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THE STATE AND WAR IN A NUCLEAR AGE

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A Question of Superior Power, Prophetic Protest or Political Statecraft?

The subject of the Christian and war is an enormous one. The literature on the subject is almost as large. I have been asked to look at the subject in relation to the State. Even that is too great a task for this one paper. Therefore, I have elected to look at the State and War within the context of one historic, theological debate on the matter — that between the reformed and anabaptist traditions, and in one contemporary setting — that of the nuclear age. My modest intention is simply that any insights offered by such a limited study may serve to stimulate our thinking about the universal issues of the State and War.

The State and War have long been the subject of debate amongst Christians, but the development of new weapons of undreamt-of destructive capacity would seem to have cast the whole issue into a new mould and forced upon us new ethical dilemmas and the necessity for new moral decisions. The evangelical ethicist David Cook has suggested in his recent book, *The Moral Maze: A Way of Exploring Christian Ethics*, that we rarely make moral decisions as such. "Most of the time", he says, "... when we are faced with moral issues or problems, we react. We do not think about the moral dilemma, but simply respond to it. This is not to say that our reaction is immoral or subjective. On the contrary, our reactions are highly moral. They are a reflection of our moral teaching, heritage and tradition. They reflect the ways in which we have been morally educated and trained. In one sense, that we respond to moral situations making moral judgements without a great deal of thought is a tribute to the success of our moral inculcation. We do not need to think about most issues, for our moral reaction comes quite naturally."¹ Cook argues that "For most moral situations the old tried and tested rules may be applied without thinking about it. Such decisions are taken automatically.

The problem is that every now and then, and only now and then, the rules do not cover the particular example, or the law breaks down. Then we are faced with exceptional circumstances. Such exceptions are rare but do require our moral response. In a sense, we are suggesting that the necessity for moral decision-making procedures arises most actively in a crisis. The crisis is either that the old system will not cope with the problem or that our judgement is criticised and we are called on for justification."²

Such an analysis of moral decision-making is particularly germane to the ethical issue before us in this paper — the relationship between the

State and War in the modern era. No-one can doubt that the circumstances of the modern state and modern warfare are exceptional and present us with the need for a new moral response. Until the rise of nation states like Nazi Germany, representing a new capacity for institutional evil and organised human slaughter on a massive scale, many pacifists, Christian or non-Christian, did not question their moral response of total opposition to warfare on the principle of the inviolable sanctity of all human life. Similarly, until the rise of modern atomic weapons, representing a new capacity for the destruction not only of the enemy but of the planet, many advocates of the just war did not question their moral response of qualified support for war, on the basis of the principles of proportionality and discrimination. But now, with the rise of powerful nation states and the development of modern atomic weapons, that together have the capacity not only to wage war, as this has been understood historically, but in a matter of minutes to destroy millions of the human race, and make the whole earth uninhabitable except, as one writer has called it, as “a republic of insects and grass”, we are presented with a new moral crisis. It is a moral crisis that demands of us the recognition of the necessity for moral decision-making procedures in place of the old instinctive moral rules and the wisdom gathered by history. The established Christian moral approaches to issues of State and War do not seem to be coping with this modern problem, and the traditional arguments in this matter are being increasingly criticised and called on for justification.

To return to David Cook’s analysis, he argues, “Our usual moral reaction mechanism may not be successful for we may be faced with a genuinely new moral problem, a new amalgam of old problems, a conflict between established principles and procedures, or some surprising new features which causes strain on our traditional way of handling the problem. We do not go through all the thinking and checking procedures unless it is necessary. The breakdown and failure of the usual reactions would make this necessary. So too would the demand for justification and our acceptance of the need to justify our own actions. In so doing, we would go through some procedure of moral decision-making . . .”³ Cook concludes, “We need to know what to do if we are confronted by a new moral issue or some new development in an old problem.”⁴

It is certain that we are faced with both a new moral issue and a new development in an old problem. As Gerald Segal, lecturer in International Relations and Strategic Studies at the University of Leicester, has written, “It is also true that nuclear destruction is not entirely unique in human experience. There have been gargantuan disasters, some of which have been man-made. One day’s fire bombing of Tokyo in the Second World War killed more people than did the Hiroshima atomic blast. The great plagues of 1348-50 wiped out more than a third of the population between India and Iceland. But these all pale in comparison to the destructiveness and the effectiveness of modern nuclear weapons. There can be no doubt that nuclear war, even on the most limited scale, cannot be seen as just another war.”⁵

