Peace Without Eschatology?

John H. Yoder

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Christian thought is learning to give increasing attention to the importance of the Christian Hope for the Christian life. The decades prior to the Second World War were strongly influenced by thinkers and preachers who hoped for the Brotherhood of Man just around the corner and who thought they had no time to waste on eschatology. The very word frightened them; it seemed to suggest weird speculations and wild-eyed fanatics out of touch with the world's real needs. And yet for all their down-to-earth social concern and their avoidance of date-setting, these optimists and believers in man also had an eschatology. Their simple confidence that they could be sure of the meaning of life was in itself a doctrine of what is ultimate—i.e., an eschatology—though a questionable one, being in part unconscious and not directly based on Christian foundations.

The plan of the World Council of Churches to set the Christian Hope in the center of its theological deliberations at Evanston is a recognition that history and human endeavor can be understood only in terms of God's plan. There is no significance to human effort and, strictly speaking, no history unless life can be seen in terms of ultimate goals. The *eschaton,* the "Last Thing," the End-Event, imparts to life a meaningfulness which it would not otherwise have. A singularly apt example of the eschatological mode of thought is the use of the term "peace" to designate the position of the conscientious objector or of the "Historic Peace Churches." "Peace" is not an accurate description of what has generally happened to nonresistant Christians throughout history, nor of the way the conscientious objector is treated in most countries today. Nor does Christian pacifism guarantee a warless world. "Peace" describes the pacifist's hope, the goal in the light of which he acts, the character of his action, the ultimate divine certainty which makes his position make sense; it does not describe the external appearance or the observable results of his behavior. This is what we mean by eschatology: a hope which, defying present frustration, defines a present position in terms of the unseen goal which gives it meaning. Our task in the present paper is to examine the relation between the present position and the goal, between pacifism and "peace," in the basis of the Biblical eschatology.

We must first of all distinguish between *eschatology*—whose concern as we have defined it is the meaning of the eschaton for present history—and *apocalyptics*—the effort to obtain precise information as to the date and shape of things to come. In marked

contrast to the apocryphal literature of the time, the Bible is far more interested in eschatology than in apocalyptics; even when an apocalyptic type of literature occurs, its preoccupation is not with prediction for the sake of prediction, but rather with the meaning which the future has for the present. It would be inaccurate to maintain that an apocalyptic interest is foreign to New Testament Christianity, but we may nevertheless carry on our present study without asking the questions which the apocalypses answer.

Recent New Testament study has devoted itself to lifting out of the records of the life of the first churches the content of the *kerygma,* the central message of the apostolic preachers. This message is no timeless theological statement; it is from beginning to end eschatological, a declaration about events and their place in the unfolding of God's purpose. It would be a rewarding study to analyze the various stages of salvation history—the backward look to David and the Prophets of old, the recital of the works of Christ, His Passion and Resurrection, the forward look to His Coming in preparation for which all men must repent—for each stage has a particular significance for ethics. We must however limit our present study to our age, which extends from the Resurrection to the final Coming. In this framework we shall seek the answer to two questions: how shall we understand attempts to build "peace without eschatology," i.e., to build a strategy for Christians in society upon a wrong understanding of eschatology? and how does a Biblical eschatology clarify the place and meaning of Christian pacifism? The Biblical emphases on which the present paper builds are generally accepted by contemporary theologians of all schools of thought.

Peace with Eschatology: Nonresistance and the Aeons

The New Testament sees our present age—the age of the church, extending from Pentecost to the Parousia—as a period of the overlapping of two aeons. These aeons are not distinct periods of time, for they exist simultaneously. They differ rather in nature or in direction; one points backwards to human history outside of (before) Christ; the other points forward to the fullness of the Kingdom of God, of which it is a foretaste. Each aeon has a social manifestation: the former in the "world," the latter in the church or the Body of Christ.

The new aeon came into history in a decisive way with the Incarnation and the entire work of Christ. Christ had been awaited eagerly by Judaism for centuries; but when He came He was rejected, for the new aeon He revealed was not what men wanted. The Jews

were awaiting a new age, a bringing to fulfillment of God's plan; but they expected it to confirm and to vindicate all their national hopes, prides, and solidarities. Thus Christ's claims and His Kingdom were to them scandalous.

The new aeon involves a radical break with the old; Christ also was forced to break with the Jewish national community to be faithful to His mission. The Gospel He brought, even though expressed in terms borrowed from politics (*kingdom*) and involving definite consequences for the social order, proclaimed the institution of a new kind of life, not of a new government. All through His ministry, from the temptation in the desert to the last minute in Gethsemane, political means were offered Him from all sides as short cuts to the accomplishment of His purposes, and He refused to use them. He struck at the very institution of human justice with His "Who made me a judge over you?" and even into the intimacy of the family circle with His "not peace but a sword!" Students of the Bible have in the past given inadequate attention to this aspect of Jesus' attitude; for our present problem it is of utmost significance to be aware that human community (as it exists under the sign of the old aeon) was far from being Jesus' central concern.

