

A THEOLOGICAL CRITIQUE OF THE CHRISTIAN PACIFIST PERSPECTIVE

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE POSITION OF JOHN HOWARD YODER

by

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C O N T E N T S

	<u>Page</u>
ABSTRACT	(i)
PREFACE	(iv)
<u>CHAPTER 1</u> <u>INTRODUCTION AND CLARIFICATION OF TERMS</u>	1
Introduction	2
Definition of terms and some clarifications	6
Power	6
Force and coercion	8
Violence	9
Non-violence and pacifism:	11
1. Degrees of pacifism	12
2. Broad categories of pacifism	14
3. Ambiguity of the concept of non-violence	16
Value language and descriptive language	16
Summary	18
References	21
<u>CHAPTER 2</u> <u>THEOLOGY AND CONTEXT</u>	25
Doing theology in context	26
The South African context	30
Conquest and dispossession	32
Resistance and the failure of non-violent methods	35
The structural violence of South African society	37
The lack of prospects for peaceful change	38
Apartheid and the roots of civil war	41
The Church against apartheid	43
References	46

	<u>Page</u>
<u>CHAPTER 3</u> <u>THE CHRISTIAN PACIFIST POSITION</u> <u>ACCORDING TO JOHN H YODER</u>	54
Introduction	55
The context	
The pacifist response	55
The choice of Yoder as representative of this response	56
Yoder's theological background	57
Yoder's hermeneutical approach	58
Jesus as norm : the implications for discipleship	60
All Christians are called to imitate Jesus as their norm	60
The 'original revolution' of Jesus	61
A radical judgment on the status quo	63
The doctrine of 'revolutionary subordination'	63
The Cross and Resurrection of Jesus	65
Yoder's pacifism in contrast with other pacifists	67
A theology of the 'powers' and the role of the state	69
The role of the state	72
The role of the Church and of Christians in the world	73
Christian ethics for the state	76
The role of Christians in the state	78
1. Can a Christian participate in government?	79
2. What does it mean for a Christian to be subject?	80
3. Can a Christian be a policeman?	81
4. Can a Christian participate as a soldier in war?	82
The basis of Yoder's disagreement with Karl Barth concerning just-war theory	85
Some implications of Yoder's position for Christians in the South African situation	88
References	92

	<u>Page</u>
<u>CHAPTER 4</u> <u>A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF JOHN H YODER'S CHRISTIAN PACIFIST POSITION</u>	103
Introduction	104
SECTION I: THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF YODER'S ETHIC	104
The radical challenge of Jesus for the social and political life of Christians	104
The questioning of assumptions about the effectiveness of 'power'	106
It is God, not man, who ultimately guides and controls history	107
The challenge to the easy justification of war	108
SECTION II: SOME CRITICAL QUESTIONS	110
Introduction	110
The portrayal of Jesus and the implications for discipleship	111
1. Did Jesus teach total pacifism?	113
2. Jesus and the Zealot option - a false alternative	120
3. The theology of Jesus' refusal to use coercive power	125
4. Jesus as norm, and the implications for discipleship	131
5. A critical evaluation of Yoder's doctrine of revolu- tionary subordination	141
6. A note on the biblical understanding of love - Christ the Lamb and Christ the Judge	155
7. A summary of the criticisms of Yoder's exegesis and hermeneutics	161
The nature of man's responsibility for the world	164
1. The necessity for the police function in maintaining peace and just order	164
2. A critique of Yoder's Christian ethics for Christians versus Christian ethics for the state	167
The reality of ambiguous moral situations - contradictions in love	177
Bonhoeffer's dilemma	179
Conclusion	182
References	184

	<u>Page</u>
<u>CHAPTER 5</u> <u>AN EVALUATION OF YODER'S CRITIQUE OF BARTH'S GRENZFALL ETHICS - THE METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEM</u>	204
Introduction	205
An outline of Barth's <u>Grenzfall</u> ethics	205
An evaluation of Yoder's criticisms	209
The methodological problem	215
Conclusion	224
References	226
<u>CHAPTER 6</u> <u>AN ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE - THE JUST-WAR POSITION</u>	231
Introduction	232
Man as God's steward sharing responsibility for the world	235
The political dimensions of love and the dynamic of Christian hope	237
Continuities and discontinuities between the political kingdom and the Kingdom of God	237
The reality of power: ethical use of force and the presumption against violence	241
Just-War Theory	246
Its function and purpose to limit violence and restore peace	246
The criteria outlined	247
1. The criteria of <u>jus ad bellum</u>	247
2. The criteria of <u>jus in bello</u>	250
3. The concept of limited war	251
Just-war theory as an evolving ethical process	252
Distinguishing the primary intention and principle from the specific formulations	253
Some basic assumptions	255
The common starting point of pacifism and just-war theory	256
Just-war theory as a <u>Grenzmoral</u>	259
Just rebellion as an integral dimension of just-war theory	260

	<u>Page</u>
Some criticisms assessed	262
The easy justification of war and the slide into crusade theory	262
The lessons of the spiral of violence	265
Its inapplicability in a nuclear age	268
Its use to underpin an unjust status quo	270
The problem of measurement	272
The strengths of just-war theory	274
Provides ethical guidelines for the control of power	274
Bases the purpose of power in the prophetic Christian tradition	275
Prevents the absolutising of the state and the status quo	275
Respects differing convictions and vocations	276
Gives due recognition to the reality of ambiguous moral situations	276
Demands rigorous analysis of the situation	277
Provides a tool for the analysis of conflict	277
Conclusion	278
A note on the theology of the state - conditional legitimacy	278
Legitimate rebellion	284
Introduction	284
Legitimate resistance as a form of just-war	285
The question of legitimate authority to conduct war	288
Legitimate rebellion as a <u>Grenzfall</u> to restore just order	292
Conclusion	296
References	298
<u>CHAPTER 7</u> <u>AN UNCONCLUDING POSTSCRIPT</u>	315
Introduction	316
Application of just-war criteria	316
Implications for the Church's teaching ministry	321
References	323
BIBLIOGRAPHY	325

ABSTRACT

This study is an exercise in theological critique of the Christian pacifist position of John Howard Yoder, with a view to engaging in the theological debate on violence and non-violence. Given the wide ranging nature of this debate it is, however, necessary to ground such a discussion in a given context. South Africa has been chosen for this purpose because of my own sense of shared responsibility for the healing of this land in which I was born.

The problem of violence, together with the use of force and power, is an area of ethics where the definition and clarification of terms is of particular importance. Words like 'violence' are used in different ways which, more often than not, reflect the perspective of the one employing them. Chapter 1 is, therefore, devoted to the attempt to clarify and define certain key concepts, and to draw attention to the inherent ambiguity attached to terms like 'violence', 'non-violence', and 'pacifism'.

This thesis is not primarily concerned to analyse South African society. It is, first and foremost, a study in theological ethics concerning the use of force. Nevertheless, a brief outline of the South African situation has been presented, for two reasons. Firstly, no theology, and manifestly no theological ethics, can usefully be undertaken except in relation to the actualities of life. Secondly, the motivation for this study derives from being involved in this specific situation of violence. In Chapter 2, therefore, some description and analysis of South African society is given, simply in order to ground this study in a context.

In reflecting upon the ethics of the use of force and the problem of violence, the challenge of the pacifist option is first considered. Given the wide variety of positions within the pacifist perspective, one highly regarded exponent of this tradition has been chosen, namely, John Howard Yoder. Yoder's position is presented in Chapter 3.

In Chapter 4 a critical evaluation of this position is undertaken. This constitutes the central focus of this study. Apart from certain positive aspects, areas of criticism are analysed in depth. These concern the way in which Jesus is portrayed in the Gospels, and the debate around the implications of this for disciples. A further area concerns the debate around the nature and limitations of man's responsibility for wielding power as stewards of God's world. Finally, the complex issue of the reality of ambiguous moral situations is raised and analysed. The conclusion reached is that Yoder's position, though powerfully argued, is nevertheless unconvincing in certain respects. His claim that "every member of the body of Christ is called to absolute non-resistance in discipleship" is challenged, both in terms of biblical exegesis, and in terms of the nature of human responsibility to control the abuse of force in the world.

On the other hand, it is conceded that Yoder's criticism of the alternative position has a certain validity. In this instance, his criticism is levelled more specifically at the methodology which Karl Barth employs in his theological ethics. This is evaluated in Chapter 5, and leads to a consideration of the methodological problem as it affects all ethics. A way through is suggested, which takes Yoder's criticisms into account while, at the same time, upholding the validity of Barth's position in its essentials, namely, that there are times when Christians can and must make

ethical decisions which constitute a departure from, or exception to, the norm as commonly understood.

Having analysed the methodological problem and suggested a tentative solution or way through, an alternative response is then presented and evaluated in Chapter 6. This is undertaken as an appropriate extension of the critique of Yoder's Christian pacifist position. If the latter position is found wanting, it is necessary for the sake of completion to suggest an alternative which is more viable. In this chapter, just-war theory is evaluated in some detail. The conclusion is that just-war theory remains a necessary and useful tool for the theological analysis of conflict and that, furthermore, it has a direct and important bearing on the ethical questions raised in the introduction to this study. These questions concern the debate over the involvement by Christians in the struggle for a more just and human society.

Finally, in an unconcluding postscript, it is pointed out that a viable attempt to apply the theological conclusions would not be possible without a far more extended analysis of the situation itself. Such an extended analysis would require another major study. All that is possible, therefore, is to suggest some indications as to how the just-war theory might begin to be applied in this specific situation.

PREFACE

The fact that the debate over 'violence' and 'non-violence' has 'always been with us' does not mean that the issues involved are any less urgent for people living through situations of conflict. The problem of how to make just peace, and limit and prevent violence, is one of central concern to all people of conscience and faith. This study is an attempt to grapple with this problem as it arises in the context of the present South African conflict. More specifically, it is an attempt to respond theologically, from the perspective of the Christian faith, to the reality of this situation of violence as it manifests itself in this society. Taking the perspective of the 'poor and oppressed', and assuming a history of prolonged and violent oppression, what is the ethical and legitimate response of Christians who find themselves the victims of such a system? Can it be said that all Christians, as faithful followers of Jesus, are bound to the 'pacifist option', or do circumstances exist in which some may legitimately interpret their calling differently? These are the fundamental questions with which this study is concerned. This is done by focussing on the work of a leading Christian pacifist theologian, John Howard Yoder, and by undertaking a full theological critique of his position. This, in turn, leads on to an evaluation of the alternative 'just-war' position.

The debate is not simply a matter of theoretical intellectual interest; it in fact touches the very foundations of faith and life. What are we to live and die for, and how are we to fulfil our ultimate commitment to God? This debate, therefore, has profound implications, not only for each Christian, but also for the Church as a whole in her teaching and pastoral ministry. My intention has been to attempt to make some small

contribution towards establishing greater theological clarity concerning the ethical issues which Christians are obliged to face in the present South African conflict.

It is a pleasure to have this opportunity of thanking unnamed friends, and the various members of the Department of Religious Studies, who helped me with different aspects of this study. Particular thanks are due to my supervisor, Dr Charles Villa-Vicencio, for his active interest in my undertaking, and for his rare combination of encouragement and rigorous criticism. For what gaps and lacks are still manifest, I take full responsibility. Finally, special thanks to my wife for her patience and support through all the drawn out stages of this task.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been a manifest escalation of armed conflict within South Africa and Namibia, often spilling over into adjoining territories. There is widespread recognition that despite the signing in March 1984 of the Nkomati Accord between the governments of Mozambique and South Africa, the situation remains fraught with violence and potentiality for ongoing civil conflict.

This reality compels an increasing number of people to think critically about the problem of violence. It could be argued that no-one is free from the obligation to address the ethical questions which are raised in such a situation. All white males between the ages of eighteen and fifty-five face the possibility of being required, by law, to enlist in the South African Defence Force (SADF). There is, furthermore, the real possibility that following the implementation of the new Constitution, legislation will be extended to enable those classified as coloured or Indian to be conscripted.¹ This makes it increasingly difficult for individuals to ignore the questions concerning war, violence and the need for an ethically accountable response.

For the Church this raises fundamental questions concerning the nature of pastoral responsibility and the meaning of obedience to God, both in the context of the conflict itself, and in relation to the laws which require so many church members to enter the military on a particular side. Each thoughtful Christian is confronted with the questions: What am I being called to live for and to die for? What does it mean to follow and obey Jesus in this situation? In matters which so deeply affect life and faith there is a positive duty to grapple with the issues involved; not to do so would amount to a form of pastoral and ethical irresponsibility.

Apart from general theories concerning the ethics of the use of force, there are some primary contextual ethical questions being addressed in this study:

- * Given a context of prolonged violent oppression, what is the appropriate or legitimate Christian response?
- * Is it ethical for Christians to take up arms against such an unjust regime, or are all Christians called to eschew the use of violence and, instead, to uphold non-violence as the only Christian way of achieving God's purposes on earth?
- * Are there circumstances in which it may be justifiable to seek to overthrow a regime by force of arms?

It is important that these questions be considered in a dispassionate and rigorous way, particularly in situations of this kind where it is inevitable that emotions run high and where irrational justifications and explanations can easily predominate. In the history of the Church, various doctrinal positions have emerged in response to the ethical issues raised by the use of force. Broadly speaking, one can distinguish three basic positions:

1. The rejection of the use of force - the pacifist tradition.
2. The exaltation of the use of force - the holy-war or crusade tradition.
3. The conditional and reluctant use of force - the just-war tradition.

This broad categorisation of positions begs many questions. As soon as an

attempt is made to define more closely what is meant by a rejection of the use of force, it emerges that there is a whole spectrum of positions. For example, many pacifists would allow for what they regard as a normal police function in society, while rejecting the right of any Christian to take up arms in war. Further distinctions will be discussed and clarified in the next section of this chapter. It is, nevertheless, meaningful to speak in general terms of the three basic historical positions.

It would be impossible in a study of this kind even to begin to deal adequately with all the issues involved. It is not intended, therefore, to devote much time to the critical evaluation of the 'holy war' or crusade tradition. This position lacks proponents of real weight in theological circles and is regarded as generally indefensible, in the light of rigorous biblical exegesis and theological reflection.²

The significant debate at present is between the 'pacifist' and 'just-war' traditions. While it is true that relatively few Christians and theologians subscribe to the strict or universal pacifist position, the fact remains that in the light of the person and teaching of Jesus, this position poses a challenge for every Christian. This is all the more so today when, in various ways, the applicability of the 'just-war' doctrine of the mainstream Christian tradition is being questioned.

Since the literature on the pacifist position is so vast and divergent, a critical evaluation of the writings of one specific advocate of pacifism, namely, John Howard Yoder, is to be considered. He is, by a wide consensus, probably the most articulate and prominent exponent of this tradition today. An attempt will be made to give a precise description of his position; thereafter will follow a critical evaluation of that position. Certain points of criticism will be identified, which are

considered pertinent to the formulation of an adequate theological response to the problem of violence. It will be shown that, apart from the immediate appeal of the example of Jesus, the real strength of Yoder's position emerges with his criticism of the methodology of the alternative 'non-pacifist' position. A separate chapter will, therefore, be devoted to an analysis of the methodological problem. It will be argued that Yoder's critique, though weighty, is not decisive.

An alternative response will then be presented, as an attempt is made to respond in the light of the Biblical tradition, to the specific situation in which Christians find themselves in South Africa. This will require an evaluation of the 'just-war' theory as a methodological tool for the analysis of conflict.

What will emerge from the analysis will be a recognition that in the conditions of a 'fallen world', it may be ethical to use force as a last resort and in terms of other limiting criteria. It will be argued that it is the 'just-war' theory itself which, for all its limitations, provides the most satisfactory set of limiting criteria concerning the legitimate use of force.

All dilemmas in ethics arise out of specific situations and need to remain earthed in the actualities of life. This whole study, therefore, is undertaken in response to ethical questions raised by the actual context of the South African conflict. It will begin with an outline of the situation in terms of which an attempt is being made to formulate an adequate theological response to the ethics of the use of force, both in defence of a given regime or against it. The intention is to attempt to make some contribution towards establishing greater theological clarity concerning

the ethical issues which Christians are obliged to face in the present South African conflict.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS AND SOME CLARIFICATION

Already, in the introduction to this study, familiar terms have been used, the meaning of which can by no means be easily assumed. Terms like 'violence' and 'non-violence', for example, while much used in the debate, require careful clarification before they can be used without danger of confusion. Juan Segundo SJ is very much to the point when he says that:

Any phenomenological study of violence and its relationship to love must begin by discarding the terrible superficiality that surrounds many analyses of this issue.³

For this reason, it will be necessary to clarify and define some of the key terms which will be used in this study. The need is all the greater given the tendency for the debate to become confused at the outset, precisely because of a muddled use of important concepts.