This new moral dilemma has caused many Christians to question the

justification for their traditional moral attitudes to the State and War. In an essay on his own attitude to warfare and the state, John Stott has described the changes in that attitude over his own lifetime, from an instinctive pacifism to an acceptance of the discriminate use of state force for just ends and by just means. "But now", he writes, "in my thinking the pendulum has swing again, as I take note of the appallingly indiscriminate nature of atomic weapons. The contemporary build-up of the super-powers' nuclear arsenal is a horrendous reality. The nuclear warheads of the United States alone could annihilate the complete world population 12 times over. What is this lunacy?"⁶ So Cook's criteria for the need to undergo a moral decision-making process are met in this analysis of the State and War in the modern world. A new situation has arisen, and it has called into question old responses. In his book David Cook offers such a method of moral decision-making as a "clarificatory tool", a method designed to clarify what we are doing when we make moral decisions, rather than a method to force particular moral assumptions into our procedures.

I would like to employ Cook's methodology in relation to this pressing, contemporary ethical debate about the relationship between State and War in a nuclear age, for three reasons. First, it fits his own criteria of when it is necessary to re-assess moral positions. Secondly, one of the most disturbing aspects of the present nuclear debate is the extreme polarisation between the positions of unilateral nuclear pacifism and the crusading advocacy of total military superiority. This is a sterile exercise in "vertical" thinking on the nuclear problem. By scrutinising our methodology of moral decision-making we can re-establish a middle ground on which to build a Christian consensus on what would be an appropriate and effective public and spiritual response to the issues of state and war in a nuclear age. And thirdly, Cook's methodology has forced me to re-evaluate my own Reformed theological tradition and find in it new resources for developing a Christian ethical response to this new moral dilemma. I believe the same methodological exercise would benefit all Christians engaged in a similar re-assessment of their own traditions.

Only the barest outline of Cook's novel method of moral decision-making can be given here and only the briefest use made of it in relation to the issue before us.⁷ I shall, therefore, first delineate the stages in Cook's "way of exploring Christian ethics" before employing them to open up some of the main aspects of the problem.

Cook's methodology

1. Cook reminds us that moral decisions are required only in exceptional circumstances and are to be distinguished from moral reactions that are inculcated in us by moral tradition. He argues that in making moral decisions we must first be aware of what the moral problem is that we are concerned with. We must set it down in order to clarify the nature of the moral dilemma in question.

2. Having established the nature of the moral problem under scrutiny,

the next stage is to “consider all the factors”. Cook recommends that an exhaustive list be drawn up of all the possible factors that may bear upon our thinking on the moral problem.⁸ He thinks that it is simply common sense to draw up as full a list as possible of all the factors impinging on the problem. By involving other people in this second stage, we are more likely to avoid forgetting some important factor that should be taken into account.

3. These first two stages are obviously meant to clarify in our minds the exact nature of the moral problem and the significant circumstances that influence it. The third stage introduces the “first important principles” that need to be identified and set in order of priority in any moral situation or decision-making. Cook argues that the Christian will derive these moral principles from three sources. The primary source is Scripture, which the main ground of Christian moral teaching has used as the means of discerning God’s will for mankind. The question is then raised as to the particular teaching or principles in Scripture that may be relevant to the situation. Cook provides a helpful checklist of the biblical sources of ethical principles, from the perspective of Creation, the Old Testament and the New Testament.⁹ Our concern here will be “. . . to clarify the theological and moral principles at stake, as well as specific biblical teaching, and reference to other parts of Scripture as a balance and complement to particular passages”.¹⁰ Scripture is the fundamental and authoritative source of our moral principles.

The second source of our first principles is tradition, the rich and varied bodies of Christian reflection on revealed truth in relation to moral issues in the experience of the Church amid changing historical circumstances. Such a study of tradition offers a variety of Christian ethical formulations to draw on, as well as showing us pitfalls to avoid and lessons to be heeded.¹¹ Thirdly, Cook argues, we can draw on the present reality of the life of the Spirit in the community of the Church. The Spirit can guide the Church as it seeks to understand what the appropriate moral principles and responses are for our present circumstances and new moral dilemmas.¹² At this third stage, the Christian turns to these three sources to discern appropriate Christian values in readiness for the final three stages in Cook’s method.