Jesus' interest was in man; the reason for His low esteem for the political order was His high, loving esteem for man as the concrete object of His concern. Christ is *agape;* self-giving, nonresistant love. At the Cross this nonresistance, including the refusal to use political means of self-defense, found its ultimate revelation in the uncomplaining and forgiving death of the innocent at the hands of the guilty. This death reveals how God deals with evil; here is the only valid starting point for Christian pacifism or nonresistance. The Cross is the extreme demonstration that *agape* seeks neither effectiveness nor justice, and is willing to suffer any loss or seeming defeat for the sake of obedience.

But the Cross is not defeat. Christ's obedience unto death was crowned by the miracle of the Resurrection and the exaltation at the right hand of God. Phil. 2. Effectiveness and success had been sacrificed for the sake of love, but this sacrifice was turned by God into a victory which vindicated to the utmost the apparent impotence of love. The same life of the new aeon which was revealed in Christ is also the possession of the church, since Pentecost answered the Old Testament's longings for a "pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh" and a "law written in the heart." The Holy Spirit is the "Down Payment" on the coming glory and the new life of the Resurrection is the path of the Christian now. But before the Resurrection there

was the Cross, and the Christian must follow his Master in suffering for the sake of love.

Nonresistance is thus not a matter of legalism but of discipleship, not of "thou shalt not" but of "as he is, so are we in this world" (I John 4:17); and it is especially in relation to evil that discipleship is meaningful. Every strand of New Testament literature testifies to a direct relationship between the way Christ suffered on the Cross and the way the Christian, as disciple, is called to suffer in the face of evil. Matt. 10:38; Mark 10:38f; 8:34f; Luke 14:27. Note the relationship between discipleship and human solidarity. John 15:20; II Cor. 1:5; 4:10; Phil. 1:29; 2:5-8; 3:10; Col. 1:24f; Heb. 12:1-4; I Peter 2:21f; Apoc. 12:11.

It is not going too far to affirm that the new thing revealed in Christ was this attitude to the old aeon, including force and self-defense. The Cross was not in itself a new revelation; Isaiah 53 foresaw already the path which the Servant of Jahweh would have to tread. Nor was the Resurrection essentially new; God's victory over evil had been affirmed, by definition one might say, from the beginning. Nor was the selection of a faithful remnant a new idea. What was centrally new about Christ was that these ideas became incarnate; but superficially the greatest novelty and the occasion of stumbling was His willingness to sacrifice in the interest of nonresistant love all forms of human solidarity, including the legitimate national interests of the chosen people. The Jews had been told that in Abraham all the nations would be blessed and had understood this promise as the vindication of their nationalism. Jesus revealed that the contrary was the case, that the universality of God's kingdom contradicts rather than confirms all particular solidarities and can be reached only for first forsaking the old aeon. (Luke 18:28-30.) In the Old Testament the prophets had been lonely men, cut off from their people by their loyalty to God (which was, in the deepest sense, their real loyalty to their people, even though the people condemned them as troublemakers). Then in the New Testament the Body of Christ came into being, a new people in the prophet's line, replacing disobedient Israel as the people of the promise. Nationalism and effectiveness are both rejected in the life of the people of the new aeon, whose only purpose is love in the way of the Cross and in the power of the Resurrection.

Christ is not only the Head of the church; He is at the same time Lord of history, reigning at the right hand of God over the principalities and powers. The old aeon, representative of human history under the mark of sin, has also been brought under the reign

of Christ (which is not identical with the consummate Kingdom of God. I Cor. 15:24). The characteristic of the reign of Christ is that evil, without being blotted out, is channelized by God, in spite of itself, so as to serve His purposes. Vengeance itself, the most characteristic manifestation of evil, instead of creating chaos as is its nature, is harnessed through the state in such a way as to preserve order and give room for the growth and work of the church. Vengeance is not thereby redeemed or made good; it is nonetheless rendered subservient to God's purposes, as an anticipation of the promised ultimate defeat of sin.

This lordship over history was already claimed for Jahweh in the Old Testament. Isaiah 10 exemplifies God's use of the state's vengefulness to administer His judgment, but without approving of the vengefulness, and without exempting the "scourge of His wrath" from judgment in its turn. When the New Testament attributes this lordship over history and the powers to Christ, it means that the essential change which has taken place is not within the realm of the old aeon, vengeance and the state, where there is really no change; it is rather that the new aeon revealed in Christ takes primacy over the old, explains the meaning of the old, and will finally vanquish the old. The state did not change with the coming of Christ; what changed was the coming of the new aeon which proclaimed that the old is doomed.

Romans 13 and the parallel passages in I Timothy 2 and I Peter 2 give us the criteria for judging to what extent a state's activities (since the state incarnates this semisubdued evil) are subject to Christ's reign. If the use of force is such as to protect the innocent and punish the evildoers, to preserve peace so that "all men might come to the knowledge of the truth," then that state may be considered as fitting within God's plan, as subject to the reign of Christ. This positive evaluation cannot apply to a given state in all that it does, but at best in one case at a time, each time it chooses the best alternative rather than adding evil to evil. It is however possible, and even frequent, for a state to abandon this function, to deny any sort of submission to a moral order higher than itself, and in so doing to punish the innocent and reward the guilty. That state is what we find in Revelation 13, best described as demonic. Pilate condemning Jesus, not daring to be honest with his own recognition of Jesus' innocence, shows the weak form of this disobedience; the strong form is sufficiently well known in our day to need no further description.