Power

The concept of power is fundamental to any adequate consideration of the meaning of terms like force and violence. Power may be defined as the capacity to alter or influence a situation, either in its personal or material dimensions. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines power as "the ability to do something or anything, or to act upon a person or thing". The same Dictionary speaks of power as "personal or social

ascendancy" or "political ascendancy or influence".⁴ In the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Kittel, it is stated that "Words deriving from dyna- all have the basic meaning of 'being able', of 'capacity', in virtue of an ability".⁵

For a theological understanding of this concept, it is helpful to turn to Karl Rahner. He speaks of power as coming from God but then, immediately, emphasises the ambiguity of the word, defining it as:

a certain self-assertion and resistance proper to a given being and hence as its innate possibility of acting spontaneously, without the previous consent of another, to interfere with or change the actual constitution of that other All beings simply because they exist inevitably have power in a certain sense and to a certain degree.⁶

Power is essential to man's existence, its exercise is unavoidable, it can only be renounced by death.⁷ Power must not simply be understood somewhat negatively as necessary and, therefore, reluctantly permissible. It is "the condition of the possibility of freedom".⁸ Paul Tillich, in his study of Love Power and Justice, refers in his preface to the fact that these concepts have a "common root in the nature of being itself".⁹ He speaks of a "false opposition between love and power which "stems from a narrow understanding of both".¹⁰

Rahner develops the implications of the analysis of the concept of power still further. He regards the principle of the absolute renunciation of force as "a heresy which misunderstood the nature of man".¹¹ Since the exercise of power is fundamental to the exercise of human freedom, man in spite of his "incurable fallibility"¹² must wield power, and this includes the exercise of physical force.¹³

What has been said so far can be summed up with two observations. Firstly, human beings by their very being, have power which they wield consciously or unconsciously; to have power is part of what it means to be human. Secondly, power as a concept is ethically neutral; it can be used for good or evil purpose.¹⁴

Force and Coercion

The term 'force' is used to denote a particular form of power. Force, as a noun, can be defined as "physical strength".¹⁵ It can also be defined in a more psychological way, for example, in the sense which Gandhi would have intended, in his use of the word Truth Force, to translate the meaning of Satyagraha. It is most usual, however, to find the word associated with physical force. Thus, when one speaks of someone being forced to do something, this usually means being physically compelled. In this sense, force is in many contexts a synonym for coercion. To coerce is to "constrain or restrain by force, or by authority resting on force".¹⁶

The last definition of force opens up another important area of implications already intimated in the consideration of Rahner's analysis of power. Put very simply, it might be said that while power is a function of being human, the use of force and coercion is a function of the existence of human community. Emil Brunner, therefore, insists that force is "indispensable for the moral existence of the community".¹⁷ Theologians are in fact unanimous that some forms of coercion are essential for the very existence of the human community.¹⁸ Human societies cannot function without some structure of law and, yet, "an intrinsic characteristic of the law is the fact that it is always backed up by coercive

power".¹⁹ In this sense it can be argued that the use of force and coercion, like power, is ethically neutral; it can be used for good or evil purpose. The significance of this point will become apparent in the course of this study.

Violence

The ground has now been prepared for a consideration of the meaning of the term 'violence' and for an analysis of violence as a phenomenon. Traditionally, violence has been defined primarily in terms of physical injury done to persons. In the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary it is defined as "the exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury or damage to persons or property". Yoder includes a psychological dimension and, at one point, defines violence as "intentional harm done to the physical or psychic integrity of anyone".²⁰ However, when confronted with the nature of destructive and damaging phenomena, discernable in the human community, these definitions of violence are found to be deficient.

In recent years, we have learned that violence has many faces. It is not merely a matter of physical harm intentionally inflicted upon an individual in an obvious dramatic way. The ecumenical encounter has sharpened our awareness of the violence which is built into many of the world's existing social, political and economic structures. There is no easy way of defining precisely this enlarged concept of violence ... There is need for continued work at this level of conceptual and semantic clarification.²¹

Yoder, himself, would no doubt agree with this "enlarged concept of violence". It has in fact become increasingly apparent that in any discussion concerning the nature of violence, it is important to draw out

both the distinction and relationship between personal violence and structural or institutional violence.

The reality of what may be called structural or institutional violence is widely recognised and no longer at issue. According to Helder Camara's analysis of violence in society, the violence of unjust institutional structures is primary. It is this primary violence which provokes the secondary violence of armed resistance to injustice.²² Thomas Merton describes as "plainly violent" a system "which compels people to live in poverty".²³ John Rawls regards unjust social arrangements as "themselves a kind of extortion, even violence".²⁴

The need for an "enlarged concept of violence", to encompass the reality of structural violence, is only too apparent once attention has been drawn to this all pervasive phenomenon of human existence. Once this wider understanding is fully included in the concept of violence, important consequences follow.

It is not satisfactory to confine the definition of violence to "intentional harm done to the physical or psychic integrity of anyone". It is preferable to define 'violence' as the serious abuse of power. Such a definition includes, for example, the destruction and harm caused to people by laws which divide families, and which forcibly confine vast numbers of people to places of virtual starvation in rural areas. Such laws may be supported and enforced by people who do not intend to be so destructive. The intention, however, is largely incidental to the reality, which is one of manifest violence being done to people.

The term 'violence' remains a complex one. No single definition is entirely satisfactory. In all war situations, people are killed and

injured on both sides. This is violence, regardless of the relative justice of the causes of the respective belligerents. For this reason, the definition of violence as "intentional harm done to the physical or psychic integrity of anyone" is useful and certainly cannot be discarded. However, the wider definition of violence as the serious abuse of power is also crucial because it includes the perhaps unintentional, but no less damaging, dimensions of structural and institutional violence. Any reflection on the nature and consequences of exploitation make it obvious that a definition of violence should include these dimensions.²⁵ Furthermore, this enlarged concept of violence has crucial implications for the meaning of the concept of non-violence and of pacifism.

Non-Violence and Pacifism

Yoder defines 'non-violence' as the "intentional renunciation of intent to harm".²⁶ Just as a definition of violence needs to encompass the structural dimensions of the phenomenon, so a satisfactory definition of non-violence needs to take this enlarged concept of violence fully into account. The above definition of non-violence, with its heavy emphasis on intentionality, fails to do this. It is quite possible for a person to be deeply involved in the serious abuse of power, while consciously committed to the intentional renunciation of intent to harm. For example, to quote from Merton:

Those who in some way or other concur in the oppression and perhaps profit by it are exercising violence even though they may be preaching pacifism. supposedly peaceful laws which maintain this spurious kind of order are in fact instruments of violence.²⁷

José Míguez Bonino argues that every human being is somehow involved in doing violence. He regards as a fallacy the assumption that a Christian is in a neutral, uninvolved position from which he or she can decide whether or not to partake in violence. All people are already caught up in and are part of structures which do violence to others:

Our militancy or lack of it, our daily use of the machinery of society in which we live, our ethical decisions or our refusal to make decisions make us actors in this drama.²⁸

It was for these reasons that Henry Thoreau refused to pay taxes to the Federal Government because he judged that such payment would constitute a form of participation in the war in which his government was engaged against Mexico.²⁹

'Pacifists' may be defined as those who make a conscious option for non-violent means. This option does not, however, alter the fact that all are implicated in some way in the processes of structural violence. The Corrymeela Consultation rejected the "facile assumptions about non-violence which have been current in the recent debate",³⁰ and went on to point out that:

Non-violent action is not free of the compromise and ambiguity which accompany any attempt to embody a love-based ethic in a world of power and counter-power.³¹

1. Degrees of pacifism

There is another important dimension which is characteristic of the whole debate around the issues of pacifism and non-violence, namely, the acceptance of the idea of degrees in the ethical use of force. In clarifying the meaning of the term 'force' it was argued that, like power, it

is ethically neutral. In other words, there can be both an ethical and unethical use of force. The debate about pacifism and non-violence is, therefore, not primarily over whether the use of force as such is ethical or not but, rather, over when, in what circumstances, it is either ethical or not. The importance of this distinction is crucial for the purposes of this study and it will, therefore, be necessary to establish the point by means of examples:

- (i) A person might slap a hysterical friend in order to calm him down; one might knock out a drowning man in order to save him. One can assume agreement that these are examples of an ethical use of force.

- (ii) Many pacifists would argue that to knock out a hijacker about to blow up an aeroplane full of innocent passengers would constitute a good use of power - a legitimate use of force - even if the hijacker required three stitches in his head after the knock-out blow! Pacifists who condone such an action would find it difficult to say what they mean by a commitment to non-violence in these circumstances. If violence is defined in terms of doing injury then, clearly, violence has been done to the hijacker. His head needed stitching after the blow. If, however, violence is defined as the abuse of power, it is possible to argue that there was no such abuse in this context and that, therefore, no violence was done. It seems, however, that most pacifists define their position in relation to the use of force as such. If this is so, then the commitment to non-violence cannot be synonymous with the refusal to use force. Non-violence, if defined in terms of the use of force, then becomes a relative concept. The content of its meaning relates to the degree of force. Reinhold Niebuhr's comment is, therefore, appropriate:

Once we admit the factor of coercion as ethically justified, though we concede that it is always morally dangerous, we cannot draw any absolute line of demarcation between violent and non-violent coercion.³²

The complexity of the issue is now very apparent.

(iii) In the whole debate concerning the legitimate and illegitimate use of force, pacifists tend to place the divide at the point of 'taking life'. There may be circumstances in which it may be necessary to inflict injury, but never to the extent of killing a person. However, even this crucial distinction is not necessarily absolute for pacifists. What of the attempt by police to control a Mafia gang which is holding violent sway over an area, and assassinating opponents with impunity? There is a very large category of those who regard themselves as pacifists who, nevertheless, accept the necessity and, therefore, ethical legitimacy of the use of force by police, in order to stop criminal violence.³³

(iv) Perhaps the more crucial divide concerning the ethical and unethical use of force is not, therefore, over the issue of taking life as such but, rather, over the issue of participation in war. Pacifists in this category attempt to make a fundamental distinction between the function of a policeman and that of a soldier. There are, however, many situations in which it is most unconvincing to attempt to argue for the significance of the soldier/policeman distinction.

2. Broad categories of pacifism

It is not possible here to attempt to describe all the various types of

pacifism, many of which flow from differing understandings concerning the ethical and unethical use of force, and resultant differing definitions of violence and non-violence. It is sufficient at this point to refer to four broad categories of pacifism:

- (i) Absolute pacifism: This would be the position of those who seek to renounce the use of all forms of the physical use of force - including the hitting of the hijacker.

- (ii) Conditional or Provisional Pacifism:
 - (a) This would include persons who accept the need for the use of force in certain circumstances, but deny the legitimacy of taking life under any circumstances.

 - (b) This category would also include those who argue for a strict distinction between the function of a policeman and that of a soldier. Such pacifists would deny any legitimacy to the taking of life in war.

 - (c) Vocational Pacifism: This refers to those who feel personally called to renounce the use of force for taking human life, but who do not thereby argue that others who feel differently called are thereby necessarily acting in an immoral way.

 - (d) Christian Pacifism: Pacifists in this category might be included in any of the other categories. What characterises Christian pacifists of all kinds is that they base their position consciously on their understanding of the demands of the Christian faith. Some in this category allow for the use of

force for non-Christians, while denying any ethical use of force to disciples of Jesus.

3. Ambiguity of the concept of non-violence

There is another dimension to the fundamental ambiguity in the concept of non-violence. It is sometimes assumed that non-involvement, or deliberate refraining from intervention leaves the potential agent, as it were, ethically innocent. It is assumed that direct action is more ethically involving than indirect action. This may normally be the case. The refusal to act, however, certainly does not, of itself, constitute an immunity from ethical involvement. "As you did it not ..." (Matthew 25:45). If a person is at hand to lift an infant from the tracks of an oncoming train but refuses to do so, the failure to act constitutes a decisive participation in the death of the infant. Non-action can render a person morally culpable of violence. "Inaction can sometimes be as brutal as action".³⁴ The ethical distinction between doing and refraining from doing, becomes untenable in many circumstances. There are circumstances in which a 'non-violent' inaction becomes effectively a 'violent' action - ethically speaking.

Value language and descriptive language

The word 'violence' carries strong pejorative connotations. It is almost universally used to refer to a use of force or power of which one disapproves. If power is described as a capacity to influence a situation, most people would use the term 'violence' as the use of this capacity to influence a situation in a damaging way. Hence, people speak of psychological violence - harming another person in a psychological way;

institutional (structural) violence - laws and social structures which cause poverty and death by malnutrition; physical violence - the thief who stabs the worker to rob him of his pay packet; verbal violence - words used in a painful and destructive way in a relationship.

When people wish to refer to a use of force of which they approve, they will use a term other than violence. If a group of armed gangsters are captured, it might be said that they were forcibly restrained. Those who are at the receiving end of what they regard as excessive or unjust police action, call it violent, while those who support the same action, call it a necessary use of force. It is important to be aware of the extent to which the use of the term violence has to do with the perception and analysis of reality.

Much as one may try to employ purely descriptive language in order to enhance the possibility of dispassionate and rational debate, it is not possible, in practice, to avoid the use of value language in this context. Violence is a value-loaded word, and this must be fully recognised in the discourse about it. The definition of violence as the serious abuse of power, employs a frank use of value language. Violence, in this sense, is by definition an immoral use of force.

In so far as one holds the view that there can be an ethical use of force, this can be called the legitimate or justifiable use of force. It is preferable to avoid the term 'justifiable violence', because it leads to a confusion between value language and descriptive language. If the term 'violence' means by definition an immoral use of power, it becomes too contradictory to talk of justifiable immorality.

Richard McCormick helps greatly to clarify this important distinction in moral discourse, between value language and descriptive language:

When something is described as "adultery" or "genocide", nothing can justify it; for the very terms are morally qualifying terms meaning unjustified killing, intercourse with the wrong person, etc. That is, they are tautological. The question contemporary theologians are facing is rather this: What (in descriptive terms) is to count as murder, adultery, genocide?³⁵

It is for this reason that it is preferable to speak of the 'justified' or 'unjustified' use of force³⁶ and to avoid a term like 'justified violence'. The term violence should be used, as far as possible, only to describe the abuse of power, or the unethical, unjustified use of force. What is most important, however, is that in using the word 'violence', one be fully aware of the particular sense in which one is using the term.

Summary

To summarise this discussion, the definitions of the key terms are listed with a few explanatory comments:

Power is the capacity to alter or influence a situation either in its personal or material dimensions. It is a capacity inherent in being human. As such, it is ethically neutral and may be used for good or evil purposes.

Force is physical power. In this study it is used in conjunction with the term coercion. To coerce is to "constrain or restrain by force, or by authority resting on force". Since force, like power, is a phenomenon inherent in, and necessary for, human existence, it must be said that it too is ethically neutral and can be used for good or evil purpose.

Violence is both intentional harm done to another (e.g. injuring a hijacker) and the serious abuse of power (i.e. wrong use of force). Both dimensions of this definition need to be upheld. This underlines the fact that violence remains an inherently ambiguous term. In this study, the main emphasis will be upon the broader definition of violence as the abuse of power. This refers to the unethical use of force (such as injury done to a person in order to rob him). It also refers to structural or institutional violence through which, whether consciously or unconsciously, people are exploited or oppressed and their dignity as persons is abused.

Non-violence is the avoidance of all forms of violence. However, as pointed out above, it is difficult to delineate non-violence in any 'pure' form, because of certain inherent ambiguities. This becomes clear when trying to define the related concept of pacifism.

Pacifism is a complex term denoting, in the first place, a commitment to avoid the use of all forms of violence. It is complex because, as already pointed out, it is possible to be culpably involved in structural violence, while preaching a commitment to avoid the use of force in the solving of disputes.³⁷

It is also a relative concept indicating a spectrum of positions, each with its own border-line beyond which the use of force is regarded as unethical.³⁸ It is seldom, if ever, found in the form of an absolute and universal ethical rejection of the use of force.

This preparatory attempt to define and clarify certain key terms is, of course, very far from complete. The work of "conceptual and semantic clarification" needs to continue.³⁹ However, at very least, the

complexity of the task of clarification, and the profound ambiguities attached to terms like violence and non-violence, power and force, should now be clear. This will, hopefully, make it possible to avoid facile assumptions and over-simplifications in the process of this theological critique.

CHAPTER I - REFERENCES

1. The Population Registration Act No. 30 of 1950, provided the legislative basis for the detailed 'race classification' of the inhabitants of South Africa.
2. It is true that in the effort to claim just cause, and to enhance the motivation of their respective forces, leaders on both sides of the conflict are prone to use 'holy war' language.
3. Juan Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1976, p 156.
4. There are many forms of power. For example, there is physical power to lift a child from the tracks on an oncoming train; verbal power to persuade people to vote for a resolution; psychological power to dominate a group; the power of love to move a person to repentance; the power of truth to convince and inspire people to understand a situation differently; institutional power, or structural power, of an educational system to affect the attitudes of people.
5. G. Kittel, (ed), Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1964, p 284.
6. Karl Rahner, Theological Investigations, 4, Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1966, p 391.
7. Perhaps power cannot even be renounced by death; the way a person dies tends to exert an ongoing influence or power over those who were close to him in life.
8. Rahner, Op Cit, p 399.
Alan Boesak makes essentially the same point when he says: "to have choice is to be human; to have choice is to have power". Black Theology & Black Power, Mowbrays, London, 1978, p 79.
9. Paul Tillich, Love, Power & Justice, Oxford University Press, New York, 1960, preface.
10. Ibid, p 11. See also p 37: "Being is the power of being".
11. Rahner, Op Cit, p 399.