These can be set out briefly.

4. Cook argues that it is not enough to establish our moral principles before arriving at a moral decision. We must also consider what our “aims, goals and objectives are” in making such a decision. This involves giving thought to the consequences of any action taken and distinguishing between the desirable and the possible in deciding the direction we want to go. As he says, “In any situation it is important to know the motivation and desires of those involved and the likely consequences of putting their motives into action, by seeking to fulfil their aims.”¹³

5. The penultimate stage requires us to consider all the “alternatives, possibilities and choices” open to us in our response to a particular moral dilemma. According to Cook, our first reaction to an ethical problem may not be the best one, and we should carefully reflect on alternative ways of looking at the situation before making up our minds on the

matter.

6. The final stage in Cook's moral decision-making procedure is an exercise in human empathy. He believes that morality involves taking other people seriously, and so a fully informed moral decision must take account of "other people's viewpoints". He readily admits that this may not be an easy thing to do, especially if strong disagreement exists with the other person or viewpoint. However, this last stage is designed to avoid the selfishness of only taking our own interests into account.

To understand the distinguishing characteristic of Cook's methodology we must step back for a moment and consider the way in which he relates these last three stages to the relevant moral principles and all the factors to be considered in the situation. As well as being a Christian ethicist, Cook is a philosopher and teacher of logic. His interest in the way people think has led him to appreciate the insights of Edward de Bono and the method of thought described as "lateral thinking". Such "creative thinking" seeks to look at a problem from fresh angles rather than in the accepted terms by which it has been formulated and knowledge gained on the subject. This latter approach to the thought process de Bono calls "vertical thinking". It involves digging deeper into the existing hole of a problem to find a solution rather than approaching it sideways by means of lateral thought, digging other holes.¹⁴ Cook sees a fruitful connection between this creative way of thinking and the way in which we do Christian ethics. He argues that, too often, when we come to make moral decisions, especially those demanded by the new moral problems of our modern world, we do not consider the moral dilemma from fresh angles. Instead, we usually think "vertically" in the traditional terms of existing approaches to ethics. What is required is a method of moral decision-making that can cope with "a new moral issue or some new development in an old problem" by examining it from fresh angles in the manner of lateral thinking.

Cook's methodology offers just such a creative, "lateral" approach that looks at all the factors involved in the dilemma and all the relevant principles from the thought-provoking angles of our ultimate goals, alternative options and other people's viewpoints. Out of the creative interplay of the different stages of this method we will be in a better position to make an informed moral decision and to see how we arrive at such an ethical conclusion. Let us now consider his method in relation to just such a crisis, that of the Christian approach to State and War in the era of nuclear weapons. What follows is an outline of how Cook's procedure might be employed and some indications of how helpful a method it may prove on this subject in the context of my own partisan use of it.

Cook's method applied

1. First, what is the moral problem? It may be stated in the following way. In an age in which the modern state and modern nuclear weapons both have the proven capacity for indiscriminate and total destruction, what is the appropriate response of the Christian conscience; what is the

appropriate theological strategy for Christian action towards the State and nuclear warfare in the light of the Word of God?

2. The second stage is to consider all the factors impinging upon the moral problem outlined above. Again, it is not possible here to give an exhaustive list but let me suggest a few important factors that should certainly be included.

(a) The nature of the States involved in conflict in a nuclear age. If we are to know what our Christian attitude to such states in relation to nuclear war is to be, then we must understand the nature of these states. We must analyse them politically and ethically. For most of us in the West that involves a distinction between democratic and totalitarian states. This distinction will, in itself, determine something of our thinking as Western Christians. We must also realise that each state and country brings to the question of war its own historical experience of statecraft and of warfare.

(b) The nature of modern nuclear warfare. No one is in any doubt about the destructive power and horror of nuclear weapons, whether in so-called tactical use or in an escalation to total use in what has been termed "mutual and assured destruction". This is not in dispute. The debated question is not about the indiscriminate destructive consequences of using weapons but rather about how to avoid their use.