Cullmann describes the subjugation of the old aeon in terms of

"D-Day" and "V-Day." D-Day, the successful invasion of the continent of Europe by Allied forces, was the decisive stroke which determined the end of World War II. Yet the war was not over. Between the decisive stroke and the final surrender (V-Day) there was a period in which the Axis powers were fighting a losing battle and the Allies were relatively sure of final triumph. This corresponds to the age of the church. Evil is potentially subdued, and its submission is already a reality in the reign of Christ, but the final triumph of God is yet to come.

The consummation will mean the fulfillment of the new aeon and the collapse of the old. The "world" in the sense of creation becomes after purgation identical with the new aeon, after having been the hostage of the old. It is in the light of this promised fulfillment that life in the new aeon, which seems so ineffective now, is nevertheless meaningful and right.

The consummation is first of all the vindication of the way of the Cross. When John weeps in despair because there is no one to break the seals of the scroll in which is revealed the meaning of history, his joy comes from the cry that the Lamb that was slain is worthy to take the scroll and open its seals (First Vision, Rev. 5), for the Lamb has ransomed men of every nation to make them a kingdom of servants of God who shall reign on earth. The ultimate meaning of history is to be found in the work of the church. (This relationship of Christ's suffering to His triumph is also stated in Phil. 2; the centrality of the church in history in Titus 2 and I Pet. 2.) The victory of the Lamb through His death seals the victory of the church. Her suffering, like her Master's, is the measure of her obedience to the self-giving love of God. Nonresistance is right, in the deepest sense, not because it works, but because it anticipates the triumph of the Lamb that was slain.

The apparent complicity with evil which the nonresistance position involves has always been a stumbling block to nonpacifists. Here we must point out that this attitude, leaving evil free to be evil, leaving the sinner free to separate himself from God and sin against man, is part of the nature of *agape* itself, as revealed already in creation. If the cutting phrase of Peguy, *"complice, c'est pire que coupable,"* were true, then God Himself must needs be the guilty one for making man free and again for letting His innocent Son be killed. The modern tendency to equate involvement with guilt should have to apply *par excellence,* if it were valid at all, to the implication of the all-powerful God in the sin of His creatures. God's love for men begins right at the point where He permits sin against Himself and

against man, without crushing the rebel under his own rebellion. The word for this is divine *patience,* not complicity. But this gracious divine patience is not the complete answer to evil. We have seen that evil is already brought into check by the reign of Christ; the consummation of this reign is the defeat of every enemy by the exclusion of evil. Just as the doctrine of Creation affirms that God made man free and the doctrine of Redemption says this freedom of sin was what led *agape* to the Cross, so also the doctrine of Hell lets sin free, finally and irrevocably, to choose separation from God. Only by respecting this freedom to the bitter end can love give meaning to history; any universalism which would seek, in the intention of magnifying redemption, to deny to the unrepentant sinner the liberty to refuse God's grace would in reality deny that human choice has any real meaning at all. With judgment and Hell the old aeon comes to its end (by being left to itself) and the fate of the disobedient is exclusion from the new heaven and new earth, the consummation of the new society which began in Christ.

It is abundantly clear in the New Testament, as all exegetes agree, that this final triumph over evil is not brought about by any human or political means. The agent in judgment is not the church, for the church suffers nonresistantly. (Note the themes of patience and endurance in Revelation 6:9-11; 13:10; 14:12.) Nor is the agent the state, as it is for the judgments of God within history; for in fact the state, refusing ever more demonically Christ's dominion, becomes God's major enemy (Antichrist). God's agent is His own miraculous Word, the sword coming from the mouth of the King of kings and Lord of lords who is astride the white horse. Rev. 19. Just as has been the case ever since the patriarchs, and most notably at Christ's Cross, the task of obedience is to obey and the responsibility for bringing about victory is God's alone, His means beyond human calculation. God's intervention, not human progress, is the vindication of human obedience. The Christian's responsibility for defeating evil, is to resist the temptation to meet it on its own terms. To crush the evil adversary is to be vanquished by him because it means accepting his standards.

The term "interim ethics" has often been used to describe the ethics of the New Testament. Customarily (Albert Schweitzer) this term means that Christ and the New Testament writers were led by their expectancy of an early end of time to an irresponsible attitude to ethics in society. This analysis springs from the attempt to judge on the basis of the old aeon. The New Testament view is rather "being risen with Christ, seek what is above." It means being longsighted,

not shortsighted; it means trusting God to triumph through the Cross. Faith is just this attitude (as the examples of Hebrews 11:1—12:4 show), the willingness to accept the apparently ineffective path of obedience, trusting in God for the results. Faith, even in Hebrews 11:1f, does not mean doctrinal acquiescence to unproved affirmations, but the same trust in God which Christ initiated and perfected. 12:3. Again the example is the Cross, which was right even though its rightness was not yet apparent.

