

RESPONSE TO JOSEPH FAHEY

Leonard Cherlin

I would like to start by giving my definition of the State: The State is the political organization of society. It is the means for enforcing the will, as declared in a system of laws, of those who at any given moment control society. It is designed for the primary purpose of coercing people to do certain things and to refrain from doing certain other things. It is an instrument for the application of force, or, as it is more usual to say, for enforcing law and order.

The State cannot be separated from the actual society on which it is based. Consequently, although the State tends to set itself above classes, it cannot remain aloof from them and their struggles. It serves the dominant class or classes, and as the representative of these classes, its function is to resolve in their favor the social, economic and political conflicts, both national and international, which are inevitable to such societies.

Now, to define war: War is the armed struggle between States or between social classes, e.g. civil wars. There are just and unjust wars. Just wars are fought to repel aggression, or, to win freedom from exploitation. Unjust wars are waged to perpetuate and/or assert the domination of an exploiting State and to enrich it through enslaving other countries and peoples.

Just wars are distinguished from unjust wars by the progressive or reactionary, liberating or aggressive, aims of the belligerents.

Any war that is waged by a people for the sake of freedom and social progress, for liberation from exploitation and national oppression or in defense of its State's sovereignty against an aggressive attack, is a just war.

Conversely, any war unleashed by the State with the aim of seizing foreign territories, enslaving and plundering other peoples, is an unjust war.

The determination as to whether the war waged by each of the belligerents is just or unjust is indissolubly linked with the classification of wars into types. The main types of wars in this epoch are:

1. Wars between opposing social systems.
2. Civil wars between contending classes within a State.
3. Wars between colonialists and the peoples fighting for their independence.
4. Wars between contending imperialist States.

The moral reality of war may be divided into two parts. War must always be judged twice; first, with reference to the *reasons* the contending parties have for fighting, secondly, with reference to the *means* they adopt. We can say that a particular war is just or unjust and we can say that the war is being fought justly or unjustly. These two sorts of judgment are logically independent. It is perfectly possible, and probable, for a just war to be fought unjustly and for an unjust war to be fought in strict accordance with the rules.

This dualism in the definition of war determines the character of a war as either a moral or immoral enterprise. The inherent contradiction in this definition is self-evident. Even though the causes of war may be just, the acts of war are inevitably immoral.

People get killed and often in large numbers. War is hell. Perhaps, the best way to describe the immorality of war is simply to say that there are no limits: people are killed with every conceivable brutality, and all sorts of people, without distinction of age or sex or moral condition are killed. This view of war is brilliantly summed up in Karl Von Clausewitz's book *On War*:

"War is an act of force which theoretically can have no limits."

"We can never introduce a modifying principle into the philosophy of war without committing an absurdity."

"War tends toward the utmost exertion of forces," and that means toward increasing ruthlessness, since. "The ruthless user of force who shrinks from no amount of bloodshed must gain an advantage if his opponent does not do the same."

To recapitulate: I have said that there can be a moral justification for waging war. Even though every war does have immoral attributes, the moral struggle for a just cause, e.g. freedom from exploitation or for national independence supercedes the immorality inherent in all warfare.

However, with the coming of the Nuclear Age and the concomitant dangers of a nuclear holocaust, it becomes obvious that it is not possible to establish a moral rationale for the waging of a nuclear war. Or so I thought.

Kenneth S. Kantzer, a long-time educator and philosopher, is president of Trinity College, Deerfield, Illinois and is a former editor of *Christianity Today*. He received his Ph.D. in philosophy and religion from Harvard University and has written and edited numerous essays including the book *Evangelical Roots*. In the following viewpoint, Dr. Kantzer, while acknowledging the catastrophic effects of nuclear war, argues that there are values which must transcend human physical life.

The following excerpts are taken from "What Shall We Do About the Nuclear Problem?" written by Dr. Kantzer for the January 21, 1983 issue of *Christianity Today*:

"Nuclear warfare, for example, is essentially indiscriminate, but to some extent so is all warfare. The siege of a nation's city brought starvation to all within its walls, and invariably the women and children died first. ...But the principle of safeguarding civilians is right. We must never aim to kill innocent people; we must protect them from harm as much as possible. This parameter of conventional warfare ought to be insisted on in all nuclear engagements. Therefore,

we should pledge that we will not aim our nuclear warheads at civilian populations - no matter what the provocation. Naturally, this will no more guarantee that civilians will remain unharmed than it has in the past.

"...[W]ill the end justify going to war in a nuclear exchange when so many millions will almost certainly be destroyed? Here everything hangs on our relative values. ...The evangelical is not committed to human physical life as the highest value. As he contemplates what it will mean to live in the Gulag societies described by Solzhenitsyn, 100 million deaths may not be too great a price to pay."

As opposed to this evangelical position, we, as Humanists, do take the position that nuclear war is and will remain morally unacceptable. Today, nothing poses a graver danger to human life and health than nuclear war. The destructive effect of modern nuclear weapons has no analogy in the past. The existing stockpiles of these weapons are so great that a nuclear war, whether launched deliberately or accidentally can destroy all life on Earth.

The yield of all the currently available nuclear weapons is estimated at 50,000 to 60,000 megatons, the equivalent of 2.5 to 3 million Hiroshima bombs.