(c) Traditional attitudes to the State and War in the Christian Church. We are drawing upon traditions developed over centuries that have only had to reflect upon these uniquely modern dilemmas within the last forty years. If they are to be of any use to us in developing contemporary Christian ethical decisions then they must be subject to careful scrutiny and re-evaluation. Undoubtedly, the pacifist approach has been more strongly reassessed and developed in relation to the dilemmas of a nuclear age than other traditions. Christians in the Just War tradition have not, until recently, been so fruitful in producing a literature of theological and ethical revision. One tradition, in particular, is particularly disturbing in the way it is being applied to issues of state and war in a nuclear age, and that is the position advocating war as a moral crusade. It is a view that is increasingly influential among certain sections of fundamentalists in the US in their opposition to the Soviet Union, where nuclear warfare is contemplated and justified in terms of a moral crusade.

(d) What are the key features of a nuclear confrontation amongst states? Some would argue that the sheer build-up of weapons threatens nuclear disaster. The prospects for their use are so appalling that even their possession is immoral and an intolerable act by the state. I would argue with Gerald Segal that we need to bear in mind two basic aspects of the problem of nuclear weapons. First, nuclear weapons have been invented, and the genie, once escaped from the bottle of knowledge, cannot be replaced. Second, it is political conflict that tends to determine the use of weapons, and continuing conflict in politics seems to be the normal historical process in international relations. If this is the case, then we are stuck in a world with nuclear knowledge and our moral calculations must take that into account. Two moral

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responses to that situation seem to me inadequate. The first is simply to concentrate upon the effects of nuclear weapons and argue that they are so horrific that there can be no further argument and no further moral thinking on the matter. This is the stance that many on the pacifist wing of the nuclear debate take. Secondly, there is the response of those who argue that all war is hell anyway and that all we can do is harden ourselves, quite literally, against its likely if not inevitable consequences. This is the view of those who are thinking of surviving a nuclear holocaust by building shelters.

In order to develop a third, more appropriate moral response we must draw upon political as well as theological analysis. This requires that we carefully study the nature of the modern nuclear confrontation and ask detailed and informed questions about international relations, military strategy and arms negotiations. Such questions engage us in political thinking and raise ethical questions which lead to a different position from the two inadequate responses outlined above. It is possible to ask moral questions as well as strategic questions about the holding of nuclear weapons and their use in deterrence. One cannot rule them out of court simply by arguing that the consequences of using such weapons are unthinkable and that's the end of the ethical dilemma, or that we must hang on to them and be willing to use them to survive. Between these two positions there is a middle ground, a way of thinking about the reality of nuclear warfare in a critical and an analytical way. We can subject such an analysis to Christian moral criteria. The key feature of nuclear confrontation is not the weapons as such, but the political relationships and conflicts between states that leads to the use of such weapons. America, Britain, and Germany were already in conflict and the nuclear bomb was developed in fear that the Germans would develop it first and use it against Britain and America in an existing political conflict. When we talk about nuclear war in the modern age, we are talking about a political issue, first and foremost, and not the technical issue about how many warheads each side possesses. The solution to the nuclear problem is, therefore, also a political one.

3. These are only some of the background factors among many others that Cook's method allows us to take into account, but they do serve to illustrate the value of such an exercise. They bring us to the third stage in Cook's approach, establishing the relevant "first important principles" for this moral problem. These are to be derived from three sources: Scripture, the Spirit in the Church, and Christian tradition. Only preliminary remarks can be made about the use of the first two sources to allow for fuller treatment of the third source, tradition.

(a) Scripture as a source for Christian moral decision-making. As mentioned above, Cook has provided a helpful checklist of the biblical material that should be considered. In relation to the State and War, I would only add that the way one interprets Scripture is of key importance in moral decision-making on this issue. Some of the evangelical thinkers in the Anabaptist tradition see this point very clearly when writing about the State and War. Leonard Verduin, for example, argues for the

progressive nature of God's dealings with the world as revealed in Scripture, which distinguishes between "an early and a later gracious interference with the downward plunge of fallen man".¹⁵ One of Verduin's main criticisms of the Magisterial Reformation theological tradition is that it interprets Scripture in a "flat" way and fails to make this "early and late" distinction that sees the ethics of the Gospels and New Testament writings superseding the moral teaching and practice of the Old Testament records. He believes that the "flat theology of grace" held by most reformed theologians has prevented them from developing a proper doctrine of the State. Whether one derives one's view of the State from the New Testament only, or in conjunction with the Old Testament Scriptures will obviously have profound implications for the moral decision-making process in its use of Scripture.