Peace Without Eschatology: the Constantinian Heresy

We have seen that the eschatological situation—in which nonresistance is meaningful and in which the state has its place—is one of tension between two aeons, tension which will be resolved by the triumph of the new in the fullness of the Kingdom of God. The attitude which seeks peace without eschatology is that which would identify church and world, or fuse the two aeons in the present age without the act of God whereby evil is removed from the scene. This means a confusion between the providential purpose of the state, that of achieving a "tolerable balance of egoisms" (an expression borrowed with gratitude from Reinhold Niebuhr) and the redemptive purpose of the church, the rejection of all egoism in the commitment to discipleship. This confusion leads to the paganization of the church and the demonization of the state.

The common understanding of religion in the ancient Middle East was that of the tribal deity; a god whose significance was not ethical but ceremonial. His purpose was not to tell his people how to live, but to support their tribal unity and guarantee their prosperity through the observance of the proper cultic rites. This pagan attitude came to light in Israel as well in the form of the false prophets, whose significance in Old Testament times we often underestimate. Whereas the true prophets of the Lord proclaimed Jahweh's ethical requirements, His judgment, and His call to repentance, the false prophets were supported by the state in return for their support of the state's projects. Rather than define ethical demands of God, they committed God to the approval of the king's own plans. Jeremiah resumed their service as being to proclaim: "peace" when there is no peace, i.e., proclaiming peace without judgment, peace without eschatology. This position was far from pacifism. "Schalom," "peace" as the false prophets preached it, referred not to the absence of war but to the blessing of God on national aims, including wars for national interest. The false prophets, making God to be a handy man rather than a judge, thus inaugurated the line of those who seek to sanctify nationalism with the name of God. This line goes on into the Mac-

cabees and to the various parties of Jesus' times who attempted to unite faith and nationalism in various ways—the Sadducees by collaboration, the Zealots by rebellion. Jesus, in close contact with the Zealots' movement, consistently refused their intention to wage war for national independence. (See O. Cullmann, *The State in the New Testament,* New York, 1956.)

The classic expression of this attitude in the Christian epoch is known as *constantinianism;* the term refers to the conception of Christianity which took shape in the century between the Edict of Milan and the *City of God.* The central nature of this change, which Constantine himself did not invent nor force upon the church, is not a matter of doctrine nor of polity; it is the identification of church and world in the mutual approval and support exchanged by Constantine and the bishops. The church is no longer the obedient suffering line of the true prophets; she has a vested interest in the present order of things and uses the cultic means at her disposal to legitimize that order. She does not preach ethics, judgment, repentance, separation from the world; she dispenses sacraments and holds society together. Christian ethics no longer means the study of what God wants of man; since all of society is Christian (by definition, i.e., by baptism), Christian ethics must be workable for all of society. Instead of seeking sanctification, ethics becomes concerned with the persistent power of sin and the calculation of the lesser evil; at the best it produces puritanism, and at the worst simple opportunism.

It is not at all surprising that Augustine, for whom the constantinian church was a matter of course, should have held that the Roman church was the millennium. Thus the next step in the union of church and world was the conscious abandon of eschatology. This is logical because God's goal, the conquest of the world by the church, had been reached (via the conquest of the church by the world). By no means did Augustine underestimate the reality of sin; but he seriously overestimated the adequacy of the available institutional and sacramental means for overcoming it.

This reasoning goes one step further. If the Kingdom is in the process of realization through the present order, then the state is not simply a means of reconciling competing egoisms in the interest of order; it can be an agent of God's defeat of evil and may initiate disorder. The Crusades are the classic case. Rather than preserving peace, which I Timothy 2 asserts is the purpose of kings, the Holy Roman Empire wages war for the faith and against the heathen. Thus the function of judgment which the New Testament eschatol-

ogy leaves to God, becomes also the prerogative of the state, with the church's consent, if not urging.

Herbert Butterfield, in his study *Christianity, Diplomacy, and War* demonstrates that the periods of relative stability and cultural advance have been those where wars were limited to pragmatic local adjustments between conflicting interests (in which case they could be somehow compared to the police function and considered as subject to the reign of Christ). Likewise, the least social progress has come when nations, in a constantinian attitude, have felt obliged by honor to fight for a "cause." The Thirty Years' War and the ideological wars of our century are good examples. In these cases the use of force, by claiming to be a positive good rather than an evil subdued by Christ, becomes demonic and disrupts the stability of society more than it serves it. No longer subject to the restraint of Christ, the state, blessed by the church, becomes plaintiff, judge, jury, and executioner; and the rightness of the cause justifies any methods, even the suppression or extermination of the enemy. Thus even the New Testament doctrine of Hell finds its place in constantinianism; the purpose of exterminating, rather than subduing evil is shifted from the end-time to the present. Standing not far from the brink of a world crusade to end all crusades, we do well to remember that the constantinian and crusader's mentality is, far from being a way to serve Christ's Kingdom, a sure road to demonizing the state by denying the limits to its authority and failing to submit its claims to a higher moral instance.