12. Ibid, p 400.
13. Ibid, p 401.
14. Theologians can sometimes use the term in a loose way. For example, José Camblin in The Church and the National Security State, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1979, p 164, speaks of Liberation seeking to "overcome all power and domination". It would have been preferable for the purpose of conveying his obvious meaning, if he had used the phrase 'abuse of power' in place of the single word 'power'.
15. Shorter Oxford English Dictionary.
16. Ibid.
17. Emil Brunner, The Divine Imperative, Lutterworth Press, London, 1937, p 453.
18. It will be shown through specific references in the next chapter, that Yoder accepts this point, even if he does not accept that it is ethical for Christians to undertake this task. Speaking of physical force, Rahner says that it is "not itself sin but a gift of God" which "can offer the possibility of serving him", Op Cit, p 396.
19. Segundo, Op Cit, p 160.
20. Yoder, "The Church and Change: Violence and Its Alternatives". Unpublished Lecture delivered to the Annual Conference of the South African Council of Churches, Hammanskraal, 24 July 1979, p 6.
21. The Report of the Corrymeela Consultation, "Violence, Non-violence and Civil Conflict", World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1983, p 18. See also Segundo, Op Cit, p 156, where he discusses the real difficulty of being clear about when and where violence actually begins.
22. Helder Camara, Spiral of Violence, Sheed & Ward, London, 1975, p 29ff.
23. Thomas Merton, Faith and Violence, Notre Dame, UP, 1968, p 7-8.

24. John Rawls, Theory of Justice, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1972, p 343.
See also Jacques Ellul, Violence, Mowbrays, London, 1978, p 89, where he refers to Tocqueville's account of legal violence done to American Indians.
See also Reinold Niebuhr in Moral Man and Immoral Society, Charles Scribner & Sons, New York, 1932, p 233, where he speaks of the hidden coercion present in economic structures.
25. James Douglass, in The Non-Violent Cross, Macmillan, New York, 1973, p 269-70, argues that "a politics without violence is first of all a politics without exploitation".
Hannah Arendt, in On Violence, Allen Lane, London, 1970, discusses the relationship between power and violence. She defines power as corresponding to "the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never just the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only as long as the group keeps together", p 44. She then goes on to develop the thesis that "Power and violence are opposites; where one rules absolutely the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy", p 56. This is not convincing. The understanding of power cannot be confined to its corporate dimension. To describe power and violence as opposites is to over-stretch the more acceptable meaning and content of these concepts. If violence is the abuse of power, then it is not the opposite of power.
26. Yoder, "The Church & Change : Violence and Its Alternatives, Op Cit, p 6.
27. Merton, Op Cit, p 8.
28. José Míguez Bonino, "Violence: A Theological Reflection", The Ecumenical Review, Vol XXV, 1973, p 458.
See also Billy Paddock, "Why I say 'No!' to Collaboration with the SADF", Unpublished paper, September 1982, p 1.
29. Henry Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience" in The Pacifist Conscience, ed by P Mayer, Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1966.
30. Violence, Non-violence and Civil Conflict, Op Cit, p 29.
31. Ibid, p 29.
See also Reinhold Niebuhr, Op Cit, p 172, where he points out how a non-violent boycott could have violent consequences.
See also Hans-Werner Bartsch, "The Foundation and Meaning of Christian Pacifism" in New Theology, No 6 eds Martin Marty and Dean Peerman, Macmillan, Toronto, 1969, p 196. He shows an unusual awareness of the ambiguities of non-violent participation by pacifists in situations of violent conflict.
In the South African context, it is possible to cite as a topical example the ambiguity of non-combatant involvement in the South

African Defence Force. To what extent can one disclaim participation in the violent actions of an army of which one is a member, even if in a non-combatant capacity?

32. Niebuhr, *Op Cit*, p 172.
33. Roland Bainton, Christian Attitudes to War and Peace, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1960, p 239.
See also G H C MacGregor, The New Testament Basis of Pacifism, Fellowship Publications, New York, 1954, p 63.
34. Richard Mouw, Politics and the Biblical Drama, William B Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1976, p 110.
35. Richard McCormick, "Current Theology", in Theological Studies, Vol 39, No 1, March 1978, p 93.
36. Jürgen Moltmann, "God in Revolution", in A Reader in Political Theology, ed Alistair Kee, SCM Press, London, 1974, p 56, where Moltmann enlarges on this point.
37. For example, an employer might exploit his workers in a grossly unjust way, while at the same time propogating the view that to take up arms in any cause, however noble, is nevertheless unethical.
38. For example, some self-proclaimed pacifists might regard it as ethical to hit a hijacker to prevent an aeroplane from being blown up, but regard it as unethical to take his life in order to save the lives of others.
39. "Violence, Non-violence and Civil Conflict", *Op Cit*, p 18.

CHAPTER 2
THEOLOGY AND CONTEXT

DOING THEOLOGY IN CONTEXT

The task of theology can only be fruitful if undertaken within, and in response to, the actualities of existence. The attempt to do theology in vacuo, is always in danger of becoming a sterile, escapist exercise, without any direct connection either to the concrete needs of the time, or the actual Good News of Jesus relative to such needs. As pointed out in the previous chapter, the questions with which this study is concerned, arise out of the challenges and needs of a particular situation of conflict. The purpose is not merely to debate theoretical ethical questions, but rather to attempt to treat theologically, certain immediate ethical issues in terms of the specific situation from which they arise. This means the adoption of a frankly contextual perspective. Such a perspective should not, however, simply be assumed. Some further explanation needs to be given of its theological basis. A full analysis of the development of what has become known as 'contextual theology' cannot be undertaken in this study. This would require a careful comparison between the methodology of contextual theology and that of so-called 'classical theology'. All that can be done here is to provide an outline of the essential issues.

There is, of course, a sense in which all theologising is done contextually. The whole of the New Testament, for example, is illustrative of theology being done in context. The Christological question - Who is this man, Jesus? - arises out of his birth, life and death in the context of Jewish culture and the religious tradition of the Old Testament. From the very beginning, the early Christian community was doing theology in response to the actual and changing context. Chapter 15 of the Book of Acts provides a classic description of this process. With the move of the

Church into the gentile world, new questions arose which required fresh responses. After "much debate" (Acts 15:7), James gives his considered judgment, and this was subsequently agreed to by all present as what "seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:28). Such theology is incarnational. It seeks to give flesh to God's word of salvation. This word of hope can only be such if it relates to the needs of people and their situation. In this sense, it starts with life's context; with the question: What does God, who is love, say of this situation? What does he require of us in this situation?

Juan Segundo is, therefore, right in asserting that "any and every theological question begins with the human situation".¹ He points to a significant contrast in the theological methodology of the Pharisees compared with that of Jesus.² Theirs was a failure to be fully contextual. They start with a set of theological certitudes and 'force' them into the human situation with tragic results, as if man was made for the sabbath. Jesus, on the other hand, starts with the human situation and asks what God is saying here and now, in this context: "Is it lawful on the sabbath to do good or to do harm?" (Mark 3:4).

In the post apostolic Church, Augustine's The City of God provides an outstanding example of theology being done in context. His view of the barbarian threat to the great 'Pax Romana' was a fundamental contextual factor which coloured his theology and, in particular, his approach to the ethics of war.³ Karl Barth's theological ethics, based on the command of God, presuppose a contextual axis. One example will suffice for the purpose of illustrating this emphasis. Speaking about suicide, Barth begins by asserting that no man has the right to take his own life,⁴ but in the context of a suicide in order to avoid giving secrets under torture

and so betraying friends, "he can indeed have the freedom to do this if God gives it".⁵ Another theologian, Helmut Thielicke, begins his Theological Ethics Vol 2 by raising important questions of methodology, pointing out that the actual context is always a vital consideration for any meaningful theologising.⁶

José Míguez Bonino, in his book Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, describes the theological process of reflecting upon the situation in the light of God's Word. People are in pain; what must we do? What will make for healing and wholeness? For salvation? What is the meaning of love in a situation of conflict? How are we to understand the 'ministry of reconciliation' in the context of a structural conflict between oppressed and oppressor classes? To grapple, theologically, with these questions is doing theology in context.

It is not enough, however, to show that all theology is contextual. The term is used today in order to distinguish a way of doing theology which is different from that of classical theology. For the purpose of this brief outline, two important features of contextual theology in its modern sense need to be highlighted:

1. In its methodology, it starts consciously and deliberately with the human situation in order to bring the Gospel to bear upon it. Leonardo Boff, in Jesus Christ Liberator, puts the question this way: "In the face of a given situation and its exigencies, how are we to ponder, preach and live Jesus Christ in such a way that he appears as the saviour?"⁷
2. Fundamental to this methodology is the affirmation of the need for a thorough analysis of the situation which constitutes its starting

point. The task of analysis thus becomes a prerequisite for doing theology in a way which relates fruitfully to life.⁸

Yves Congar, one of the founders of this way of doing theology, insisted that:

If the Church wishes to deal with the real questions of the modern world and to attempt to respond to them Instead of using only revelation and tradition as starting points, as classical theology has generally done, it must start with facts and questions derived from the world and from history.⁹

This in fact represents a "whole new way of doing theology".¹⁰

In this study, the perspective and methodology of contextual theology will be adopted for the following reasons:

1. Doing theology in context is necessary for the simple reason that the failure to do so more easily results in a biased theology; biased, that is, in favour of the status quo with its inherent injustices. This is so because a theology, which is not centrally concerned with the problems and needs of suffering humanity, becomes a theology which is not first and foremost concerned for the practice of the Gospel. This inevitably leads to a relative indifference to the status quo and deflects Christians from their responsibility to seek to change it in the direction of God's purposes.¹¹
2. Doing theology in context, starting with the human situation, would seem to be truer to the spirit and intention of the Gospel. This conviction seems to be increasingly accepted by theologians.¹² It is superficial to regard it as confined only to those identified with 'liberation theology'.¹³

3. In theological ethics in particular, this approach is necessary because all ethics is related to concrete situations. This is all the more so in the case of the ethics of the use of force. It is essential to ground arguments in a specific context. "Violence is always a contextual problem".¹⁴
4. In speaking of theology and context, one is really talking about the hermeneutical process. What does 'the Word of God mean here, in this context?'¹⁵ To speak about, and understand, God's Word here, it is crucial to know the nature of the 'here', in terms of which one is seeking God's mind and will. Doing theology in context presupposes an analysis of the context itself. To this, attention must now be given.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

South Africa has been chosen for this contextual focus for two obvious reasons; firstly, because it is the country in which this writer was born and brought up, and for which he shares a sense of responsibility. Secondly, it is a situation in which the 'violence/non-violence' issue is being keenly debated.

In turning to an analysis of the South African situation, a methodological problem immediately arises. Clearly, it is beyond the scope of this particular study to undertake a full scale analysis of South African society. This would require, at very least, a thesis of its own. Under the circumstances, what is attempted is a broad historical outline of the present South African reality. It is not possible to consider the various models by means of which historians and political analysts both articulate and reflect differing interpretations of the nature of the present situation and the deeper causes which gave rise to it.¹⁶ It can be

argued, however, that there are, for example, certain demographic facts and basic phenomena about which commentators across the whole political spectrum are agreed.

The population of South Africa has been estimated as some 28 800 000 in 1980. In terms of the 'racial' categories legislated for in the Population Registration Act of 1950, the numbers in each group in 1980 were as follows:¹⁷

Blacks	20 800 000
Coloureds	2 600 000
Asians	800 000
Whites	4 600 000
	<hr/>
	28 800 000
	=====

In terms of the new Constitution,¹⁸ the 'racial' structures of the South African political system are further entrenched. While Indians and coloured people are included in separate houses, the whites remain assured of overall control in the Tricameral Parliament.¹⁹ Africans,²⁰ who constitute about 72% of the total population (inclusive of 'independent homelands'), are excluded altogether from participation in the central government.

It would be possible to provide a virtually unending list of 'facts and figures' about which there would be no significant disagreement.²¹ Disagreement arises, however, concerning the interpretation of these facts.²² It can be argued that for the Christian there is an obligation to try to interpret a situation, to the extent that this is possible, from the perspective of those who suffer most, i.e. the poor, the hungry and the needy (Luke 4:18). In the South African context, these are the Black majority.

While in the final analysis there can be no question of proving the

correctness of a particular interpretation, this peculiarly New Testament perspective (particularly characteristic of Luke) is being increasingly adopted by Church leaders and theologians. The Latin American Catholic Bishops speak of

"the need for conversion on the part of the whole church to a preferential option for the poor, an option aimed at their integral liberation.²³

This emphasis is not confined to the Church in Latin America; Pope John Paul II confirms this view point:

"in founding his family, the Church, God had in mind poor and needy humanity.²⁴

The implication of this teaching is that the Church, and those who belong to her, will endeavour to understand the world and what is happening in society from the viewpoint of the poor and exploited.

In the broad outline of the South African situation, which follows, an attempt will be made to interpret the facts from this biblical perspective, namely, that of the poor and oppressed. This is done in the conviction that such a perspective is more likely to lead to an authentic understanding of reality in the light of the Gospel.

Conquest and dispossession

From the arrival of the Dutch settlers in 1652, the history of this country has been characterised by a process of conquest and dispossession. This process is documented in many standard histories of South Africa.²⁵ It led, in the end, to the establishment of a system of government under which the vast majority of the citizens suffer gross exploitation and oppression. Whatever one's analysis as to primary causes, it is true to

say that, by and large, it is the whites who wield political and economic power, and blacks who constitute the overwhelming proportion of the oppressed.

There are many milestones in the history of this process but it was with the Act of Union (1910) that this pattern of conquest, was confirmed and consolidated in constitutional form. Britain washed her hands of further responsibility and, effectively, handed over the majority of the population to legalised subjugation by a white minority ruling class.

In withdrawing from South Africa, Great Britain left behind a caste-like society, dominated by its white minority. The price of unity and conciliation was the institutionalisation of white supremacy.²⁶

In 1910, the intentions of the ruling minority were already apparent.²⁷ They were determined to continue the process of consolidating their conquest and dispossession of the African people. The Land Acts of 1913 and 1936 together, radically restricted the ownership of land. Africans were effectively confined to 13% of the land and the residual voting rights, which they had retained in the Cape, were finally abolished.

With the electoral victory of the National Party in 1948 (which is still in power today) the apartheid system of conscious legal discrimination, on the basis of skin colour, was ruthlessly and systematically implemented. The effects of the policy have come to pervade every aspect of life - social, political and economic. In 1968 the South African Council of Churches (SACC), in its "Message to the People of South Africa", described the system in this way:

Until a man's racial identity is established, virtually no decisions can be taken; but, once it is established, it can be stated where he can live, whom he can marry, what work he can do, what education he can get where he can be buried²⁸

The point is not simply that the whole of society was structured in racial terms, but that it was structured in the interests of the white ruling class, a minority who were determined to sustain power and privilege gained through conquest. Innumerable laws, passed to establish and maintain this system of inequality and exploitation related, among others, to education,²⁹ influx control and the migratory labour system,³⁰ which separated men from their families and also insisted upon the drastic uprooting of thousands of families.

A central feature of this "grand apartheid" scheme is the 'Homeland' policy, resulting in the creation of a number of 'independent ethnic states', carved out of the 13% land area set aside for occupation by black South Africans. The thinking behind this policy was well summed up by the Secretary for the Department of Bantu Affairs, Van Onselen, in 1972:

What is certain is that no individual can claim the right to stay in the White country permanently. He is here exclusively on account of his labour, and not in a permanent capacity which can give him access to rights which whites enjoy He can achieve such rights in his own fatherland.³¹

As far as my Department is concerned, the alienation of white land, excepting that for which legal provision exists, will be viewed as a nail in the coffin of the white nation and of the fundamental principles of apartheid.³²

The result is that an estimated 3½ million South Africans have been "re-settled".³³ The final solution, envisaged by the implementors of this scheme, will strip 20 million Africans of their South African citizenship.³⁴

The new South African Constitution will ensure the perpetuation of central features of the apartheid system. It will be a constitution based on racial classification. It retains white control, and excludes Africans from the central government.

Resistance and the failure of non-violent methods

How did the people resist? For nearly 50 years they tried by non-violent means. The African National Congress³⁵ (ANC), for example, was founded in 1912, in response to the ominous implications of the colour-bar clauses in the South African Act, and the threat perceived in the debate in white political circles which led to the 1913 Land Act. At first they attempted to obtain reforms by persuasion and moral argument. This approach proved totally fruitless. "Methods of protest consequently changed from consultation to non-collaboration and then to passive resistance".³⁶ In 1913 a group of 600 women protested against the pass laws, by handing a bag of passes to the Deputy Mayor of Bloemfontein.³⁷ In 1952 another major effort was made to achieve change through non-violent methods; a Defiance Campaign was mounted against various discriminatory laws.³⁸ The ruling class responded with increasingly repressive measures to control and stamp out effective forms of opposition. The campaign was effectively broken by means of the specially enacted Criminal Law Amendment Act, which made volunteers for civil disobedience liable to a three year prison sentence and/or flogging.³⁹ In addition to this, political organisation was severely hampered by the banning of political leaders.