Similarly, the way in which the Cross is interpreted in its meaning for Christian discipleship will determine the kind of ethical principles on war and peace derived from Scripture. Again, in the Anabaptist tradition, the suffering servanthood of Christ upon the Cross as the culmination of the way of non-violent resistance and powerlessness is regarded as definitive for Christian practice in the world. As Ronald Sider has said in his book *Christ and Violence*, "In every strand of the New Testament literature and with reference to every kind of situation (whether family, church, state, or employment), the way of the Cross applies. Jesus' cross, where He practised what He had preached about love for one's enemies, becomes the Christian norm for every area of life."¹⁶ The nature of one's interpretation of the content of Scripture is, therefore, of key importance when the Bible is used as the main source for Christian moral principles.

(b) The guiding of the Spirit in the life of the Church. Cook sees this source as having a special contribution to make to the problem of forming moral judgements about new ethical dilemmas. "When the Christian is called to pass a moral judgement on modern issues where there is no biblical teaching and no experience to draw on from tradition, he is not helpless and left with nothing to say. The Christian then, in particular, looks to the work of the Holy Spirit to guide and direct his thinking, so that the will of God in the new situation may be discerned. Such a procedure would soon be reduced to subjectivism . . . unless there was some means of checks and balances, for the Spirit guides and directs in . . . the context of the whole people of God."¹⁷ For those Christians involved in the peace movement and in campaigning for unilateral nuclear disarmament, this source is a central and significant one in forming and arguing for their moral stance. We must take seriously this movement of opinion in the Church today and its claim that in it can be discerned the leading of the Holy Spirit. What is the Spirit saying to the churches on this life and death issue?

Whatever our viewpoint as Christians, this is a question that we cannot ignore in formulating our moral decisions.

(c) Christian tradition. I wish to give more attention to this source for our first principles in moral decision-making because I believe it leads us to the heart of the moral dilemma about nuclear weapons. In particular, I want to focus upon the debate between two theological and ethical

traditions, those of the Anabaptist and Reformed Churches. I do so because these two traditions hold very different views of the nature of the State, and it is the Christian's relationship to the State that I believe to be one of the key issues in determining our moral decisions about nuclear weapons.

As I have argued above, the solution to the nuclear dilemma is, fundamentally, a political problem, rather than a technical one about the numbers and capabilities of nuclear weapons or simply a question of the degree of moral outrage at the undisputed horror of nuclear war. If this is the case, then the Christian's understanding of the State and politics will be crucial in determining his moral stance on this issue. This can best be illustrated by a brief case-study of the resurgent Anabaptist tradition's view of the State in contrast with the view of the Reformed and Calvinist traditions. It should be noted, in passing, that it is this Anabaptist view of the State that is influencing the thinking and practice of many younger Evangelical Christians in the peace movement in this country, as in the United States. Richard Mouw, a Calvinist philosopher from the United States, has identified some of the fundamental differences between the Anabaptist and Reformed traditions in their understanding of the State which they can fruitfully discuss in dialogue together.¹⁸

Mouw himself comments, "In the Christian community as a whole, and especially within 'conservative evangelical' borders, the political differences between these two perspectives bring many current tensions into bold relief."¹⁹ Drawing on an analysis of the writings of the leading Anabaptist scholar, John Howard Yoder, he has highlighted three key themes in Yoder's thought which bear upon our own concern with the State and War in a nuclear age.

First, there is the Christian attitude towards the State and political involvement that Yoder terms "revolutionary subordination". This attitude does not regard governmental domination over others as worthy of the Christian's calling to servanthood but accepts submission to the state's authority, like all social obligations, as "the voluntary subordination of one who knows that another regime is normative."²⁰ The Anabaptist tradition refuses to accept the State and its use of force as normative in any way for the Christian or to permit the Christian to be involved in the political order, especially as an agent of government. The Christian should, however, be concerned about governments and their policies, be subordinate to government authority even if not obedient to it, and exercise a prophetic witness to the State and politicians in the light of Kingdom norms. This attitude obviously differs from a Reformed perspective which accepts governmental authority as a positive good in society, an authority which the Christian has a duty to obey and even participate in, inasmuch as it enforces the just standards of a righteous society established by biblical norms.