Constantinianism was at least consistent with its starting point; it knew only one society, that of the Roman empire, and sought to Christianize it. But today nations are numerous, and each nation takes over for itself the authority from God to represent the cause of history. We must yet seek the origin of this kind of nationalism in the example of Constantine. For Constantine, in replacing Christ's universal reign by the universal empire, shut out the barbarians. This seemed quite normal, since they were not Christian; but in reality it gave the church's sanction to the divided state of the human community, and opened the door to the concept that one nation or people or government can represent God's cause in opposition to other peoples who, being evil, need to be brought into submission. When the Germanic tribes replaced the Empire they applied this sense of divine mission to their tribal interests, despite all the efforts of the medieval church toward maintaining peace. Once admitted in principle, this attitude could later bless nationalism just as consistently as

it had blessed imperialism. The universality of Christ's reign is replaced by the particularism of a specific state's intentions.

This goes even further. Once it is admitted that a particular group egoism is the bearer of the meaning of history, so that the nation's or the group's cause is endorsed by God, the divisiveness thus authorized does not stop with nationalism. Just as the medieval unity of Europe broke down into autonomous kingdoms each claiming God's sanction, so also each nation now tends to break down into classes and parties, each of them again sure of divine approval or its secular equivalent. Once a "cause" justifies a crusade or national independence, it may just as well justify a revolution, a cold war threatening to grow hot, or the toppling of a cabinet to suit a particular party's interest. Witness France. All these phenomena, from the Bolshevik Revolution to John Foster Dulles, are examples of one basic attitude. They suppose that it is justified in the interest of a "cause" for a particular group, whose devotion to that cause is a special mission from God, to rend the fabric of human solidarity, poisoning the future and introducing a rupture which is the precise opposite of the "peace" which it is the duty of the state under the lordship of Christ to insure.

(If with the New Testament we understand the unity of the church as a universal bond of faith, we can understand that the real sectarianism, in the Biblical sense of unchristian divisiveness, was the formation of churches bound to the state and identified with the nation. And on the other hand, some so-called "sects" notably the 16th century Anabaptists, the 17th century Quakers, the 18th century Moravians, and the 19th century Open Brethren, were by their freedom from such ties, by their mobility and their missionary concern, by their preference of Biblicism and obedient faith to creedal orthodoxy, the veritable proponents of ecumenical Christianity. On the other hand, the revolution of Münster, with which uninformed historians still blacken the Anabaptist name, was not consistent Anabaptism; it was a reversion to the same heresy accepted by Lutherans and Catholics alike—the belief that political means can be used against God's enemies to oblige an entire society to do God's will. It is for this reason that the nonresistant Anabaptists denounced the Münsterites even before the conversion of Menno. Münster attempted, just as did Constantine, to take into human hands the work which will be done by the Word of God at the end of the age—the final victory of the church and defeat of evil.)

One of the startling manifestations of modern particularized constantinianism is the parallelism between the opposing groups,

each of which claims to be right. In our day the examples are as patent as they were in the Thirty Years' War. Both Dulles and Molotov are convinced that no co-existence of two opposing systems is possible; each is willing not only to wage war but even to destroy all culture rather than let the enemy exist. Each is sure that the other is the aggressor and that any injustices or inconsistencies on one's own side (like the police methods in the People's democracies or the West's support of Rhee, Tito, Franco, French colonialism) are only rendered necessary by the enemy's aggressiveness and espionage. Each is convinced that history is on the side of his system and that the opposing system is the incarnation of evil. Each is willing to have the people's morale upheld by the churches; neither is willing to stand under God's judgment and neither feels the need to repent. Each feels obliged to take God's plan into his own hands and guarantees the triumph of the good by means of the available economic, political, and if need be military weapons. Each seeks peace by the use of force in the name of God without accepting God's judgment, without abandoning group egoism, without trusting God to turn obedience into triumph by His own means. In short, both are right where Israel was in the time of Micaiah, and both are amply served by churches faithful to the tradition of the 400 prophets of I Kings 22, which say: 'Go up, for Jahweh will give it into the hand of the King." Peace without eschatology has become war without limit; thus is fulfilled the warning of the Lord, "Satan cannot be cast out by Beelzebub."

Eschatology and the Peace Witness

Having seen how the crusader's thesis that the end justifies the means is finally self-defeating, and that the constantinian heresy ultimately reverts to a purely pagan view of God as a tribal deity we must return to the New Testament eschatology for a new start. We shall ask not only what is required of Christians (for on this level the imperative of nonresistance is clear) but also whether any guidance may be found in the realm of social strategy and the prophetic witness to the state. Certain aspects of a Biblical, eschatological, nonresistant Christian view of history may be sketched here.

First of all, we must admit that only a clearly eschatological viewpoint permits a valid critique of the present historical situation and the choice of action which can be effective. Noneschatological analysis of history is unprotected against the dangers of subjectivism and opportunism, and finishes by letting the sinful present situation be its own norm. History, from Abraham to Marx, demonstrates that

significant action, for good or for evil, is accomplished by those whose present action is illuminated by an eschatological hope. There are some kinds of apocalypticism which may favor a do-nothing attitude to social evil; this is precisely what is unchristian and unbiblical about some kinds of apocalypticism. But Schweitzer's thesis, generally accepted by liberal theologians, that the eschatological expectancy of the early church led to ethical irresponsibility, is simply wrong, exegetically and historically.