It became extremely difficult to mount the type of mass mobilisation essential for the success of non-violent campaigns. Yet, in spite of these critical factors militating against the likelihood of achieving change through non-violent means, the ANC continued in this commitment.

In 1960 the Pan African Congress (PAC), which had recently split off from the ANC, mounted a massive campaign against the hated pass-law system. The ANC threw in its weight behind this campaign. In March of that year,

some policemen overreacted to the presence of crowds of non-violent protestors and killed 69 Africans in Sharpeville. Shortly after this, both the ANC and the PAC were banned. Membership of these organisations became punishable by a heavy prison sentence.

These events proved to be a watershed in South African history. The regime had shown that it was determined to destroy the organisational power bases which are an essential ingredient of non-violent peaceful means of change. After some fifty years of futile constitutional pressure, and non-violent strategy, the leadership of black political resistance felt left with no other option than to go underground, and to resort to the use of force to defend their people from the ravages of the violence of the apartheid system. Albert Luthuli, the then leader of the ANC, had pointed out as early as 1952:

Who will deny that thirty years of my life have been spent knocking in vain, patiently, moderately and modestly at a closed and barred door? The past thirty years have seen the greatest number of laws restricting our rights and progress, until today we have reached the stage where we have almost no rights at all.⁴⁰

In concluding this brief outline of the history of resistance and the failure of non-violent forms of protest over a period of fifty years, it needs to be pointed out that the demands being made by the oppressed were hardly of an extreme or unreasonable nature. It was not as if they were asking for more than the fulfilment of simple justice. The charter, to which the ANC subscribes, has been described as a "powerful statement for both political and economic democracy" which envisaged a society "eminently desirable to any rational and humane person".⁴¹ As another historian observed:

"Although constantly frustrated, African nationalism in South Africa has persistently sought to establish a non-racial alternative to official policies. This idealism remains a heritage of great importance and a source of some hope for the future".⁴²

In spite of the reasonableness of these goals, the South African regime remained determined to hold on to its position of power and privilege, even if this meant doing continued violence to the dignity and general welfare of the black majority.⁴³

The structural violence of South African society

It is no exaggeration to speak of the violence being done to the dignity and welfare of people. If violence can be defined as 'the serious abuse of power', then the structures of the apartheid system are manifestly violent. The violence done to the family life of Africans, through the system of migratory labour, is but one of numerous possible examples. Under the "pass laws", more than 142 thousand people were arrested in 1983.⁴⁴ These laws penalise men and women seeking work in urban areas and make criminals of otherwise law-abiding black citizens.

As already pointed out, the whole policy of resettlement has resulted in an estimated 3,5 million being uprooted and relocated in overcrowded 'Homelands'.⁴⁵ Not only are such forced removals a direct form of violence, but the consequences in terms of aggravating the poverty and the exploitability of the people also do violence to the persons concerned. This is quite apart from the psychological violence done to people through racial discrimination which is built into every dimension of life.

These structures of violence are, in turn, maintained by further instruments of violence, namely, the laws which allow for banning and indefinite detention without trial.⁴⁶ The whole range of so-called security laws became an essential pillar of the system. They provide

stark evidence for the assertion that the present system is held together by the determined and all-pervading use of force. The detention laws effectively leave the detained at the mercy of the security police. The number of deaths in detention, and constant testimonies to torture during interrogation,⁴⁷ leave the vast majority in no doubt about the reality of systematic violence done to people who oppose the present dispensation in any significant way.⁴⁸

Addressing the annual congress of the Political Students' Union of South Africa, Professor J J Degenaar, Head of the Department of Political Philosophy at Stellenbosch University, acknowledged the reality of "structural violence in the form of discriminatory laws".⁴⁹ He saw this as one of the significant factors which militated against the possibility of achieving fundamental changes through peaceful means. It is to this latter question which attention must now be given.

The lack of prospects for peaceful constitutional change

The history of resistance to the structures of oppression reveal the systematic suppression of all non-violent attempts to change this system. The new Constitution, by excluding Africans from participation in the central government, can hardly be seen by them as the basis of a just dispensation. For decades trade union power was crippled through the banning of leaders. Non-violent campaigns have been ruthlessly repressed and, as already noted, the major black political organisations were banned in 1960, and forced to continue underground, struggling for the basic rights of their people.

It is all the more remarkable that, given this background of harsh repression, there emerged a movement of blacks in the late 1960's and early 1970's, which was committed to operating 'above ground', within the severe limits imposed by the apartheid structure. This 'black consciousness movement' (as it became known) found expression in a number of organisations, such as the South African Students' Organisation, the Black Community Programmes and the Black People's Convention. It should be noted in passing that the option for constitutional non-violent means of change was never seen by the leaders of this movement as a sufficient substitute for the option taken by the Pan African Congress and the African National Congress. They saw themselves as playing a complementary role in the long struggle for freedom and justice.

Once again, these peaceful constitutional strategies in the black democratic struggle for rights were shattered by the police treatment of the students and youth of Soweto in 1976. In 1977 the government banned some 19 organisations. The result was a massive exodus of young people, mostly into the ranks of Umkhonto weSizwe, the military arm of the ANC. It seems that the lesson was once again driven home, that peaceful pressures are useless, because the régime is determined not to yield to them.⁵⁰

The Provincial Synod of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa, in 1982, recognised these realities when it expressed its mind in the following way:

In South Africa fundamental democratic procedures which might allow for peaceful evolution towards a more human and just society are lacking, and there is no adequate evidence of sufficient will to establish such procedures.⁵¹

Africans, as already pointed out, can hardly be expected to find, in the

recent changes to the constitution: "adequate evidence of sufficient will" to establish democratic procedures, when they are totally excluded from any share in the central government. The Chief Minister of Kwa Zulu and President of Inkatha, Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, described the constitutional proposals as a "prescription for war".⁵² There is great irony in Mr Louis Le Grange's warning in 1981 that:

"If the just aims and aspirations of all groups were not realised with the necessary speed, South Africa would be set for revolution".⁵³

If those in power believe that resettling Africans and confining them to 13% of the land area of South Africa represents a fulfilment of their "just aims and aspirations" then, clearly, the idea of justice represented by such a policy is totally at variance with the way the oppressed themselves understand their God-given rights. Yet there is every indication that the régime intends implementing this policy with all the force necessary to achieve it. The evidence, therefore, points to the conclusion that the prospects for peaceful constitutional change towards a more just dispensation are indeed lacking.

The structures of government are, in fact, becoming fused with the Military. Kenneth Grundy, in his paper "The Rise of the Defence Establishment in Central Decision Making", commissioned for the Institute of International Affairs, confirms the now widespread view that the defence establishment is a major factor in those structures of government where most important decisions are now made.⁵⁴ The State Security Council, for example, "is widely recognised as the key organisation through which total national strategy is devised and executed".⁵⁵ Seventy percent of the members of this Council are military men.⁵⁶ Dr Robert

Rotberg, in a special study on the subject, predicts that the military will "involve itself more and more in the affairs of state, and certainly not lessen its influence on the future shape of South Africa".⁵⁷

Not only is the military increasingly involved in deciding and evolving government strategy at the highest level, it shares an even greater role in policing South African society. "Now a road block is as likely to be manned by the army as by the police".⁵⁸ According to a White Paper on Defence and Armaments Supply in a two year period, the South African Defence Force (SADF) had "carried out 22 cordon operations, 10 sweep and search operations and had manned 633 road blocks".⁵⁹ These trends point to the fact that the régime is gearing itself for war and is effectively acknowledging the lack of prospects for peaceful constitutional change.

Apartheid - the roots of civil war

Even in the brief outline given above of the historical background to the present South African situation, it will have become very obvious that the root of the conflict lies in the imposition of a system of exploitation on an unwilling majority by an entrenched minority. The Apartheid system is the name and form of these structures of oppression as they have evolved. It is a system which has been developed as a means of consolidating the conquest of blacks by the white ruling classes.⁶⁰ While it may be true that those who are oppressed may well, in the course of their struggle for liberation, look to the world at large for support, the root cause of the conflict remains the apartheid system itself.

"The current conflict cannot be viewed from outside the context of the history of resistance by Black South Africans to the system imposed upon them".⁶¹

The official government view is that South Africa is involved in a defensive war against an external communist aggressor.⁶² It is far more plausible, however, to understand the conflict as an essentially internal civil one. In the words of political columnist Gerald Shaw:

The truth is that we are sliding into a civil war The enemy is not some faceless communist horde from behind the Iron Curtain. The enemy is our own people, fellow South Africans, a guerilla army of young people who fled from South Africa after the Soweto unrest of 1976 in their thousands and were recruited into the army of the African National Congress.⁶³

With regard to the war in Namibia, it can be argued that this is directly related to the civil conflict in South Africa. It can be assumed that the primary concern of the South African Government is to protect and further its own long term interests. All strategic planning, diplomatic activity and military actions revolve around this basic consideration. It has been argued above that the central concern of the South African régime is the consolidation of its power and privilege through the 'grand apartheid' scheme. If this is so, then it would seem that the involvement of the SADF in Namibia and elsewhere is essentially a function of the civil conflict which characterises the situation within South Africa's borders. The South African Government's entry into Angola, for example, was, in the final analysis an extension of long term strategic considerations in relation to the struggle of the majority of South Africa's black population for their liberation from oppressive minority rule.

It was recently acknowledged in the Supreme Court, by Mr Acting Justice A P Myburgh, that the conflict in South Africa had escalated and that it was now "a matter of civil war".⁶⁴ Perhaps even more significant

than this statement from the Court, is the testimony of the editor of a leading pro-government newspaper, "Die Vaderland". Mr Pakendorf, speaking of the black struggle for liberation, admitted that "we fought for our freedom, now they are fighting for their freedom We have become the oppressors".⁶⁵ There could hardly be a more telling statement on the nature of the conflict, coming as it does from an open supporter of the régime.

Apart from official propaganda, few would really deny that the conflict in South Africa is not basically a civil one, and

.... that the essential nature of the conflict stems from the determination to maintain by force a structure of society in which the majority of the people of this land suffer gross oppression and exploitation".⁶⁶

It seems clear that South African society is already caught up in a low intensity civil conflict. This may well be contained for some years by the kind of initiatives represented in the Nkomati Accord. Yet, in the long term, it is common cause that the civil conflict will continue as long as the structures of society remain so unjust and exploitative.

The Church against apartheid - a 'status confessionis'

Since the coming to power of the present government in 1948, under the banner of apartheid, the so-called English-speaking churches have consistently recorded their verbal protest against virtually every piece of legislation designed to implement this policy. In contrast, the Dutch Reformed Churches, with some notable exceptions among their theologians,⁶⁷ gave their full theological blessing to the policy. The decisive split

between these two broad Christian groupings in South Africa came with the rejection by the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK), of the conclusions reached at the Cottesloe Consultation in 1960.

In the last decade there emerged, within the daughter churches of the Dutch Reformed fold, a powerful reaction to the apartheid system and the theology which was developed to justify it. The significant breakthrough came in 1982, when the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), meeting in Ottawa, declared apartheid to be a heresy.

The promises of God for his world and for his Church are in direct contradiction to apartheid ideals and practices ... This situation constitutes a *status confessionis* for our Churches Apartheid is a sin, and the moral and theological justification of it is a travesty of the Gospel and, in its persistent disobedience to the Word of God, a theological heresy".⁶⁸

There is no need to attempt to describe and evaluate here the role played by the Christian Institute, the South African Council of Churches and other bodies⁶⁹ in the process which led up to this watershed decision by the WARC. What is important, for the purpose of this chapter, is that this declaration has clarified the nature of the contextual theological and ethical issues.

The WARC came to a decision which is both profoundly biblical and contextual. It was precisely after careful analysis of the situation, in the light of the Gospel, that churches the world over became convinced that a point had been reached in the scale and nature of the injustices of South African society; that the time had come to declare the situation as constituting a 'status confessionis'.⁷⁰

The fact that the world wide Christian community has achieved such a consensus concerning the nature of South African society is a fact of considerable significance.

1. If it is accepted that "apartheid ideals and practices" are heretical, and that these ideals and practices continue to be the cornerstone of Government policy, and if it is further accepted that these ideals and practices are what constitute the very fabric of South African society, then fundamental questions must be raised as to what kind of society is being upheld and defended.

2. It also suggests that the kind of interpretation of South African history outlined in this chapter is not merely subjective. On the contrary, it is affirmed by the wide consensus of the Christian churches in the world at large.

It is from within this context that the concerns of this study emerge. The context is a profoundly violent one. Violence is an all pervading reality. The question is how to respond theologically to this reality. Assuming a history of prolonged and violent oppression, what is the ethical and legitimate response of Christians who find themselves the victims of such a system? Are all Christians bound by the calling to renounce the use of force in the struggle for freedom and justice? Or do circumstances exist in which some may legitimately interpret their calling differently? It is to the challenge of these questions that the next chapters will be addressed.

CHAPTER 2 - REFERENCES

1. Juan Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1976, p 79.
2. Ibid, 77ff.
3. See Gustavo Gutierrez A Theology of Liberation, SCM Press, London, 1974, p 6, for his comment on Augustine's influence on a theology which is based on "the signs of the times and the demands with which they challenge the Christian community".
4. Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, , Vol III, 4, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1961 p 404.
5. Ibid, p 412.
6. Helmut Thielicke, Theological Ethics, Vol 2, Fortress Press Philadelphia, 1969, p 4.
7. Leonardo Boff, Jesus Christ Liberator, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1978, p 265.
8. Integral to the task of analysis is a self-critical dimension which seeks to be constantly aware of assumptions and presuppositions. This way of doing theology is consciously and explicitly contextual. It contrasts with the kind of theologising which is not conscious of the contextual factors and which is, therefore, more likely to be blind to the 'non-theological', historical and sociological factors, which colour its presuppositions and analysis.
9. Yves Congar, quoted in Gutierrez, Theology of Liberation, Op Cit, p 12.
10. Robert McAfee Brown, "A Preface and a Conclusion". In Theology in the America's, edited by Sergio Torres and John Eagleson, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1976, p X.
See the pages following for a useful description of the paradigm shift which is represented by the concept of contextual theology.
11. Edward Schillebeeckx makes the point in this way: "The Church has for centuries devoted her attention to formulating truths and meanwhile did almost nothing to better the world".
Quoted in Gutierrez, Theology of Liberation, Op Cit, p 10.

12. The theology of Jürgen Moltmann has, perhaps, been of critical significance here. He defined eschatology as the doctrine of Christian hope and then went on to show how this doctrine bears dynamically upon our present life. "Those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it", The Theology of Hope, SCM Press, London, 1967, p 21.
13. For example, Karl Rahner writes: "Dogmatic theology today has to be theological anthropology, and such an anthropocentric orientation of theology is both necessary and fruitful". "Theology and Anthropology" in The Word in History, edited by T Patrick Burke, Sheed & Ward, New York, 1966, p 1.
14. Charles Villa-Vicencio, Theological Studies, THE 304, University of South Africa, Pretoria, 1980, p 7.
15. Schillebeeckx writes: "The hermeneutics of the Kingdom of God consist especially in making the world a better place. Only in this way will I be able to discover what the Kingdom of God means". Quoted in Gutierrez, Theology of Liberation, Op Cit, p13.
16. Much of the current debate in South African historiography revolves around differing understandings concerning the relationship between the capitalist system and the racist structures of South African society. Dan O'Meara's recent study, Volkskapitalisme, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1983, is a striking example of what has become known as the 'class analysis' of South African history. O'Meara sets out to "explore the material conditions, contradictions and struggles in the development of capitalism in South Africa, which gave rise to 'Afrikaaner nationalism'", p 3.
For a similar approach see Frederick Johnstone, Class Race & Gold, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1976, and Marian Lacey, Working for Boroko, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1981. Lacey acknowledges her debt to what she calls "the more theoretically-informed radical perspective of the new school of South African historiography", p xii.

In contrast to this emphasis on 'class analysis', is the explanation and interpretation of South African history in terms of 'racial analysis' or ethnic factors. As an example of a more sophisticated version of this 'liberal school', one might cite T Dunbar Moodie, The Rise of Afrikanerdom, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1975 : "South African racial policy has been based on the determination of white South Africans to retain all political power and so to prevent economic competition from black Africans", p 260.

Another example is a study by Heribert Adam and Hermann Giliomee, The Rise and Crisis of Afrikaner Power, David Philip, Cape Town, 1979. In a chapter on "Interests behind Afrikaner Power", Adam writes, "The basis of its success lies in ethnic mobilization. The resulting structural transformation of South African society amounts to an ethnic revolution", p 177.

Though it is totally beyond the scope of this study to enter into this debate, it is nevertheless important that one be aware of it.