The second theme in Yoder's work is the Anabaptist refusal to "manage society". His reading of the New Testament convinces him that it is not the Christian's responsibility to participate in the management of society or to try and "run God's world for Him" because this would inevitably involve the Christian in coercion as the world's way of

conducting human affairs and effectively achieving social goals. Rather, it is the Christian's duty to witness to those who do manage society and the State through the radical Christian alternative of the New Testament pattern of decision-making and community which eschews all coercion. In contrast, the Calvinist tradition holds that the Christian does have a responsibility under God for the running of the world. It accepts that a degree of coercion is necessary to achieve legitimate social goals through political activity. The Anabaptist and Reformed positions therefore lead to very different views of the State and Christian involvement in society.

The third theme in Yoder's writings on the State and War, the acceptance of powerlessness by the Christian, highlights these differences even more clearly. Yoder believes that the powerlessness of Jesus on the Cross should be "consistently and universally" imitated by Christians in their own powerlessness in relation to the powers of this world.²¹ Reformed theology would not see the meaning of the Cross only in terms of Christ's powerlessness as the means of victory over the powers of evil in the world. It would be seen more as a decisive and unique victory by Christ that now enables Christians to use "the powers", including the power of the state, to promote justice and righteousness in the world without thereby being separated from God's love.²²

Through the writings of men like Yoder, Ronald Sider and, in Britain Alan Kreider, we have today a resurgent Anabaptist theological and social tradition that is very much concerned to be involved in society but which still refuses to hold office in the state or accept political responsibility for the management of society if that involves coercion. As Willard Swartley and Allan Kreider have stated it, "... Christians are called to a distinctive Christian ethic; they do not need to be burdened with policing society."²³ According to this approach, it is the calling of the Christian church to demonstrate to the state and society an alternative new society based on the power of the gospel and not the sword. Christians must stand prophetically over against the state in its demonic use of power in many areas of government and all aspects of warfare. In this tradition, opposition to nuclear weapons is properly expressed by non-violent witness and even civil disobedience that seeks to challenge the state and change people's attitudes through the values and methods of another "normative regime", the Kingdom of God. The Anabaptist perspective on the state and war that undergirds this kind of Christian practice is proving increasingly attractive to those Christians in Britain, who feel called to non-violent protest against nuclear weapons.²⁴

If the Anabaptist view of the state can be characterised as one of "revolutionary subordination" then the Reformed approach may be summarised in the phrase "critical transformation". Following on from the Magisterial Reformation belief that a Christian could be a magistrate and accept responsibility for the exercise of power in society, (as expressed in chapter 23 of the Westminster Confession), the Calvinist conviction is that the Christian should develop a critical mind to see how the power of the state and social institutions might be used to transform society according to the biblical norms of justice and righteousness. In the light of this perspective on the state, those influenced by the

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Reformed tradition in their moral decision-making are more likely to regard political involvement in government, with all the tensions that entails, as the proper way of dealing with the moral problem of war in conjunction with the Church's calling to prayer, evangelism and the prophetic preaching of the Word to the State as well as to individuals.

I have outlined these distinctions between the two theological and church traditions at greater length because they seem to me to play such a pivotal role in any use of Cook's method in relation to the moral dilemma of the state and war in the era of ever more sophisticated and deadly nuclear weapons. Out of the Anabaptist tradition comes a commitment to the first important principle of "revolutionary subordination through powerlessness", while "responsible citizenship through the transformation of power" emerges as a primary principle in the Reformed tradition. These two contrasting moral principles, based on differing interpretations of the same authoritative Scriptures, have led Christians to variant moral decisions about the state and war. Before we can reach that final stage of moral decision about the new ethical dilemma presented to us by nuclear weapons, we must subject our thinking so far to the "lateral thinking exercise" of the three remaining stages of Cook's decision-making process.