Within pacifist circles there is urgent need to clear up a serious ambiguity in the understanding of our peace witness. This ambiguity contributed to the weakness of the optimistic political pacifism of the Kellogg-Brand era, and was really a constantinian attitude, as it felt that true peace was about to be achieved in our time by unrepentant states. Once again the hope was for peace without eschatology.

Restoring our peace witness to its valid eschatological setting, we find it to have three distinct elements. One is addressed to Christians: "Let the church be the church!" As *Peace is the will of God* attempts to do it, we must proclaim to every Christian that pacifism is not the prophetic vocation of a few individuals, but that every member of the Body of Christ is called to absolute nonresistance in discipleship and to abandonment of all loyalties which counter that obedience, including the desire to be effective immediately or to make oneself responsible for civil justice. This is the call of the Book of Hebrews—a call to faith and sanctification. Eschatology adds nothing to the content of this appeal; but the knowledge that the way of the Lamb is what will finally conquer demonstrates that the appeal, for all its scandal, is not nonsense.

Secondly there is the call to the individual, including the statesman, to be reconciled with God. This is evangelism in the strict sense, and is a part of the peace witness. Any social-minded concern which does not have this appeal to personal commitment at its heart is either utopian or a polite form of demagoguery. But we must still face the problem with which we began. What is our witness to the statesman, who is not in the church and has no intention to be converted? Here only the eschatological perspective can provide an answer, whereas the "realisms" which agree with Constantine finish by giving him a free hand. We must return to the first Christian confession of faith, *Christos kyrios,* Christ is Lord. The reign of Christ means for the state the obligation to serve God by encouraging the good and restraining evil, i.e., to serve peace, to preserve the social cohesion in which the leaven of the Gospel can build the church, and also render the old aeon more tolerable.

Butterfield, not a pacifist but an honest historian, applies this sort of viewpoint to the question of war. He concludes that the constantinian war, i.e., the crusade whose presupposition is the impossibility of co-existence and whose aim is unconditional surrender, is not only bad Christianity but also bad politics. He concludes with a qualified approval of what he calls "limited war," i.e., war which is the equivalent of a local police action, aiming not at annihilation but at a readjustment of tensions within the framework of an international order whose existence is not called into question. His thesis is that this sort of balance-of-power diplomacy which one associates with the victorian age is the most realistic. In virtue of its recognition that it is not the Kingdom of God, it is able to preserve a proximate justice which permits the silent growth of what Butterfield calls the "imponderables," those attitudes and convictions, not always rational or conscious, which are the real preservatives of peace. These factors of cohesion: ideals of brotherhood, of honesty, of social justice, or the abundant life, are the by-products of the Christian witness and the Christian home, and have a leavening effect even on non-Christians and non-Christian society. It would even be possible to speak of a limited doctrine of progress within this context. As long as the state does not interfere, either through fascism or through violence which destroys the tissue of society, these by-products of Christianity do make the world, even the old aeon, immensely more tolerable. Yet they make men ultimately no better in the sight of God, and no better administrators of the talents entrusted them.

The function of the state is likened by Butterfield to the task of the architect in building a cathedral. The force of gravity, like human egoism, is not in itself a constructive force. Yet if art and science combine to shape and place properly each stone, the result is a unity of balanced tensions, combining to give an impression not of gravity but of lightness and buoyancy. This sort of delicate balance of essentially destructive forces is what the political apparatus is to maintain under the lordship of Christ, for the sake not of the cathedral but of the service going on within it.

Thus the church's prophetic witness to the state rests on firmly fixed criteria; every act of the state may be tested according to them and God's estimation pronounced with all proper humility. The good are to be protected, the evildoers are to be restrained, and the fabric of society is to be preserved, both from revolution and from war. Thus, to be precise, the church can condemn methods of warfare which are indiscriminate in their victims and goals of warfare which go further than the localized readjustment of a tension. These

things are wrong for the state, not only for the Christian. On the other hand, a police action within a society or under the United Nations cannot on the same basis be condemned on principle; the question is whether the safeguards are there to insure that it become nothing more. In practice, these principles would condemn all modern war, not on the basis of perfectionist discipleship ethics, but on the realistic basis of what the state is for.

Two comments must be appended here. First of all, the kind of objectivity which makes it possible to see the task of the state in this light is really possible only for Christians. For only the Christian (and not many Christians at that) can combine forgiveness (not holding the other's sins against him), with repentance (the willingness to see one's own sin). The pagan sees all the sin on the "other side" and the proclamation of repentance is therefore the only liberation from selfishness and the only basis of objectivity. (Compare Trocmé, *Politics of Repentance* and Butterfield's chapter on "Human Nature and Human Culpability.")