17. Peter Randall (ed), Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1982, SA Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, 1983, p 44-45. These figures were arrived at by combining the census figures for the 'Independent Homelands', the 'non-independent Homelands' and the 'rest of South Africa'.
18. The Republic of South Africa Constitution Act, No. 110 of 1983.
19. It is not necessary in this brief outline to go into further detail about the powers of the President, and the functions of the Joint Standing Committee and other bodies which are still to be set-up.
20. Those designated Black, Coloured and Indian according to the South African Population Registration Act, often prefer to speak of themselves collectively as 'blacks'. The term 'African' is preferred when distinguishing coloured and Indian people from the population-group now officially named 'Blacks'. Perhaps the best rule of thumb in the delicate area of nomenclature is to use the term preferred by the group concerned.
21. See John Dugard, Human Rights and the South African Legal Order, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1978, for details of numerous statutes which (1) impose restrictions on political organisation, freedom of speech, freedom of movement and the right to seek work; (2) provide for residential segregation and powers of forced removal; (3) provide for indefinite detention and interrogation.
22. For example, with regard to the whole policy of creating 'independent homelands', there are those who would argue that this represents a positive development in terms of which more and more people are enjoying the blessings and rights of genuine freedom. Van Onselen, when Secretary to the then Department of Bantu Affairs in 1972, spoke of Africans gaining the same rights as whites in their own fatherland, i.e. Bantustan or homeland. See John Kane-Berman, Soweto - Black Revolt and White Reaction, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1978, p 98.

Others would argue on the contrary, that this policy represents part of the ongoing process whereby oppressive social, economic and political structures will be maintained. In this view, the policy both deprives the majority of the population of their rights of South African citizenship, and ensures that they will continue to be dominated and exploited in the land of their birth.
23. John Eagleson & Philip Scharper (eds), Puebla and Beyond, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1979, p 264.
24. Ibid, p 265.

25. Eric Walker, A History of South Africa, Longman, London, 1927.

C W de Kiewiet, A History of South Africa : Social and Economic, Oxford University Press, London, 1957.

Monica Wilson & Leonard Thompson, The Oxford History of South Africa, Vol I, 1969, Vol II, 1971, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

T R H Davenport, South Africa - A Modern History, MacMillan, Johannesburg, 1978.

The above are just some of many works which could be cited.

For an example of more specialist studies see:

David Welsh, The Roots of Segregation Native Policy in Natal (1845-1910), Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1971.

See also J B Peires, The House of Phalo, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1981, for a detailed account of the history of the Xhosa people leading up to the period of their first defeat. Peires concludes his study with these words: "For the Xhosa, British Kaffraria was a monster which swallowed them up, tore them from their children, and squeezed them off their land onto the labour market", p 169.

For an example of South African history written from a very different perspective, see:

F A van Jaarsveld, The Afrikaner's Interpretation of South African History, Simondium, Cape Town, 1964.

C F J Muller (ed), Vyfhonderd jaar Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis, Acedemica, Pretoria, 1968.

W A de Klerk, The Puritans in Africa : A story of Afrikanerdom, Rex Collings, London, 1975.

26. Monica Wilson & Leonard Thompson (eds), The Oxford History of South Africa, Vol 2, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971, p 364.

27. It can be argued that South African society has essentially evolved around the interests of the jostling power groups which comprise the ruling class. For example, with the discovery of diamonds (1867) and gold (1884), the mining interests required a source of cheap labour. Regulations were, therefore, enacted which required the indigenous people to pay a poll tax. This effectively forced large numbers of the peasantry to seek work on the mines, in order to earn the money to pay the required tax.

28. John de Gruchy & Charles Villa-Vicencio (eds), Apartheid is a Heresy, David Philip, Cape Town, 1983, p 156.

29. A N Pelzer (ed), Verwoerd Speaks, Afrikaanse Persboekhandel, Johannesburg, 1966, p 83 and 84.
Explaining the rationale behind the Bantu Education Act of 1953, Dr Verwoerd said in the Senate, 7 June 1954: "There is no place for him (the Bantu) in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. ... He has been subject to a school system which mislead him by showing him the green pastures of the European"
30. See Francis Wilson, Migrant Labour in South Africa, South African Council of Churches, Johannesburg, 1972, for the most thorough documentation of this system, and Elsa Joubert, The Long Journey of Poppie Nongena, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1980, for one of the most telling accounts ever written of the impact, in personal terms, of the myriad of regulations which negatively affect the lives of Africans in South Africa.
31. John Kane-Berman, Soweto Black Revolt White Reaction, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1978, p 98.
32. Ibid, p 92.
33. Surplus People's Project, Forced Removals in South Africa, 4 Vols, SPP, Cape Town, 1983. Though the figure of 3½ million has been questioned, the writers defend the overall validity of the estimate. See also C Desmond, The Discarded People, Christian Institute, Braamfontein, 1970, concerning resettlement.
34. "Every black man in South Africa will eventually be accommodated in some independent new state there will no longer be a moral obligation in this Parliament to accommodate these people politically", ex-Minister Connie Mulder. Quoted in Helen Zille, "Restructuring the Industrial Decentralisation Strategy", in South African Review ONE, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1983.
35. It was first called the South African Native National Congress. The term 'Native' was dropped in 1925.
36. Peter Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa, University of California, Berkeley, 1971, p 413.
37. Ibid, p 80.
38. For an analysis of this campaign, see Tom Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa since 1945, Chapter 2, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1983, and Leo Kuper, Passive Resistance in South Africa, Jonathan Cape, London, 1956, p 45.
39. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa since 1945, Op Cit, p 45.

40. Francis Wilson, "Southern Africa", Chapter 6 in Cambridge History of Africa, Vol 8, ed Michael Crowder, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, forthcoming, p 279.
41. Howard Zinn, Professor of Political Science at Boston University, in his T B Davie Memorial Lecture at Cape Town University, reported in the Cape Times on 24 July, 1982.
For a copy of the Freedom Charter see Albert Luthuli, Let My People Go, Collins, Johannesburg, 1962, p 239-43. In 1956 a huge 'Treason Trial' took place. Much of the argument revolved around an assessment of the Freedom Charter. All the accused were found not guilty of treasonable intent and were acquitted.
42. Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa, Op Cit, p XII.
43. This sketch of the history of black resistance to oppression has been too brief to do justice to the significant role played by other groups. An adequate account of this history would have to include, for example, the role of the Trade Union Movement and other groupings such as the Non-European Unity Movement, together with the place of the All Africa Convention. The African National Congress was singled out here because it is almost universally acknowledged as the strongest grouping representing the oppressed people of South Africa. For accounts which include other perspectives, see:

NoSizwe, One Azania, One Nation, Zed Press, London, 1979.

Gail Gerhart, Black Power in South Africa, University of California, Berkeley, 1978.

Tom Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945, Op Cit.
44. The Minister of Co-operation and Development, Dr Piet Koornhof, released these figures on the 27 February, 1984. Cape Times report dated 28 February, 1984.
45. See Surplus People's Project, Forced Removals in South Africa, Op Cit, and article by Allister Sparks, "Prisons of Poverty and Hopelessness" in the Cape Argus, 25 November 1983.
46. See J Dugard, Human Rights and the South African Legal Order, Op Cit.
47. Andre du Toit, Associate Professor of Political Philosophy at the University of Stellenbosch, writes in criticism of the Rabie Commission into security legislation, that it "failed to examine such crucial issues as solitary confinement and the methods of interrogation employed by the security police, the evidence of police misconduct in a number of trials and inquest proceedings or, more generally, the causes of the large number of deaths in detention", Article in Cape Times, 21 October, 1982.

48. This form of violence and intimidation has spilled over in its crudest form into homeland government regimes. See report on allegations of torture in Venda, Rand Daily Mail, 13 February 1982, and in the Ciskei, the report done by Nicholas Haysom for the Legal Resources Centre, giving many accounts of torture, Cape Times, 13 October, 1983.
- In Namibia, court cases have brought to light the violent methods of the special paramilitary police unit, commonly known as Koevoet. It appears from the evidence that this counter-insurgency unit uses ruthless tactics against the local population. See reports in Cape Times, 17 October, 1983, 8 November, 1983, 23 November 1983 and 24 November, 1983.
49. See report in Cape Times, 30 June, 1982.
50. "I thought it was pointless to make placards and be shot for that. I decided to go out of the country and get a gun". These words were spoken by Simon Mogoerane when giving evidence during his trial. Reported in Cape Times, 6 August, 1982. It should be pointed out that the Natal-based Inkatha cultural organisation, headed by Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, still adheres to a policy of seeking change by non-violent means.
51. Acts and Resolutions of the Twenty-fourth Session of the Provincial Synod, Church of the Province of Southern Africa, 1982. CPSA, Cape Town, 1983, p 43.
52. See report in Cape Times, 28 January, 1983.
53. See report in Star, 16 December, 1981.
Note also the following words of Professor Gerrit Viljoen:
"When excessive self-protection results in the wronging of others or in the human dignity of other people being impaired, it brings a harvest of bitterness and division in our internal relations that can create an internal enemy worse than that threatening from outside".
Reported in Cape Argus, 15 June, 1978.
54. See Financial Mail, 8 October, 1982.
55. Ibid.
56. Robert Rotberg, "The process of decision-making in contemporary South Africa", quoted in Cape Times, 21 January, 1984.
57. Ibid.
58. See Financial Mail, 24 September, 1982.

59. See Financial Mail, 16 April, 1982.
60. It is not being said that the pattern of domination and oppression in South Africa is synonymous with ethnicity in an absolute sense. The statement holds, however, as a legitimate generalisation.
61. Peter Hathorn, "Dissension in the Ranks - Argument for conscientious objection". Published by Ad Hoc Support Committee, SRC Press, University of Cape Town, 1983, p 2.
62. See Cape Times, 3 April 1983, Report headed "Reds want to deny West SA wealth", giving extracts of a speech by the Minister of Defence, General Magnus Malan.
See also a report in The Southern Cross, 7 March 1982, referring to a broadcast by the Chaplain General of the Defence Force on 14 February 1982, in which he spoke of the call to die if necessary for Christian civilisation in a battle against the forces of atheistic communism.
63. See Cape Times, 27 March, 1982.
64. See Cape Argus, 25 November, 1983.
65. Quoted in Albert Nolan, "Resistance to the Dominant Ideology", Grace and Truth, Vol 3, No 2, June 1982, p 92.
66. Acts and Resolutions of the Twenty-fourth Session of the Provincial Synod of the CPSA, Op Cit, p 43.
67. For example, Professor B B Keet, Dr Beyers Naude and Professor David Bosch.
68. John de Gruchy & Charles Villa Vicencio, (eds), Apartheid is a Heresy, Op Cit, p 170.
69. Most significant among other bodies was the Broederkring, led by Dr Alan Boesak, and largely comprising ministers of the NG Sending Kerk.
70. See Charles Villa-Vicencio, "Southern Africa Today - A Consensus Against Apartheid", in the Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, No 41, December 1982, p 83-5.

CHAPTER 3

THE CHRISTIAN PACIFIST POSITION ACCORDING TO JOHN H YODER

INTRODUCTION

The Context

The description of the present South African reality, outlined in the previous chapter, reveals a pattern of violence and counter violence. This has led some of the victims to resort to arms as members of one or another liberation movement. It is common cause that Christians belonging to various churches are to be found on both sides, either directly involved in armed conflict, or more or less actively supporting one side or the other. It is also common cause that many Christians involved in the armed conflict, whether as members of Umkhonto weSizwe or the South African Defence Force sincerely believe that they are right in what they are doing, or that their participation is, at very least, justifiable.

Clearly, the fact that many are sincere in their belief that their participation is justifiable does not, however, make it morally or theologically justifiable. All Christians need to be challenged, to reflect on their involvement or potential involvement, and ask themselves the fundamental question: Can I really say that what I am doing is justifiable in the light of the Gospel? To put the question in another way: What does obedience to Jesus require of me in this situation of violence and counter violence - this escalating war in South Africa?

The pacifist response

In the Introduction to this study, it was pointed out that, broadly speaking, one can distinguish between three basic positions which have arisen in the history of the Church, in response to the ethical issues raised by the use of force: the 'pacifist', 'crusade', and 'just-war'

traditions. This is said while of course recognising that there are different emphases within each of these positions. It was further argued that the significant debate at present is between the pacifist and just-war traditions.

In this chapter, the pacifist response, or rather a particular version of this, will be identified. In a further chapter, the alternative response of the just-war position will be identified and assessed. This will be necessary because an adequate assessment of the pacifist response inevitably involves a critical comparison with the main alternate position. The reason for concentrating in this chapter on one particular pacifist response soon becomes clear when one attempts to analyse more deeply the theological, exegetical and ethical reasoning behind the pacifist position.

The choice of Yoder as representative of this response

There are, in fact, a great variety of pacifist positions.¹ Yet, in order to prevent this study from becoming unwieldy and over-generalised, it has been decided to concentrate on the theological position of one particular Christian pacifist, namely, that of John Howard Yoder. As was pointed out in Chapter 1, at the very outset of this study, Yoder has been chosen because he is widely regarded as probably the most influential exponent of this tradition today. For example, James Gustafson observes: "My conviction is that all constructive theology in the Christian tradition needs to be defined to some extent in relation to this radical option".² He specifically identifies Yoder as the most cogent and consistent proponent of this option.³

Yoder's theological background

Yoder stands firmly in the pacifist Mennonite Anabaptist tradition.⁴ One of the main thrusts of his theology is his attempt to recall the mainline Christian churches to what he regards as the pacifist demands of the Gospel. In his preface to The Politics of Jesus, Yoder describes his book as, at one level:

.... the simple rebound of a Christian pacifist commitment as it responds to the ways in which mainstream Christian theology has set aside the pacifist implications of the New Testament message.⁵

Yoder's pacifist Anabaptist base is revealed clearly, for example, in a passage in The Original Revolution, in which he severely criticises the revolution of Münster as a travesty of 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".⁶ In Chapter 7 of The Christian Witness to the State, Yoder outlines in graphic form the classic options of the mainline churches, together with certain sectarian views, only to reject them all in favour of his interpretation of what is essentially a Mennonite position.⁷

Yoder, however, does not merely provide an undifferentiated and uncritical statement on Mennonite Anabaptism. He explains how it was that "some conservative Mennonites"⁸ opted for a strategy of withdrawal from politics. He shows how this option was due to certain historically conditioned misunderstandings, and proceeds to develop a theology of 'conscientious participation' in the affairs of the world. On the basis of an exegesis of the New Testament, he challenges all Christians to be

politically involved as an imperative of faithful discipleship. In doing so, he effectively shatters any quietistic tendencies to withdraw from any form of involvement in politics. At the same time, he maintains that pacifism is central to the meaning and message of Jesus.

Yoder's Hermeneutical Approach

Yoder outlines his own hermeneutical principles in terms of a critique of mainstream hermeneutical assumptions, particularly as they are applied to "contemporary social ethics, especially as this latter discipline is currently preoccupied with the problems of power and revolution".⁹ His point of departure is the affirmation of an hypothesis, which he proceeds to defend: that "Jesus is, according to the biblical witness, a model of radical political thought".¹⁰

Yoder's problem with mainstream ethics is that Jesus is not the norm. He is "not relevant in any immediate sense to the questions of social ethics".¹¹ This is so for several reasons. The following are some examples:

1. "The ethic of Jesus is an ethic for an 'interim' which Jesus thought would be very brief;"¹²
2. "Jesus was a simple rural figure"¹³ - not concerned to speak to the complex problems of power politics.
3. Jesus lived at a time when there was no question of having influence in the corridors of power. Since the time of Constantine, however, Christians are faced with a new situation. Christians 'in

power' cannot look to Jesus for immediate guidelines, because he was never in such a situation.

4. Jesus "dealt with spiritual not social matters".¹⁴

Since Jesus himself cannot be normative for ethics, mainstream tradition developed a natural theology, in terms of which "we will measure what is 'fitting' and what is 'relevant' and what is 'effective'".¹⁵ From these assumptions concerning "the sources of a relevant social ethic",¹⁶ this tradition returned, as it were, to the scriptures, only to re-interpret their message in terms of fundamentally questionable assumptions.

Yoder, on the other hand, sets out once again "from the canon"¹⁷ of scripture, with a crucial question constantly before him: "Is there here a social ethic?"¹⁸ Then, without any claim to originality, and with full awareness of "the significance of the critical and historical problems which lie behind the canonical text",¹⁹ he seeks to outline "an understanding of Jesus and his ministry, of which it might be said that such a Jesus would be of direct significance for social ethics".²⁰

It is not my intention to enter into a debate with Yoder concerning his understanding of mainstream hermeneutical assumptions. It is rather to provide a critical evaluation of his Christian pacifist ethic in terms of his own hermeneutical principles. He endeavours to set out from the canon of scripture with the question in mind: "Is there a social ethic here?" His conclusion, that there is indeed a social ethic, will be fully accepted. Where disagreement will arise, however, is over the interpretation he gives of this social ethic.

It will also be accepted that Jesus is indeed the norm for Christians.

Disagreement will once again arise, however, in relation to what this means. It will be argued, among other things, that Yoder fails to take sufficiently into account what the canon records regarding the uniqueness of Jesus, and suggested that this leads him to an inadequate understanding of what it means for disciples to follow him as their norm. What follows is not a detailed statement of Yoder's argument, which is readily available in his own lucid writings. It is rather a brief statement of the broad outline of his position, with a view to establishing a framework within which to raise certain critical questions to be debated in Chapter 4.

JESUS AS NORM : THE IMPLICATIONS FOR DISCIPLESHIP

All Christians are called to imitate Jesus as their norm

The basis of Yoder's pacifism is scriptural and, more specifically, Christological.