4. The fourth stage is to establish our aims, goals and objectives in making any decision about a moral problem. For the Christian pacifist, the aim must be a world in which all nuclear weapons are abolished. For the advocates of a moral crusade against communism, the goal is a world that knows total security through the superior military power of one state or alliance. Neither of these aims deals realistically or constructively with the moral problem we are faced with, in my judgement. I would suggest a third objective, derived from Calvin's view of the state found in the last chapter of *The Institutes*, that offers itself as a more scriptural and credible goal. This aim is determined by the view that the state has a limited but important authority, in the divine economy, to maintain what can only be a provisional but nevertheless essential order of justice in a fallen world and requiring a legitimate use of force to exercise that authority. The state's ministry is to maintain the precarious viability of human society through the deterrence of evil and the ensuring of a minimum of good conduct in society. This limited function can never remove the elements of risk or tragedy from human affairs but it does provide the only possible civil framework for human survival under divine sovereignty until the advent of the Kingdom.²⁵

By adopting this limited objective of maintaining a provisional peace through the powers of the state, I am arguing for a middle position between the pacifist and militarist goals of security through total, immediate nuclear disarmament or total, escalating nuclear superiority. This third aim recognises that we will have to live with the real and ever present danger of nuclear disaster as long as we possess the knowledge and resources to make such weapons and until the Parousia. Any goal we adopt in relation to nuclear weapons must be consonant with these realities. Therefore, our preferred objective must be the political control and management of that danger, (Whether through policies of deterrence

and/or multilateral disarmament negotiations is a matter for further debate), rather than the prospect of its removal though unilateral disarmament or the nightmare of its realisation through a first-use nuclear strategy. Whichever aim is adopted will obviously have an effect in the conclusions reached with this decision-making process.

5. The fifth stage in Cook's method involves a consideration of the alternatives, choices and possibilities open to us in this moral dilemma. Contrary to Mrs Thatcher's dictum in another context, there is an alternative, and there are choices in the range of Christian and political strategies on nuclear warfare. This is hard to realise when the whole debate has been so polarised between two absolute positions. However, there is a spectrum of informed opinion, moral judgement and theological insight that traverses the middle ground between pacifism and crusading militarism. This can be seen from the range of Christian viewpoints to be found in a recent British collection of essays on the subject, called *Pacifism and War* in a series aptly titled "When Christians Disagree".²⁶ There is also, for example, professional and academic work being done on alternative defence strategies that rely on conventional rather than nuclear weapons. We need to see the diversity of Christian and secular opinion as a resource to challenge and stimulate our thinking rather than as a justification in itself for adopting one of the polar positions in the nuclear debate.

6. The sixth stage requires us to look at the moral problem from other people's viewpoints. One of the tragic aspects of the nuclear debate is the way in which the advocates of sincerely held views are being traduced by their opponents. So, on the one hand, the women of Greenham Common have been maligned and threatened for their peaceful protest against Cruise missiles while, on the other hand, Christians who support a policy of nuclear deterrence to prevent war are often denied any claims to the name of peacemakers. Even if we disagree strongly with either viewpoint, it is still incumbent upon us to try and understand the motivation and experience that leads people to hold such positions. Again, we cannot think about the state and nuclear war without humbly entering in to the appalling experience of those who have already suffered from the state's use of nuclear weapons, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and of those who are presently oppressed under the rule of totalitarian states. In both instances, this involves entering in to the suffering of our Christian brothers and sisters. Nagasaki, after all, was the great Christian centre in Japan when the bomb was dropped on it, and Moscow has more worshippers on a Sunday than many Western cities. This sixth stage in Cook's methodology should not seem alien to those who confess the name of our sympathetic high priest, the incarnate, crucified and ascended Son of God (Heb. 4:15).

Finally, having gone through these six stages in "lateral moral thinking", we come to the point of moral decision in which we must bring all the elements in our process into faithful and creative alignment under the lordship of Christ. I have only been able to make partial use of Cook's methodology in this paper but even that should be sufficient to indicate how others might employ it more competently than I have done, to

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explore the moral problem of nuclear weapons in their own thinking and so arrive at their own conclusions. Personally, Cook's approach to moral decision-making has brought into prominence the key feature of the Christian's relationship to the state in understanding and resolving this moral dilemma. As four professional and academic analysts have concluded in their study of this issue, the problem is fundamentally a political one.