Secondly, the message of the prophets always took a negative form. In spite of all the ammunition which the social gospel theology took from the Old Testament prophets, those prophets do not propose a detailed plan for the administration of society. This is necessary in the nature of the case, for the state is not an ideal order, ideally definable; it is a pragmatic tolerable balance of egoisms and can become more or less tolerable. To define the point of infinite tolerability would be to define the Kingdom; it can not be done in terms of the present situation. Thus the prophet, or the prophetic church, speaks first of all God's condemnation of concrete injustices; if those injustices are corrected, new ones may be tackled. Progress in tolerability may be achieved, as the democracies of Switzerland, England, and the Netherlands show us; but only in limited degree and in specific areas, and the means of progressing is not the defining of utopias but the denouncing of particular evils and the invention of particular remedies. On the larger perspective the forces of disintegration are advancing as rapidly as the church. We need not to be embarrassed when the statesman asks us what he should do; our first answer is that he is already not doing the best that he knows, and he should first stop the injustice he is now committing and implement the ideals he now proclaims.

Constantine and Responsibility

The relation of this entire development to an understanding of nonresistant Christian pacifism is obvious. It is just as clear that the

New Testament, by its ethics as well as by its eschatology, rejects most kinds of nationalism, militarism, and vengeance for the Christian and calls him to return good for evil. Any attempt to draw from Scriptures an approval of war in principle, on the basis of what John the Baptist said to soldiers, what Jesus said before Gethsemane, what Samuel said to Saul, or of Jesus' use of a whip when He cleansed the Temple, is condemned to failure.

We must however give greater respect to the one serious argumen which remains to justify participation in war. This argument has not always been clearly distinguished from the untenable exegetical points just mentioned; but it has another foundation, and in its purest form it admits that nonresistance is God's will for the Christian, and that war is evil. In spite of this concession it is held that in a social situation where third parties are involved nonresistance is not the full response to the problem of evil. The Christian as an individual should turn the other cheek; but in society he has a responsibility for the protection of his good neighbors against his bad neighbors—in short, what we have seen to be the police function of the state. This is not to say that the good neighbors are wholly good or the bad wholly bad; but in the conflict in question, one neighbor's egoism coincides more closely with order and justice than the other's. It is therefore the Christian's duty, through the functions of the state, to contribute to the maintenance of order and justice in this way. Even war as an extreme case may be justified, when the alternative would be permitting passively the extension of tyranny which is worse than war.

We must recognize the sincerity and the consistency of this viewpoint, and the honest realism which its proponents demonstrate when they do not claim to be angels or to have a divine mission to go crusading. This view of the function of the state is the only true and reliable one, and coincides with the Biblical view of the police function of the state under the lordship first of Jahweh, then of Christ. That is precisely our objection to it; this view, based on a realistic analysis of the old aeon, knows nothing of the new. It is not specifically Christian, and would fit into any honest system of social morality. If Christ had never become incarnate, died, risen, ascended to heaven, and sent His Spirit, this view would be just as possible, though its particularly clear and objective expression results partly from certain Christian insights.

The contemporary slogan which expresses this prevalent attitude to war and other questions of a social nature, especially in contemporary ecumenical and neo-orthodox or "chastened-liberal" cir-

cles, is the term "responsibility." This term is extremely dangerous, not because of what it says, but because of its begging the question and its ambiguity. The question which matters is not whether this Christian has a responsibility for the social order, it is *what* that responsibility is. Those who use this slogan, however, proceed from the affirmation that there is *a* responsibility to the conclusion (contained in *their* definition of responsibility) that it must be expressed in a specific way, including the ultimate possibility of war. The error here is not in the affirmation that there is a real Christian responsibility to the social order; it is rather in the (generally unexamined and unavowed) presuppositions which result in that responsibility's being defined from within the given order alone rather than from the Gospel as it infringes upon the situation. Thus the sinful situation itself becomes the norm, and there can be no such thing as Christian ethics derived from Revelation.

We have seen that there is a real responsibility of the Christian to the social order but that, to be accurate, it must distinguish between the objects of its witness. Thus we find the basic error of the "responsible" position to be its constantinian point of departure. This starting point leads first of all to confusion as to the *agent* of Christian ethics. Since the distinction between church and world is largely lost, the "responsible" church will try to preach a kind of ethics which will work for non-Christians as well as Christians. Or, better said, since everyone in such a society may consider himself Christian, the church will teach ethics not for those who possess the power of the Holy Spirit and an enabling hope but for those whose Christianity is conformity. This excludes at the outset any possibility of putting Christian ethics in its true light and concludes by making consistent Christianity the "prophetic calling" of a few, who may be useful if only they don't claim to be right.

But the most serious criticism of this definition of social concern, is its preference of the old aeon to the new, and the identification of the church's mission and the meaning of history with the function of the state in organizing sinful society. This preference is so deeply anchored and so unquestioned that it seems scandalously irresponsible of the "sectarians" to dare to question it. This is why the American churches as a whole are embarrassed to be asked to talk of eschatology. Yet it is clear in the New Testament that the meaning of history is not what the state will achieve in the way of a progressively more tolerable ordering of society, but what the church achieves through evangelism and through the leavening process. This "messianic self-consciousness" on the part of the church looks most

a. That "one's own" family, friends, compatriots, are more to be loved than the enemy;
b. that the life of the aggressor is worth less than that of the attacked;
c. that the responsibility to prevent evil (policing Neighbor B) is an expression of love (it is love in the sense of a benevolent sentiment but not of *agape* as defined by the Cross) when it involves the death of the aggressor;
d. that letting evil happen is as blameworthy as committing it.