The New Testament reveals the absolute normativeness of the Law of Love of the Kingdom of God as final authoritative revelation of what is ethically ultimate defining that Love in particular as the Sermon on the Mount defines it, as self-giving, non-retaliating²¹ The only normative point of orientation can and must be the Jesus of the New Testament witness.²²

He finds in Jesus, as portrayed in the Gospels and interpreted in the other New Testament writings, a transparent model for all Christians today, in every dimension of their lives - individual, ecclesial, social and political.

Jesus was not just a sacrificial lamb preparing for his immolation (He was) the bearer of a new possibility of human, social and therefore political relationships.²³

In understanding what is meant in saying that Jesus is the model for all Christian behaviour, his conclusion is that "the two patterns of

'discipleship' and 'imitation' overlap sufficiently in substance that we properly treat them here together".²⁴

In adopting the "imitation" model of discipleship, Yoder nevertheless is careful to distinguish this from what he calls the "mendicant" model, which "centered its attention upon the outward form of Jesus' life; his forsaking domicile and property, his celibacy or his barefoot itinerancy".²⁵ This is seen as "a formal mimicking of his life style" and a "distortion".²⁶ Against this position, Yoder argues that

There is but one realm in which the concept of imitation holds - at the point of the concrete social meaning of the cross in its relation to enmity and power. Servanthood replaces dominion, forgiveness absorbs hostility.²⁷

He bases his case on an exegesis of a series of texts,²⁸ showing how disciples are called to "love indiscriminately as God does"²⁹ - which means loving our enemies as Jesus did; "forgive as God forgives;"³⁰ "... serve others as Jesus did"³¹ - taking upon us "suffering servanthood in place of dominion;"³² "... accept innocent suffering without complaint as he did."³³

It is from texts like these which Yoder finds, within the New Testament as a whole, the basis for his understanding of Jesus as the one who came to inaugurate what can appropriately be called the original revolution.

The 'original revolution' of Jesus

In a significant essay³⁴ for the understanding of his position, Yoder outlines the meaning and content of this original revolution. It is "the creation of a distinct community with its own deviant set of values and its coherent way of incarnating them".³⁵ It is a "voluntary society mixed in its composition".³⁶ To this society, Jesus gave "a new way to

deal with violence - by suffering. He gave them a new way to deal with money - by sharing it".³⁷ In presenting this radical way of life, Jesus rejected all other options. He rejected the strategy of:

- (a) The Herodians and the Sadducees who opted for some kind of alignment with the powers that be, believing that this was the most effective way to influence the course of events.³⁸
- (b) The Zealots who chose the way of revolutionary violence believing that this was the only way left to change the status quo.³⁹
- (c) The Essenes who withdrew as totally as possible from the wicked world waiting for God's eschatological intervention.⁴⁰
- (d) The Pharisees who opted for 'spiritual' and religious ways of living within a world which could not be changed in any social or political sense.⁴¹

Yet Yoder argues forcefully that, of all these options, Jesus was most tempted by that of the Zealots:

Jesus was actually the closest to the Zealots; from his temptation in the desert to his temptation in the garden he was more like the Zealots than like any of the other three groups. Jesus was really tempted to join the national liberation front.⁴²

In the end, however, Jesus emphatically rejected this temptation. He realised that the way of revolutionary violence would not bring about the kind of society to which he was committed. The fault with the Zealot option was that it was not radical enough. "It simply takes the same view of justified violence and applies it against the Romans".⁴³ Instead, Jesus opted for the way of non-violent sacrificial love as the only real means of transforming the human condition. This is the significance and profound challenge of his example.

Rejecting all other strategies, Jesus came with the "good news of God's original revolution":⁴⁴ the creation of a new community which would

proclaim "the judgement of God upon the present order and the imminent promise of another one".⁴⁵ Jesus came to form a new community, which would be used by God in this task of radical transformation, by a commitment to love without violence.

A radical judgment on the status quo

Yoder is at pains to point out that this original revolution which Jesus came to inaugurate is not to be confined to the practice of private, apolitical, personal piety. He is insistent that the message of Jesus constitutes a radical judgment on the status quo. "The fifth path"⁴⁶ which Jesus took, while rejecting violence as a means of change, nevertheless has direct and concrete implications for the political life of man.

The Kingdom is as political as you can get as far as vocabulary goes.⁴⁷ Jesus came to a community seeking liberation from oppression, and he offered a way which answered the deepest political questions.⁴⁸

It is, therefore, an important characteristic of Yoder's position that the present status quo is fundamentally unacceptable to God and, therefore, to the disciples of his Son, Jesus Christ. "It is evident in Jesus", says Yoder, "that God takes the side of the poor",⁴⁹ and that "liberation is certainly the right agenda for Christian concern for society".⁵⁰ The meaning of this for the role of Christians in the state will be considered later in this chapter.

The doctrine of 'revolutionary subordination'

In describing the ethics of the new revolutionary community, Yoder

formulates his central doctrine of revolutionary subordination. It is this doctrine which forms the foundation and, indeed, the heart of his understanding of the ethic of Jesus and, consequently, of the pacifism to which he calls his disciples. "He gave them a new way of dealing with violence - by suffering".⁵¹ In chapter nine of The Politics of Jesus, Yoder specifically enlarges on the exegetical foundation of this doctrine. He bases his position on Colossians 3:18-4:1 (and related texts from Ephesians 5 & 6 and I Peter 2 & 3).

Wives, be subject to your husband slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters"

Yoder argues that there is a certain mutuality of subordination contained in, for example, the exhortation to wives and husbands.⁵² In his view, however, there is a clear exception to this dimension of mutuality in the case of Christians as political subjects. In this instance, the "call to subordination is not reversed".⁵³ This is in keeping with the life and teaching of Jesus, with his own renunciation of any recourse to state power, or even resistance to it.⁵⁴

It may be said that Yoder calls this subordination revolutionary for two reasons: (a) because it is totally new and original, and (b) more importantly because he is convinced, on the basis of the world transforming work of Jesus, that this is indeed the way his disciples can truly revolutionise or radically transform human relationships in their personal and political dimensions. It might well be an ethic which seems impracticable, and unrealistic, and even scandalous, but it is in fact an ethic which heals and changes human existence in the only truly revolutionary way. "We have reason to hope that the loving willingness of our subordination will itself have a missionary impact".⁵⁵

This voluntary subordination is to be practised not only in relation to

other people, but "toward the structures of this world".⁵⁶ This emphatically does not mean accepting these structures, for they are rejected by God, but it does mean loving subordination to them. Yoder believes that Jesus was "the first to teach and in his suffering to concretize"⁵⁷ this revolutionary subordination. He asserts, furthermore, that Jesus taught "this freedom from the need to smash them since they are about to crumble anyway".⁵⁸

The basis on which Yoder makes such an assertion will become clear when dealing with his theology of the "powers" in the next section of this chapter. Furthermore, his understanding of the implications of this doctrine of revolutionary subordination will be enlarged upon, when outlining his exegesis of Romans 13:1-7 in the section on the role of Christians in the state.

In the next chapter on the critical evaluation of his position, it will be argued that he fails to show, in a convincing way, how in contemporary society the doctrine of revolutionary subordination leads to meaningful transformation of political structures. He fails to establish an unambiguous relationship between his idea of revolutionary subordination, and God's rejection of the status quo. It will be argued further, in criticism of his doctrine of revolutionary subordination, that the exegesis upon which he bases it is too selective and, in the end, not totally convincing.

The cross and resurrection of Jesus - the ground of hope

In describing some twenty-five different forms of pacifism in his book, Nevertheless, Yoder makes the following statement which would seem to be

an apt description of his own position:

It is in the person and work of Jesus in his teachings and his Passion that this kind of pacifism finds its rootage, and in his resurrection that it finds its enablement.⁵⁹

Yoder finds that the critics of Christian pacifism not only fail to acknowledge the challenge of the way of the cross, but also fail to accept the implications for ethics of the resurrection of Jesus. The ground of hope is precisely in his resurrection from death. In other words, God has the power to find a way through situations which are totally dark and devoid of any hope from the human point of view.

Yoder bases his Christian pacifism on this doctrine of hope in the resurrection. In an article, "What would you do if?"⁶⁰ he responds to the classic question always posed to pacifists: What would you do if your wife was being attacked by an insane or criminal assailant? Yoder points out that the assumption behind the question is that there are only two alternatives: either violence will be done by the criminal, or violence must be done to the criminal. He insists that for the disciple of Christ there is always another possibility - another hope - namely, that God can enter this very situation with his redemptive power.

Does not Christian belief in resurrection mean that it is precisely where we do not see how a given situation can possibly be worked out that God might demonstrate his saving intent?⁶¹

Yoder applies this idea of 'another way', based on hope in the resurrection of Jesus, to the whole area of social and political ethics. The way of non-violence in the struggle for a more just society is not, in the last resort, based on any capacity to calculate its political effectiveness in secular terms. It is based on obedience to the New Testament ethic and hope in the resurrection of Jesus. "The meaning of history is an outworking of the sacrifice of the Lamb which is the way to bring righteousness".⁶²

Yoder's pacifism in contrast with other pacifists

Yoder is adamant that the pacifist implications of the Gospel are not simply a matter of special calling for some, but are rather an imperative for all:

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 non-resistance in discipleship.⁶³ in the renunciation of the sword to which Jesus called his disciples is one of the keys to the rest of the problem of Christian faithfulness.⁶⁴

Apart from this rejection of vocational pacifism,⁶⁵ it is important to point out other ways in which Yoder's pacifism differs from that of other Christian pacifists and non-Christian pacifists. His appeal is "to Jesus alone",⁶⁶ rather than to some absolute principle.⁶⁷ Thus, he is able to assert that non-resistance is "not a matter of legalism but of discipleship".⁶⁸ For similar reasons, he avoids basing his pacifism on a secular humanist 'respect for life' principle.

He concedes that there are "certain criticisms of pacifism which have a degree of validity".⁶⁹

1. He is not, ultimately, interested in a pacifism which rests its case on the conviction that non-violence is the most effective means of political change. Thus he is able to say:

The love of the gospel ethic is unconditional obedience to the nature of love, making no promises of effectiveness.⁷⁰

In this regard, he distinguishes the pacifism of non-violent resistance from non-resistant pacifism:

.... nonviolent resistance as represented by Gandhi's disciples is a means of coercion in class, race or party struggle.⁷¹ the pragmatic grounds of nonviolent pacifism should be distinguished. A

pacifism which is advocated because it promises to be effective always risks by its own logic being driven to accept war when pacifism no longer appears successful.⁷²

Yoder's emphasis on non-resistance as opposed to non-violent resistance is in keeping with his doctrine of revolutionary subordination. In the final chapter of The Politics of Jesus, he again draws attention to this distinction. He points out that his own position is

significantly different from the kind of "pacifism" which would say that it is wrong to kill, but that with proper non-violent techniques you can obtain without killing everything you have a right to ask for. In this context it seems that the rejection of violence is offered only because it is a more shrewd way to impose one's will on someone else.⁷³

In Nevertheless, Yoder draws attention to the essential weakness in the pacifism of non-violent social change, admitting that it is only "effective when one can appeal to the conscience of the oppressor".⁷⁴ He doubts its effectiveness "against a regime in which oppression is carried on with a good conscience".⁷⁵

It might seem that Yoder's preference is for the pacifism of non-resistance. Yet, elsewhere, he appears to approve the whole strategy of non-violent direct action exemplified by Gandhi and Martin Luther King.⁷⁶ It is not always clear how he relates his strict doctrine of revolutionary subordination and non-resistance, to the active struggle for change through the defiance of unjust laws, represented by the strategy of non-violent direct action. Perhaps the best way to understand the relationship is in terms of an inner almost spiritual quality of non-resistance, combined with the active witness against injustice.

2. Yoder makes a point of disassociating himself from the attempt by some Christian pacifists to persuade the state to make an option for pacifism.

This optimism with regard to the possibility of the state's fulfilling the requirements of Christian ethics is one which neither a careful study of the Bible nor a realistic interpretation of current events can admit.⁷⁷

The reasoning behind this position is most significant and will become clear when dealing with Yoder's distinction between Christian ethics for the state and Christian ethics for Christians.⁷⁸

Enough has been said in this section of the outline of Yoder's Christian pacifism to establish the initial statement that his pacifism rests essentially on his scriptural exegesis and stems first and foremost from his Christology. He sums up his own conviction in the final words of The Politics of Jesus:

A social style characterised by the creation of a new community and the rejection of violence of any kind is the theme of the New Testament proclamation from beginning to end, from left to right. The cross of Christ is the model of Christian social efficacy, the power of God for those who believe.⁷⁹

In the critique of his position in the next chapter, it is precisely his exegesis and Christology which will be evaluated and questioned in certain crucial respects.

A THEOLOGY OF THE 'POWERS' AND THE ROLE OF THE STATE

Before attempting to describe Yoder's position concerning the role of the Church and of Christians in the world, it will be helpful first to clarify his 'theology of the state' and its role. This requires a brief analysis of his understanding of "the principalities and powers".

Basing his argument on Colossians 1:16-17: "For in him were created all things whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers",⁸⁰ Yoder asserts that the 'powers' "were part of the good creation of God".⁸¹ It is now true, however, they are fallen and need to be redeemed. Nevertheless, they "continue to exercise an ordering function".⁸² In other words, there is an ambiguity concerning the role of the 'powers'. It is both positive and negative.

Before enlarging on this, there is another significant area of ambiguity which Yoder finds in Paul and which needs to be clarified here. It is the question concerning the 'powers' as spiritual realities, and the 'powers' as earthly, structural, political realities. In this regard, Yoder refers to what he believes is a "stimulating confusion"⁸³ present in the thought of Paul. The apostle uses language which is both political and cosmological. Often this language is used in parallel.⁸⁴

The ambiguity of language, however, corresponds to the reality it expresses. There is a mysterious, but vital, relationship between the 'powers' in their spiritual dimensions and the 'powers' in their political or incarnational dimensions. In attempting to elucidate this relationship, Yoder analyses the word 'structure'⁸⁵ and criticises the protestant individualism which caused many to assume "that the Apostle did not deal with structural problems".⁸⁶ It seems, therefore, that Yoder would share Berkhof's understanding of Paul's theology of the 'powers', when Berkhof, referring to the high priests, the scribes, Herod and Pilate, says: "In and behind these visible authorities Paul sees invisible higher 'powers' working".⁸⁷ Yoder continues to develop his theology of the 'powers' in the following way: The 'powers' are under the "providential sovereignty of God. He is still able to use them for good".⁸⁸ These 'powers' are not

simply reluctantly tolerated by Providence as some unmitigated evil which the Almighty Creator is, nevertheless, able to turn to his good ends, as the sin which caused Jesus to be crucified was turned into the victory of love. Yoder's view of the 'powers' is more positive:

These structures were created by God. It is the divine purpose that within human existence there should be a network of norms and regularities to stretch out the canvas upon which the tableau of life can be painted.⁸⁹

Without these structures which "in their general essence", are "parts of a good creation", there "could not be society or history, there could not be man".⁹⁰ The 'powers' are part of the very fabric of creation which makes human existence possible. In so far as they are fallen and "have absolutised themselves"⁹¹ they also "harm and enslave man".⁹²

It was the work of Christ, therefore, to break the power of the "principalities and powers" which were by virtue of the Fall, in contradiction to his declared will and purpose. Yoder quotes extensively from Berkhof, to describe how Christ achieved this victory over the 'powers', by unmasking them and revealing their true nature.⁹³ It is "by the cross and not by the sword"⁹⁴ that Jesus has created and established the "new humanity" with the capacity to overcome the 'powers' in their dehumanising form.

Present history runs its course in the context of two overlapping aeons: the old aeon of the fallen 'powers' and the new aeon of the victorious Christ. Yoder borrows an analogy from Cullman concerning 'D-Day' and 'V-Day', to describe the present period between Christ's victory on the cross and the final consummation of all things on the Last Day.⁹⁵

The Role of the State

It is upon his theology of the 'powers' that Yoder bases his understanding of the role of the state in God's scheme of things. The state has the

... obligation to serve God by encouraging the good and restraining evil, ie 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.⁹⁶ The function of the state in maintaining an ordered society is thereby a part of the divine plan for evangelization of the world.⁹⁷

In serving the purposes of God in this way, the state will have to perform a police function - a peace keeping role. In this context, the use of force becomes necessary and legitimate:

If the use of force is such as to protect the innocent and punish evildoers, to preserve peace so that "all men might come to the knowledge of the truth", then the state may be considered as fitting within God's plan.⁹⁸

The state is to perform the limited but vital function of maintaining a balance between destructive forces jostling for control. The state, says Yoder, has a "responsibility for the maintenance of order".⁹⁹ "The fabric of society is to be preserved both from revolution and from war".¹⁰⁰ Yoder goes as far as to suggest that methods of warfare confined to the "localised readjustment of a tension cannot be condemned on principle".¹⁰¹

It is perhaps worth observing at this point that Yoder's position with regard to the role of the state seems to bear some striking resemblances to Reformation teaching on the "two kingdoms". Both appear to find a legitimate role for citizens as members of the state in wielding the sword for the purpose of maintaining right order. The crucial distinction, however, between for example Luther and Yoder is that the former justifies Christians undertaking this role, whereas the latter confines this function to non-Christians. He would regard the use of the

sword by Christians as a violation of what it means to follow Jesus. This will be dealt with in greater detail below.

