate Christian response. In the same spirit, several groups, such as three Massachusetts senate districts; the Lawyers Alliance for Nuclear Arms Control; the Chicago Area Faculty for a Freeze; eight South Dakota city councils; and the Physicians for Social Responsibility have added their voices to the freeze movement.<sup>10</sup>

A clear message comes to church leaders from this issue. It is simply that this dilemma cannot be ignored. We affirm daily in our witnesses that it is not we but the Father who has created us. Surely "the corpse of mankind would be the least acceptable of all conceivable offerings"<sup>11</sup> to the God who loves us and cares deeply for us. Though stated dramatically, that is precisely the possibility which confronts us.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Roland Bainton, **Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace: A Historical Survey and Critical Re-evaluation** (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960); "A Matter of Faith," *Sojourners* (March 1981).

<sup>2</sup>Jonathan Schell, **The Fate of the Earth** (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982). Though somewhat flawed in language and detail, this is a powerful statement of the state of war in the modern world.

### Dawson, Footnotes Cont'd.

<sup>3</sup>Schell, *Fate of the Earth*, p. 3; Figures in Strobe Talbott, "Living with Mega-Death," *Time* (March 29, 1982): differ slightly.

<sup>4</sup>Schell, *The Fate of the Earth*, p. 45.

<sup>5</sup>Schell suggests this division throughout the chapter he entitles "A Republic of Insects and Grass," p. 3ff. The chapter is an exhaustive analysis of the impact of nuclear weapons on life, ranging from death, to mutations to ecological catastrophe.

<sup>6</sup>See James Kelly, "Thinking About the Unthinkable," *Time* (March 29, 1982): 10-14.

<sup>7</sup>See for example the report by Henry Muller, "Disarming Threat to Stability," *Time* (November 30, 1981): 37-46; Mernie King, "Like Street Preaching in Downtown Rome," in "A Matter of Faith," *Sojourners* (March 1981): 88ff.

<sup>8</sup>Bainton, "What Then?" *Christian Attitudes*, pp. 252-268.

<sup>9</sup>E. Glenn Hinson, "Who Shall Suffer Injury at Our Hands?" in "A Matter of Faith," *Sojourners*, p. 53.

<sup>10</sup>See *Time* (March 29, 1982): 10 for a list.

<sup>11</sup>Schell, *The Fate of the Earth*, p. 134.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

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## Centering on Ministry

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