What does a million Hiroshimas mean in practical terms? Many people are still not fully aware of the possible consequences of nuclear war. There are army men and even public figures who assert that a nuclear conflagration will incinerate "only 200 million people". Others forecast that a nuclear war will "destroy only half of mankind". Some strategists are discussing the possibility of fighting a "tactical" or "limited" nuclear war.

They imply that the survivors could go on living as before the nuclear war - with normal nutrition, the environment intact and without having to cope with unprecedented and extremely complicated medical problems. This illusion must be dispelled.

A nuclear catastrophe will bring untold suffering to all nations, killing hundreds of millions within the very first hours and days of the global conflict. It is estimated that a ground explosion of a one-megaton nuclear device in a city with a population of one million will destroy one-third of its inhabitants. The shock waves and the fires will demolish buildings throughout the city. There will be no housing, no electricity, no water, and little or no food. Radioactive contamination will inflict radiation sickness in varying degrees of severity on tens of thousands of people.

One cannot imagine a more terrible disaster than a world Nuclear War. No preventive effort must be spared to save humankind from it. Nuclear weapons must be destroyed before they destroy humanity.

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The following excerpt is from the article, "A Perspective On The War Crimes" by Mr. Iwamatsu which appeared in the February, 1982 issue of *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*:

"I, myself, suffered from the atomic bomb in Nagasaki, on August 9, 1945. Since then, having reflected upon my own experience, I have been appealing continuously to the world for an understanding of the effects of nuclear weapons and for eliminating nuclear arms and energy from the world. ...

"Since that time, those who suffered from the bombing have been earnestly appealing to the world to take heed of their pain, agony, bitter life, anger, rage, despair and sorrow. These appeals have been almost in vain. ...

"The United States' crime [dropping atomic bombs on two Japanese cities] is not nullified because of previous Japanese war crimes. ... The war crimes of both countries do not cancel each other out. The only right approach is to judge by criteria composed of humanistic, social, international and global viewpoints. .. It must be concluded that Japanese aggression and atrocities were serious crimes and... the American dropping of the atomic bombs was a grave outrage.

"... in truth, [the] use of atomic bombs was the supreme offense against humanity which must not be repeated."

As Humanists, we must deal with pacifism as a reaction to the immoralities of war. To the extent that it is opposed to war or to violence of *any kind*, it is self-defeating. Nonresistance to aggression is a serious threat to the survival of the democratic community. However, pacifism is not a monolithic movement.

Pacifism, in general, advocates the suppression of war through individual or collective obstruction of militarism. Although complete, enduring peace is the goal of all pacifists, the methods of achieving it differ. Some groups oppose international war but advocate revolution for suppressed nationalities; others are willing to countenance defensive but not offensive war, still others oppose all war, but believe in preserving a police force; relatively few believe in no coercive and disciplinary force at all.

As opposed to those seeking peace through detente, our present government sees everything in terms of the rivalry of the Soviet Union and the United States.

Its position is that the United States must not only be prepared to deter the Soviet Union with its nuclear forces; it must also be able to "prevail" in a nuclear conflict over a "protracted" period of time.

To prepare for this eventuality our government persuaded NATO governments to emplace nuclear weapons aimed at the USSR and to increase military spending 3% per year (after inflation) for five years. Meanwhile, the United States has embarked on 5% yearly military increases - projected, over three years, to increase total war spending by \$60 billion.

The ultimate goal of our present government is not nuclear parity but nuclear superiority - a superiority so overwhelming that the United States will be able to intervene anywhere in the world without fear of Soviet retaliation.

Those opposed to this position call for a halt to the nuclear arms race. In their view, our national security can no longer depend on continued expansion of the nuclear deterrent. Strategic nuclear forces need to be stabilized, or frozen, with reductions to follow, in order to avoid a holocaust.

Our relationship with the rest of the world, which now promises war, needs to change dramatically; it needs to be based on a program of peaceful and realistic relations with the Soviet Union, the reduction of the risks of war anywhere in the world, and a reappraisal of Third World development anchored not in continued subjection of the people by arms but in economic growth and necessary social change.

Such a program exists. It is encompassed in the 1975 Helsinki Conference statement called the Declaration On Principles Guiding Relations Between Participating States. In this Declaration, the following norms are declared:

- I. Sovereign equality, respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty;
- II. Refraining from the threat or use of force;
- III. Inviolability of frontiers;
- IV. Territorial integrity of States;
- V. Peaceful settlement of disputes;
- VI. Non-intervention in internal affairs;
- VII. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief;
- VIII. Equal rights and self-determination of peoples;
- IX. Co-operation among states;
- X. Fulfillment in good faith of obligations under international law .

These principles governing interstate relations are basic for the achieving of global peace and security. If implemented, it can mark the beginning of a new stage in the international relationships of States. It is a program that can and should be endorsed by all Humanists and peace-loving people.

I want to close with a series of questions:

1. Will it be possible to negotiate and end to the arms race and agree to disarm or are we going to continue to stockpile weapons that endanger humankind's very existence?

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2. Will it be possible to achieve an international detente that will grow into a truly universal and irreversible process for peace or will the enemies of peace manage to torpedo it?
3. Will humankind find a way to join forces to fight, instead of war, such scourges as hunger, illiteracy, and the diseases from which millions of people suffer in the world?
4. What do you think; and what will you do about it?