To conclude this section, it might be helpful simply to indicate that in the evaluation of Yoder's position in the next chapter, the implications of emphasising the role of non-Christians (as opposed to Christians) in maintaining this particular function of the state, will be analysed critically. There appear to be some major theological problems arising from this.

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH AND OF CHRISTIANS IN THE WORLD

We have seen that Yoder's theology of the 'powers' and of the 'imitation' of Jesus lead him to two decisive conclusions:

"the Christian has committed himself to have no recourse to force";¹⁰² yet the "very nature of the state is force"¹⁰³ which has "the ultimate purpose of preserving the fabric of the human community as the context within which the Church's work can be carried on".¹⁰⁴

For Yoder there are certain radical differences between Christian ethics and the ethics of the state. Christian ethics is based on the Gospel faith. The Christian renunciation of the use of force is derived from the "fundamental commitment of faith to Jesus Christ and the way of the cross in which He has called them to follow Him".¹⁰⁵ The state, on the other hand cannot, on this side of the consummation of all things, be expected to fulfil the "requirements of Christian ethics",¹⁰⁶ by renouncing the use of force.¹⁰⁷ As was pointed out above, Yoder acknowledges that he parts company at this point with many other Christian pacifists, and

non-Christian pacifists, but defends himself on the grounds of both "a careful study of the Bible" (and) "a realistic interpretation of current events".¹⁰⁸

Another way in which Yoder clarifies this radical distinction between the state and the Church is in terms of the two aeons:

The present aeon is characterised by sin and centered on man; the coming aeon is the redemptive reality which entered history in an ultimate way in Christ.¹⁰⁹ It is thus meaningful to speak of an 'order of providence' where Christ rules in and through the obedience of His disciples.¹¹⁰

The question then arises as to how the "order of redemption" relates to the "order of providence". What meaningful role can the Church or the individual Christian play in society? Many assume that there can be no relevant role. It is one of the main thrusts of Yoder's theological task to question this assumption: "The rejection of violence appears to be social withdrawal if we assume that violence is the key to all that happens in society".¹¹¹ He argues, on the contrary, that the Church can play a vital role in the healing of people and nations through embracing powerlessness - renouncing the use of force in obedience to the example and teaching of Jesus.

The renunciation of coercive violence is the prerequisite of a genuinely creative social responsibility and to the exercise of those kinds of social power which are less self-defeating.¹¹²

The primary role of the Church in society is to be what Jesus created it to be: "a distinct community with its own deviant set of values and its coherent way of incarnating them".¹¹³ "He gave them a new way to deal with offenders - by forgiving them. He gave them a new way to deal with violence - by suffering. He gave them a new way to deal with money - by

sharing it".¹¹⁴ The Church's contribution to society is to be a "demonstration of what love means in social relations".¹¹⁵ The Gospel has manifest social implications and the Church is called to live them and preach them.

One of the most important truths which the Church can share with society for its good, is the awareness that 'power' is not synonymous with 'effectiveness'. History is not just the story of the 'big battalions'. The world needs to question its deeply held assumptions about the effectiveness of power. The world has tended "to overrate both the power and manageability of those particular social structures identified as 'political'".¹¹⁶ It is of great importance that humanity becomes more deeply aware of its limited power to manage history. We don't have to have power to influence political events for the good.¹¹⁷ Just because the Church and Christians renounce power, this does not mean that they are "apolitical". Alternative social groups can make a powerful impact on society, for example, the early Christian Church.¹¹⁸

Yoder rejects as thoroughly unbiblical any idea that Jesus came to preach some 'spiritual' gospel relevant only to the individual and without any radical implications for society. Jesus rejects the status quo and comes to inaugurate a jubilee year.¹¹⁹ In rejecting the 'Zealot option', namely the use of violence as a means of change and reform, Jesus does not counsel the other extreme - the 'Essene option'- the retreat from the world to wait for the apocalypse.¹²⁰ The Gospel demands of the Church "conscientious participation"¹²¹ according to Gospel criteria.

Expanding on the implications of this "conscientious participation", Yoder makes a number of significant assertions about the prophetic role of the

Church, and about the way in which God gives his special attention to the needs of the poor and oppressed.

The prophetic church speaks first of all God's condemnation of concrete injustices; if those injustices are corrected, new ones may be tackled.¹²²

It is evident in Jesus that God takes the side of the poor.¹²³

Liberation is certainly the right agenda for Christian concern for society. It is the language of Moses and Amos and Jesus. There is sufficient biblical warrant for saying that partisanship for the unfree is the place to stand.¹²⁴

For Yoder there are two basic dimensions to the Church's prophetic role. the first is the witness given through the example of its own life in Christ. This, he is convinced, is all the more effective the less the Church is tied to the power structures of the world.¹²⁵ The second is the message which it conveys through prophetic words to the state.

Christian ethics for the state

At the beginning of this section on "The Role of the Church in the World", it was pointed out that for Yoder there are radical differences between Christian ethics (for example, the imperative to renounce the use of force) and state ethics (the legitimacy of the police function in using force to maintain the social fabric upon which all human life depends). While the primary witness of the Church to the state is the living out of the gospel life in the community of believers, the Church does have a further role in the state, namely, to recall the state to its own 'best possible' ethic.

Thus, while there needs to be a "clear recognition that Christian ethics is for Christians",¹²⁶ there is an important sense in which it can be

said that there is a Christian ethics for the state.¹²⁷ By virtue of the belief in the Lordship of Christ over all creation, it can be said that Jesus has a claim over the state as well as the Church. However, because the state does not share the faith of Christians and, therefore, the direct commitment to Jesus as a transparent and total model, the criteria and nature of "Christian ethics for the State" cannot be the same.¹²⁸ Basing his argument on Romans 13 and I Timothy 2, Yoder is able to say that "the policing function of the State is to a degree legitimate" but that "war is illegitimate".¹²⁹ He is even able to go as far as saying that

certain concepts, such as that of the lesser evils, while illegitimate for guiding Christian discipleship, are still relevant in the elaboration of an ethic for the State.¹³⁰

Arguing along these lines, Yoder is prepared to take Jean Lasserre to task for the criteria he adopts in insisting that the state has no right to take life and that, in certain situations, this demand might be a matter of "raising the wrong issue first".¹³¹ Speaking further, from the logic of a 'Christian ethic for the state' as opposed to a 'Christian ethic for Christians', Yoder even moots the theoretical possibility of circumstances in which the "possible unseating of an unjust ruler could be justified as politically legitimate".¹³² In this way, Yoder is able to speak as a Christian to the non-Christians who run the State, in the language of thorough-going political realism:

The Christian speaks not of how to describe, and then to seek to create the ideal society, but of how the State can best fulfill its responsibilities in a fallen society.¹³³

We need not to be embarrassed when the politician 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.¹³⁴

It is a remarkable feature of Yoder's theology that he is able, on the one hand, to call all Christians to live out the radical pacifist ethic of the

Sermon on the Mount while, on the other hand, he can present an approach to the state which is characterised by a striking degree of political pragmatism.

Thus, in this latter context, outside the fold of believers, Yoder is prepared to use the language of "the lesser of two evils" and the concept of "middle axioms"¹³⁶ as a means to

.... translate into meaningful and concrete terms the general relevance of the Lordship of Christ for a given social ethical issue. They mediate between the general principles of Christological ethics and the concrete problems of political application.¹³⁷

In summary, it can be said that Yoder's theology concerning the role of the Church in society is characterised by two distinctive ethical patterns:

- (a) the call for Christians to live out in their unique faith-community, the 'Christian ethics for Christians'. It is a firmly held conviction that this Christ-like living is profoundly relevant to the state, leavening secular man's total existence.¹³⁸
- (b) the call by the Church to society to live out a more just pattern of social relations in accordance with the 'Christian ethics for the state'. This 'Christian ethics for the state', in so far as it differs from the 'Christian ethics for Christians', is of necessity a Christian ethics for non-believers.

The role of Christians in the state

Concerning the role of the Church and of Christians in the world, there

are some further implications to be considered as to the role of the Christian as a citizen. These implications will be analysed in the form of a series of questions. Although there is an overlapping in the content of these questions, they help in clarifying some of the finer distinctions.

1. Can a Christian participate in Government?

Yoder says, quite explicitly, that "the function exercised by government is not the function to be exercised by Christians".¹³⁹ This is because government wields power and uses force, whereas discipleship of Jesus demands the renunciation of power and, more specifically, the use of force. Elsewhere Yoder qualifies this statement of his position by questioning the assumption that all involvement in the elective and legislative processes necessarily involves complicity in the use of violence. He argues for the possibility of selective involvement by Christians, of a kind which remains consistent with the commitment to non-resistant discipleship.

But this does not change our present argument, namely, that those who think participation in the legislative and elective processes to be major involvement in the wielding of the sword are probably mistaken and that it would be quite possible from the position of New Testament non-resistance to use selectively these means of communication without any compromise being implied.¹⁴⁰

The Christian, in this context, would have no concern for power, nor holding on to any such position of power, but rather understand the purpose of holding office "more as an occasion to speak to the authorities than as being an agent of the government".¹⁴¹ This is what Yoder means when he speaks of "conscientious participation". Christians must never wield the sword, but they can participate in government in a limited way, and fulfil a prophetic function as citizens.

2. What does it mean for a Christian to be subject?

It is under this heading that the response of the Christian to persecution and state violence can be considered. In other words, it is a question concerning the political implications of the doctrine of revolutionary subordination.

In his exegesis of Romans 13¹⁴², Yoder's main concern is to distinguish between "being subject" and "being obedient". Romans 13 confirms the call to 'be subject', but this does not at all require of a Christian that he obey when called upon by the state to do anything contrary to the teaching of Jesus.¹⁴³ Thus, while being 'subject to' to the state, the Christian will rightly disobey the state if called upon by law to take up arms in the military. Another example would be the moral imperative for the Christian to disobey the state's demand to worship Caesar. Nevertheless, in the same breath as it were, Yoder re-emphasises in a radical way his teaching about revolutionary subordination; the Christian must submit and not resist when Caesar chooses to kill him.¹⁴⁴

Yoder makes essentially the same point when he expounds on the meaning of Romans 13 in his book, The Christian Witness to the State. Paul's intention is simply to counsel Christians in Rome against any temptation to rebel, in spite of provocation through persecution.¹⁴⁵

It is true that Yoder makes it clear that the message of Jesus constitutes a radical judgement on the status quo, and that it might well be necessary for the Christian to disobey the state in certain circumstances. Nevertheless, his understanding of how Christians are to be subject and live out a revolutionary subordination seems, at times, to suggest a significant

degree of political submission to the existing political system, however unjust it may be:

.... no state can be so low on the scale of relative justice that the duty of the Christian is no longer to be subject.¹⁴⁶

Christians must learn to live the new life "within the structures of society".¹⁴⁷ The new Christian order is not an alternate to the present, "but rather a renewed way of living within the present".¹⁴⁸ For the Christian, "freedom can already be realised within his present status by voluntarily accepting subordination".¹⁴⁹

The political consequences of this teaching, for the Christian suffering oppression and state violence, are considerable. Yoder's basic position is clear: to be subject might mean disobeying the state under certain limited conditions, but forceful resistance can never be justified.

3. Can a Christian be a policeman?

Yoder himself poses this as a serious question.¹⁵⁰ Care has been taken to distinguish between the 'Christian ethics for Christians' and the 'Christian ethics for the state'. It has been pointed out that, for Yoder, there is no real problem about a non-Christian engaging in police-type activity. He acknowledges that "... police force, within definite limits, is legitimate in the fallen world".¹⁵¹ For the Christian, however, committed in faith to the imperative of non-resistant love, it would seem manifestly inconsistent to participate in a police use of force. It is very significant that Yoder is, nevertheless, prepared to consider the possible ethical validity for a Christian involvement in a police function.

He first of all argues that the reason for the non-participation of the early Christians was not based on a form of moral absolutism against participation in government functions or on an 'Essene withdrawal theology'. It had its roots "rather in considerations of relative importance and urgency, and (in an accessory way) in the state's idolatry".¹⁵² Strictly speaking, therefore, it remains an open question as to whether it is legitimate or not for a Christian to partake in the police peace-keeping function.

He goes on to re-state the question in this important way:

Does the general call (to be an agent of reconciliation), valid for every Christian, take for certain individuals a form of a specific call to be also an agent of the wrath of God?¹⁵³

Yoder is quick to point out that he has not come across someone who feels so called in this exceptional way. He speaks of this call as a "hypothetical extreme".¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, he continues to defend it as a possibility, and reiterates his rejection of a Christian ethic based on "legalism" and "absolute rules".¹⁵⁵

At this point, Yoder appears to come significantly close to the position held by Karl Barth, namely, that there are extreme borderline (Grenzfall) situations in which a Christian may be called to act in a way which involves, as it were, a suspension of the ethical norm as usually understood. It must be said, however, that this theoretical possibility is most untypical of the main thrust of Yoder's position, namely, that "non-resistant love is the way of the disciple".¹⁵⁶

4. Can a Christian participate as a soldier in war?

It has just been noted that Yoder leaves a theoretical opening for the

possibility of a Christian undertaking the role of a policeman. He insists, however, that the police function is crucially different from that of the soldier or revolutionary.

The function of bearing the sword to which Christians are called to be subject is the judicial and police function; it does not refer to the death penalty or war.¹⁵⁷

He sees these functions as "structurally" distinct.¹⁵⁸ More often than not, police power operates without the criminal even offering resistance; for example, being summonsed to court. He rejects the attempt to develop a theory of "just-war" from "the logic of the limited violence of police authority", although he does admit that "there is some logic"¹⁵⁹ to this way of thinking, and goes on to concede that

.... at very most, the only relevance of Romans 13 to war would be to a very precise operation carried on within the very clear limitations of all the classic criteria that define the 'justifiable war'.¹⁶⁰

This is a most significant statement by Yoder, for it appears that his discourse at this point is in terms of Christian ethics for Christians, and not simply in terms of his Christian ethics for the state alone.

In the final analysis, it seems that while there is in Yoder's thought a place for the Christian policeman as a "hypothetical extreme", there is no justification for the Christian to partake as a soldier in war:

As far as any real or conceivable war is concerned, in the name of any real or thinkable government, it is not honestly possible to include that function under the authorization given government by Romans 13.¹⁶¹

With regard to the question of a Christian taking up arms in rebellion against the state, Yoder is absolutely clear; under no circumstances whatsoever can such a course of action be justified. He points out that Jesus rejects the fatal temptation of the Zealot option.¹⁶² As the outline above of his doctrine of revolutionary subordination makes clear, the calling of the Christian is radically different; it is to non-

resistant suffering, which is the opposite of armed rebellion. Furthermore, "nothing in the text of Romans 13 justifies the concept of just rebellion."¹⁶³ Even in his attitudes, the Christian must be non-resistant "toward a tyrannical government".¹⁶⁴ This is all consistent with Christian vocation to 'revolutionary subordination' which is central to Yoder's understanding of the pacifism of Jesus.

It is important to remember that Yoder here is expounding 'Christian ethics for Christians'. When, however, he talks about a 'Christian ethic for the state' (assuming he is referring to non-Christians), his ethical terms of reference shift and his conclusions, therefore, are significantly different. "We do not ask of the government that it be non-resistant".¹⁶⁵ He then goes on to analyse the concept of "legitimacy" and asks what happens when there are two authorities - "Prince versus emperor".¹⁶⁶ It often happens that citizens are

.... called to be subjects not of one ruler but of two
state or province versus federal government revolu-
tionary underground versus colonial occupation ...
repeatedly the choice is not between subjection and
rebellion as between two possible attitudes towards the
same government.¹⁶⁷

Elsewhere in this connection, Yoder, speaking of the age of the Huguenots, refers to "an ideal doctrine of just revolution through the lesser magistracy, the regime healing itself".¹⁶⁸

Thus, while for Christians the message remains very clear, namely that for disciples of Jesus, revolution can never be right or justifiable, for non-Christians the ethical possibilities remain much wider. Yoder is, therefore, able to argue that for those who are not disciples of Jesus, it

.... still would be arguable that resistance to, and even
the possible unseating of an unjust ruler would be
justified as politically legitimate.¹⁶⁹

He then enlarges on the criteria which should operate if this was to be

justified in terms of the 'Christian ethic for the state' as opposed to the 'Christian ethics for Christians'.

On the issue of just-rebellion, Yoder's ethics for Christians stand in most stark contrast to his ethics for non-Christians. A Christian should never be a revolutionary but for a non-Christian this may be permitted. The validity of making such a stark distinction will be questioned and analysed in the next chapter.

THE BASIS OF YODER'S DISAGREEMENT WITH KARL BARTH CONCERNING 'JUST-WAR' THEORY

Before completing this outline of Yoder's Christian pacifist position, it will be helpful to state briefly the basis of his disagreement with Barth's theology of 'just-war'. It was argued above that for Christians there are essentially only two options possible in response to the problems of violence and war, namely, the pacifist and the 'just-war' options. A brief presentation of Yoder's critique of Barth will, therefore, help to focus this outline around the central debate. Again, this statement, as with the more general outline of Yoder's position in this chapter, can be of a general nature, with a rather more detailed analysis of his critique being discussed in Chapter 5.