These four denials are implicit in the positive development of the present paper. To develop them further here would be repetition. That these denials appear scandalous demonstrates simply how thoroughly the western Christian mind-set has been constantinianized, i.e., influenced by pagan and pre-Christian ideas of particular human solidarities as ethical absolutes.

When this argument is phrased in terms of the war question, its customary formulation is the claim that tyranny is worse than war. Apart from the confusion of agents (tyranny is the tyrant's fault, war would be ours), this raises seriously the question of ends and means. For "absolutist" ethics ends and means are inseparable and there can be no legitimate calculation of predictable success. For "lesser evil" ethics however, the comparison of results is paramount and, once mystical arguments about fighting on to the death against all odds are rejected (on the lesser-evil basis), it is hard to demonstrate that the national autonomy, even with the cultural values it protects, would be a greater loss than what would be destroyed in an Atomic-Bacterial-Chemical war and in the totalitarization even of the "free" nations which war now involves. Since no one but Gandhi has tried submission to tyranny, the comparison is hard to make; but the nations which in World War II resisted Hitler the most violently did not necessarily suffer the least thereby. For the Christian disciple, it is clear from Jesus' attitude to the Roman occupation forces and His rejection of the Zealots' aims and methods, as well as from the first centuries of Christian history, that war is not preferable to tyranny; i.e., that the intention of liberating one's people from despotic rule does not authorize the use of unloving methods. In fact the claim that God is especially interested in any people's political autonomy or that God has charged any one modern nation with a particular mission which makes its survival a good *in ipso* is precisely what is pagan about modern particularized constantinianism. Personal survival is for the Christian not an end in itself; how much less national survival.

A second pragmatic objection to the "lesser-evil" argument is the incapacity of man to calculate the results of his action in such a way as to measure hypothetical evils one against another, especially to measure the evil he would commit against the evil he would prevent. a) Basically, founding one's ethical decisions on one's own calculations is in itself already the sacrifice of ethics to opportunism. b) Such calculations, even on the purely human level, are highly uncertain, due to the limits of human knowledge and to the distortion of objective truth by human sinfulness. c) To shift to the Christian plane: the way in which God works in history has already been such as to confound the predictions of the pious and the faithful, especially those who tied their predictions about God's working too closely to their national welfare. d) The most significant contributions to history have been made not by the social strategists, who from a position of power sought to steer toward the lesser predictable evil, but by the "sectarians" whose eschatological consciousness made it sensible for them to act in apparently irresponsible ways. The most effective way to contribute to the preservation of society in the old aeon is to live in the new.

The third pragmatic objection, which should be of basic significance to the "responsible" school even though notice is seldom taken of it, is that the effect of the "lesser evil" argument in historical reality is the opposite of its intent. Consistently applied, this argument would condemn most wars and most causes for war, and would permit a war only as a very last resort, subject to strictly defined limitations; yet the actual effect of this argument upon the church's witness is to authorize at least the war for which the nation is just now preparing, since at least *this* war is a very last resort. Whereas in intent this position should hold wars within bounds and would condemn at any rate the wars now being waged and being prepared, its effect on those who hear theologians speaking thus is to make war or the threat of war a first resort. Whereas in consistent application the "lesser-evil" argument would lead in our day to a pragmatic (though not absolutist) pacifism and the advocacy of nonviolent means of resistance, in reality it authorizes the church to accept the domination of modern society by militarism without effective dissent. (This writer was present in 1950-51 when Karl Barth dealt with war and related questions in the lectures which were to become volume III/4 of his *Church Dogmatics*. For most of an hour his argument was categorical, condemning practically all the concrete causes for which wars have been and may be fought. The students became more

and more uneasy, especially when he said that pacifism is "almost infinitely right." Then came the dialectical twist with the idea of a divine vocation of self-defense assigned to a particular nation, and a war which Switzerland might fight was declared—hypothetically-admissible. First there was a general release of tension in a mood of "didn't think he'd make it," then applause. What is significant here is the difference between what Barth said and what the students understood. Even though a consistent application of Karl Barth's teaching would condemn *all wars* except those fought to defend the independence of small Christian republics, and even though Barth himself now takes a position categorically opposed to nuclear weapons, calling himself in fact "practically pacifist," every half-informed Christian thinks Karl Barth is not opposed to war. Similarly, Reinhold Niebuhr's justification of American military preparedness is used by the Luce thinking of some American patriots to justify a far more intransigent militarism than Niebuhr himself could accept. This tendency of theologians' statements to be misinterpreted is also part of "political reality." Even the most clairvoyant and realistic analysis of the modern theologian is thus powerless against the momentum of the constantinian compromise. Once the nation is authorized *exceptionally* to be the agent of God's wrath, the heritage of paganism makes quick work of generalizing that authorization into a divine rubber stamp.

Peace with Eschatology

See what love the Father has given us,
that we should be called children of God;
and so we are.
The reason why the world does not know us
is that it did not know Him.
Beloved, we are God's children now;
it is not yet clear what we shall be,
but we know that when He appears
we shall be like Him
for we shall see Him as He is.
Everyone who thus hopes in Him
purifies himself as He is pure.

I John 3