"Our prescription is threefold. First nobody is served by wishful thinking or a false prospectus. The result of a failure to achieve the impossible is likely to be disillusionment or despair. The nuclear issue is too important for the occasional outburst of campaigning to be followed by weary apathy. It requires continual attention. Second, there is much that can be done through the time-consuming and intricate mechanisms of arms control to ease the strains of the nuclear age. We can at least ensure that nuclear weapons are not allowed to drive diplomacy or intrude too early into crises. *Third, and probably most important, we must never forget that the sources of war are to be found in political relations and not in some mechanical outcome of an arms race. In the end there is no substitute for old-fashioned statecraft calming the impulses of war. As much patience and intricate handiwork must go into loosening the nuclear knot, as was used in its original weaving*".²⁷ (my italics).

I would agree with that analysis of the nuclear dilemma and argue that it is the Reformed rather than the Anabaptist theological tradition which affirms the Christian value of political statecraft and is therefore better equipped to guide Christian decision-making on the long march to arms limitation, the raising of the nuclear threshold and the maintenance of a provisional peace in a nuclear age. My decision is to support that kind of peacemaking, in fellowship with my pacifist brethren, until this dark age gives way to the age of shalom in the new creation, where there will be no more bombs and no more tears.

1. David Cook, *The Moral Maze*, (London, 1983), p 78.
2. *Ibid.*, p 80.
3. *Ibid.*, p 80
4. *Ibid.*, p 81.
5. Gerald Segal, *Nuclear War and Nuclear Peace*, (London, 1983), p 3.
6. Jim Wallis (Ed.), *Peace Makers: Christian Voices from the New Abolitionist Movement*, (New York, 1983), p 55.
7. An outline of Cook's methodology can be found on pp 82-85 of *The Moral Maze*.
8. *Cook applies his own methodology to the moral problems of abortion and euthanasia in chapters 5 and 6 of The Moral Maze*, pp 86-172.
9. A fuller treatment of the Bible as a source of Christian values can be found on pp 50-58 and a helpful discussion on the uses of the biblical text in ethics on pp 45-50 of *The Moral Maze*.
10. *Ibid.*, p 83.
11. For a treatment of tradition as a source of moral teaching, see pp 58-60 of *The Moral Maze*.
12. *Ibid.*, pp 60-62.
13. *Ibid.*, p 83.
14. *Ibid.*, pp 77, 78. See also, Edward de Bono, *Lateral Thinking*, (Harmondsworth, 1977) but note with caution de Bono's criticisms of orthodox Christianity in works like, *Future Positive*, (Harmondsworth, 1980), e.g. pp 31, 32, 85, 200.

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15. Leonard Verduin, *The Anatomy of a Hybrid*, (Grand Rapids, 1976), p 32. See also John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, (Grand Rapids, 1972), on this issue of hermeneutics and Christian ethics in relation to war and state.
16. Ronald Sider, *Christ and Violence*, (Tring, 1980), p 34.
17. Cook, op. cit., pp 61, 62.
18. Richard J. Mouw, *Politics and the Biblical Drama*, (Grand Rapids, 1976), pp 98-116.
19. *Ibid.*, p 98.
20. Yoder, o. cit., p 192. For a fuller treatment of Yoder's approach, see *The Christian Witness to the State*, (Newton, 1964), by the same author.
21. *Ibid.*, p 97.
22. Mouw, op. cit., p 115.
23. Oliver R. Barclay (ed.), *Pacifism and War*, (Leicester, 1984), p 55.
24. See, for example, the reference to *Sojourners* magazine, itself strongly influenced by the Anabaptist tradition, in Steven Mackie's pamphlet, *Civil Disobedience as Christian Obedience*, (BBC, 1983), p 22; and the valuable work of Dr Alan Kreider and the London Mennonite Centre.
25. This interpretation of the Calvinist view of the state and its function in a fallen world is stated in an original way by W. A. de Klerk, *The Puritans in Africa*, (Harmondsworth, 1976), chs. 5 and 13, esp. pp 131, 338-345.
26. Barclay, op. cit. See also, Roberts G. Clouse (ed.), *War: Four Christian Views*, (Downers Grove, 1981); Richard Harries (ed.), *What Hope in an Armed World*, (Basingstoke, 1982); Ronald J. Sider and Richard K. Taylor, *Nuclear Holocaust and Christian Hope*, (London, 1982); and David Atkinson, *Peace in our Time?* (Leicester, 1985).
27. Gerald Segal, Edwina Moreton, Lawrence Freedman, John Baylis, *Nuclear War and Nuclear Peace*, (London, 1983), p 156.