It should be pointed out that Yoder is far from being easily dismissive of 'just-war' theory. Thus, he says:

The doctrine of the "just-war" must be dealt with far more respectfully than most pacifists have been willing to do.¹⁷⁰

He even goes as far as to acknowledge that his debate with Barth is one "carried on within the pacifist camp".¹⁷¹ As Yoder understands him,

Barth "is far nearer to Christian pacifism than he is to any kind of systematic apology for Christian participation in war".¹⁷² In the end, however, Yoder comes down decisively against Barth's justification for participation in certain wars.

For Barth, all ethics stems from the will of God which is conveyed to human beings as his sovereign command. Human beings cannot absolutise any norms and ethical laws because to do so might involve limiting the exceptional command of God. Barth argues that there can exist exceptional circumstances in which a departure from the norm becomes ethically justifiable as an exceptional case. His word for this is "Grenzfall" or "borderline case". Such departures from the generally accepted and understood norm are justifiable, when willed by God. Thus Yoder explains:

The Grenzfall is the denial of man's right to refuse God the freedom to make exceptions if he so wills It does not contradict what God originally said, but rather limits man's capacity and right to make affirmations about what God's words mean.¹⁷³

In an effort to state Barth's position fairly and in all its depth, Yoder specially draws attention to Barth's conviction, "... that what is apparently an exception is actually a deeper faithfulness to the law, the most concrete form of obedience".¹⁷⁴

Against this position, Yoder raises certain major criticisms:

1. How can a person know when an exception is commanded? Yoder does not find in Barth any satisfactory answer to this vital question.¹⁷⁵
2. To take his critique further, he puts another question: "Whence and how does this commandment come?"¹⁷⁶ He then answers the question himself, in Christological terms: "There is only one

command of God, and that command is spoken to man in Jesus Christ".¹⁷⁷ What Jesus commands in terms of both his example and his words is patently clear, according to Yoder, namely, that his disciples must follow him in non-resistant pacifism - a revolutionary subordination.

3. Yoder, therefore, rejects Barth's Grenzfall ethics on the grounds that "we cannot count on situations ever arising in which God would take back what he said in Christ".¹⁷⁸ There can be no exception to the pacifist imperative of the Gospel.

4. Thus, it is not surprising that Yoder is strongly critical of Barth's rationale for the defence of Switzerland against Hitler by Christian citizens. The 'right of survival' is not the primary ground for any truly Christian ethic. The Christian must be ready to suffer the tyrant, and leave his ultimate survival to God. "The cross of Jesus Christ is for the New Testament the normative answer"¹⁷⁹ or model for all Christian ethics.

It should be pointed out that in Karl Barth and the Problem of War, Yoder is conducting the debate in terms of his Christian ethics for Christians. He is not dealing, for example, with the right of non-Christian Swiss citizens to protect the fabric of society.

This section has provided a means of illustrating the central feature of Yoder's christian pacifism, namely, his strictly Christological foundations based on his particular exegesis of the Scriptures. More importantly, perhaps, it has also provided a means of focusing on Yoder's

fundamental criticism of 'just-war' theory, namely, the methodological problem which arises when attempting to measure exceptions to Christian norms. Yoder poses a serious challenge to 'just-war' theory at this point, and it will be necessary to respond to this at some length at a later stage in this study.

SOME IMPLICATIONS OF YODER'S POSITION FOR CHRISTIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Discussion at this point is confined to certain preliminary questions concerning Yoder's 'Christian ethics for Christians', and the implications of this ethic for Christians caught up and directly involved in the South African conflict. The thrust of his theological position would seem to make it clear that no faithful disciple could agree to take up arms or fight as a member of the army, whether for the SADF or Umkhonto we Sizwe (The Spear of the Nation). For Yoder, it is not possible to be a fighting soldier and remain a faithful follower of Jesus.

The question of the ethical legitimacy of a non-combatant role is more complex. Yoder has argued that it is possible for Christians to participate in government in a limited way, on certain conditions.¹⁸⁰ Perhaps, on the same grounds, a case could be made for participating in the SADF in a strictly non-combatant way. The faithful Christian might be able to use such a position to witness within the army to the non-resistant pacifism of Jesus.¹⁸¹

What would Yoder say of the Christian who sought to join Umkhonto we Sizwe in a strictly non-combatant capacity? This is far more questionable. It would be very difficult to reconcile his theology of revolutionary subordination with membership by a Christian of a revolutionary army, even

if in a non-combatant capacity.¹⁸²

On the other hand, what of a situation where the whole nature of the state's authority is in a condition of questioned legitimacy, both de facto and de jure? Yoder refers to this in discussing the problem which can arise for Christians when they find themselves in situations where there are competing sovereignties. They then have "... to decide which of these sovereignties" is "... the most legitimate".¹⁸³ One might give the example of the American Civil War, or the war presently being waged in Namibia and Angola, primarily between the SADF and the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN).¹⁸⁴ Who is the legitimate authority? To which authority is the Christian called to be subject?

In trying to analyse the implications of Yoder's position for non-combatant membership of PLAN or Umkhonto we Sizwe, for example, the complexity of the ethical questions has at least been raised. It should be reiterated, however, that it is unlikely that a non-combatant role in a liberation movement could be reconciled with the main thrust of Yoder's position.

What would Yoder say of a Christian who sought to join a police unit in a fighting capacity? It must be remembered that Yoder finds important distinctions between the role of a policeman and that of a soldier.¹⁸⁵ Being a member of a police force does not seem to conflict with Yoder's understanding of revolutionary subordination. When this issue was analysed above,¹⁸⁶ it was noted that though he expressed grave doubts about it, he refuses to disallow this as a possible option in any absolute way. In practice, however, it would hardly be in keeping with the calling to witness to Jesus, by opting for a role of non-resistance and powerlessness.

What, then, would be the implications of Yoder's Christian pacifist ethic for a Christian suffering under the gross and violent oppression of the South African regime? What would his message be to Christian members of the African National Congress, for example, who had knocked on the door for so many years, pleading for change towards a more just and human society?¹⁸⁷

Yoder's doctrine of revolutionary subordination involves a radical call to live the ethic of Jesus over and against the false values of the world. This means active and costly witness against injustice. It is the opposite of a passive, indifferent acceptance of an unjust status quo. At the same time, Christians are called to witness in a non-violent way. The doctrine of revolutionary subordination, therefore, also means that Christians will be free of any overwhelming need to destroy the structures of society, ".... since they are about to crumble anyway".¹⁸⁸ They should heed Jeremiah's message to the exiles,¹⁸⁹ and be patient and wait for God's time and his action in history:

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.¹⁹⁰

How such action of God is to become incarnate in history is not clear. It may be that non-violent ways of bringing about justice will not bear with ".... any visible success".¹⁹¹ In spite of this, the way of faithful discipleship remains ever the same; ".... non-violent action remains the only accessible recourse for the oppressed".¹⁹²

Enough has now been said to outline the implications of Yoder's position for Christians caught up in the South African conflict. Even if the way of non-violence makes no visible headway in the direction of a more just society, Christians cannot legitimately take up arms for any cause,

however just it may be. Yoder's Christian pacifist ethic must surely present itself as a provocative challenge to the vast majority of Christians who find themselves the victim of state violence in South Africa, and would probably be profoundly unacceptable to them. Should this response simply be dismissed as misguided thinking? Is there a different, theologically viable understanding of what might be possible for disciples of Christ? It is these questions which set the stage for a critical evaluation of Yoder's ethic.

CHAPTER 3 - REFERENCES

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7. See also John H Yoder, The Church and Change: Violence and its Alternatives. A paper delivered to the South African Council of Churches, July 1979.
8. John H Yoder, The Christian Witness to the State. Faith & Life Press, Newton, Kans, 1964, p 89.
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125. Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 152.
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127. Yoder, Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 48 ff.
128. Note a resemblance to Luther's "two Kingdoms" doctrine.
129. Yoder, Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 48.
130. Ibid, p 49.
131. Ibid, p 49-50.
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157. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 205.
158. This thesis. In the next chapter the validity of this firm distinction between the role of the policeman and that of the soldier will be questioned.
159. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 207.
160. Ibid, p 207.
161. Ibid, p 207.

162. This thesis. Yoder's exegesis of Jesus and the Zealot option will be questioned and analysed in the next chapter.
163. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 202.
164. Ibid, p 204.
165. Yoder, Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 24.
166. Ibid, p 43.
167. Ibid, p 43.
168. Yoder, Christian Attitudes to War/Peace/Revolution, Unpublished lecture XXVIII, Op Cit, p 3.
169. Yoder, Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 50.
170. Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 131-132.
171. Yoder, Karl Barth and the Problem of War, Op Cit, p 52.
172. Ibid, p 52.
173. Ibid, p 35.
174. Ibid, p 57.
175. Ibid, p 31.
176. Ibid, p 47.
177. Ibid, p 47.
178. Ibid, p 67.
179. Ibid, p 99.
180. This thesis, Chapter 3. See discussion on the question: "Can a Christian participate in government?".

181. There are, of course, a host of questions which can be raised in criticism of this rationale; for example, questions concerning the ethical implications, as well as implications for Christian witness, of identifying with the functions and goals of the SADF by being part of its structures. My purpose here is simply to consider briefly some possible implications of Yoder's Christian pacifism. This is not the place for a consideration of all the pros and cons of the non-combatant conscientious objector's position.
182. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 215.
183. Yoder, Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 44.
184. The military wing of the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO).
185. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 206 and 210.
186. This thesis, Chapter 3, Doctrine of Revolutionary Subordination. See also Yoder, Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 56-57.
187. The African National Congress maintained a policy of non-violence from its inception in 1912 until its banning in 1960.
188. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, p 192.
189. Yoder, The Church and Change. Talk to SACC Annual Conference, Op Cit, p 16.
190. Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 62-63.
191. Yoder, Nevertheless, Op Cit, p 50.
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CHAPTER 4

A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF JOHN H YODER'S CHRISTIAN PACIFIST POSITION

INTRODUCTION

Most theologians who have come to grips with the theology of John Howard Yoder, testify to being deeply challenged by the position he defends and propounds. Although critical of the limits of Christian involvement in political structures for example, Richard Mouw nevertheless concludes:

.... there is perhaps no better opportunity for Christian political activists to struggle with this question than to permit their sensitivities to be molded and corrected by the kind of perspective Yoder offers.¹

Stanley Hauerwas, while also critical of aspects of Yoder's theology, acknowledges his debt to him.² He concedes that

Yoder has developed and defended a form of Christian pacifism that the conventional arguments against pacifism fail to meet.³

In attempting a short description of Yoder's position in order to make a critical appraisal, Hauerwas admits to the difficulty of doing "justice to the subtlety of Yoder's thought".⁴

It is in the context of this kind of appreciation that the critical evaluation of Yoder's Christian pacifist position, expressed in this chapter, is undertaken. Before turning to critical questions concerning Yoder's position, it is necessary to locate this critique within the context of the obvious strengths of his position.

SECTION I : THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF YODER'S ETHIC

The radical challenge of Jesus for the social and political life of Christians

Yoder does not allow Christians to develop a political theology which ignores the meaning and implications of the Cross for the whole of life.

He insists that the Sermon on the Mount has equal relevance for the political ethics of Christians as it does for the ethics of interpersonal behaviour. In this way he is seeking to ensure that all Christian ethics is consistently based in Jesus Christ - in who he was and is, and what he did and does.

In this respect his exegesis avoids the pitfalls of those theologians who seem to suggest that Jesus was concerned only with the ethics of personal relationships and that the Gospel has little relevance for political morality.⁵ For example, in Moral Man and Immoral Society, Reinold Niebuhr appears to give up entirely on the attempt to relate the message of the Sermon on the Mount to political ethics: "the religious ideal in its purest form has nothing to do with the problem of social justice".⁶ He, therefore, opts for a "frank dualism" concerning individual and group ethics.⁷ He even speaks of "political morality" being the "antithesis to religious morality".⁸ While one fully appreciates the social realism of Reinold Niebuhr's theology, there is a certain freshness and appeal to Yoder's ethic which cannot be ignored. In so far as it is assumed that a consistent Christological base is a sound criteria for our evaluation of any viable Christian ethic, Yoder's position on this issue is arguably a more acceptable one than that of Reinold Niebuhr.

Yoder believes that the ethic of Jesus challenges Christians to become politically involved. From his Mennonite Anabaptist background, he has developed a biblical theology, the effect of which "has been to prod his Mennonite constituency into those areas of responsible political involvement which are compatible with the Anabaptist understanding of discipleship".⁹ This challenge in fact extends to all Christians who share a conviction that all ethics for Christians must, in some important sense, derive from an understanding of Jesus as portrayed in the Scriptures.

The questioning of assumptions about the effectiveness of power

Yoder is consistently critical of assumptions concerning the effectiveness of the use of power as force, as a means of change in the direction of a more just and human dispensation. In this he makes an important contribution towards encouraging a more self-critical ethics. He challenges Christians to reflect more deeply on history and on the criteria as to what constitutes truly creative change. Even if it is accepted that cultural survival is a valid goal, he questions strongly the common assumption that war is the most effective way to achieve this.¹⁰ It is a serious mistake simply to assume that "violence is the key to all that happens in society".¹¹ On the contrary, Yoder believes that the practice of non-violent, non-resisting love is the most creative form of power in history.¹² No disciple of Jesus can ignore this challenge.

A Christian cannot simply assume that all 'change by violence' must lead to a more just and Christian society. There can be no automatic equation between violent change and change for the better. Richard Shaull is, therefore, being simplistic when he says: "As a political form of change, revolution represents the cutting edge of humanization".¹³ He also begs many questions when he says: "If we hope to preserve the most important elements of our cultural, moral and religious heritage, and to contribute to the shaping of the future we cannot remain outside the revolutionary struggle or withdraw from it".¹⁴ This statement is of course open to a number of interpretations, but if Shaull is saying that all Christians ought to become part of a violent revolutionary struggle, then he is making an assertion which lacks any convincing basis in a viable exegesis of Scripture.

There can be no automatic blessing of every act of violence simply because it is carried out in furtherance of a claimed good cause.¹⁵ Though the problem as to effective means remains, Yoder's reflections, on history and his theology of the politics of Jesus, provide a creative challenge to all Christians who feel deeply committed to work for a better world.

It is God, not man, who ultimately guides and controls history

This statement flows from what has been said under the previous sub-heading. As was pointed out in the previous chapter, Yoder believes that it is crucial that humanity becomes more deeply aware of its limited power to manage history:

It is assumed that the relationship of cause and effect is visible, understandable and manageable, so that if we make our choices on the basis of how we hope society will be moved, it will be moved in that direction.¹⁶

He attacks this assumption which forms the basis of all theories concerning social 'engineering'. These theories which first became influential with Comte have now, for more than a century, been propagated as a central feature of orthodox Marxism.

It is not only in this tradition, however, that this assumption continues to be influential. Frederick Herzog is referring to the same phenomenon when he criticises American theology generally, in assuming that it is up to us to change the world,¹⁷ thus failing to acknowledge the role of God's grace in enabling our incomplete humanity. In theological terms it might be said that the old Pelagian heresy never dies. Human beings are in error if they think they can save themselves, or their own history. They need, first, to be aware of their limitations if they are going to be able to use their God-given capacities to greatest effect. As Herzog puts it:

"the experience of grace frees us to become agents of liberation".¹⁸

It is important to point out that Yoder is by no means alone in emphasising that it is God, and not man, who ultimately guides and controls history. For example, Rubem Alves refers to the need to question the optimism which many have that man can create a new future.¹⁹ Moltmann criticises "positivistic realism" as an illusion; there is no "fixed body of facts" which enable any crude social engineering.²⁰ He speaks further of the "need to reveal the finitude of the epistemological horizon of positivism",²¹ and points to the source of humanity's hope as the "promise and expectation of the Kingdom of God and the Lordship of God".²² Míguez Bonino also points out that

the objections against expressions like 'building' the Kingdom are legitimate protests against naive optimism, or at times justified protection of the primacy of divine initiative.²³

In referring to the above theologians, it can be seen that while Yoder is not original in his assertion concerning the limits of human beings' capacity to manage history, it is a definite strength of his position that he should give emphasis to this point. The originality and strength of his position here lies, perhaps, in the degree to which he gives emphasis to this point, and places the divine initiative so clearly at the centre of his theology of history.

The challenge to the easy justification of war

It is intended in the next chapter to analyse and evaluate the traditional 'just-war' theory. In listing the strengths of Yoder's position, however, it is appropriate to include his thoroughgoing challenge to just-war theorists concerning the way this theory has, in

practice, led to an all too easy justification of war. While Augustine may have originally formulated this doctrine as a means of limiting war, the theory has almost invariably been used as a means of providing a theological justification for wars made in all national causes. Yoder is correct to point out how easily just-war theory can slide into a 'holy war'.²⁴

In his criticism of Barth, whom he accepts as one speaking "within the pacifist camp",²⁵ Yoder points out how Barth's own arguments were used to justify positions very different from his own intention and meaning.

This tendency for theologians' statements to be misinterpreted is also part of "political reality". Once the nation is authorised exceptionally to be the agent of God's wrath, the heritage of paganism makes quick work of generalising that authorisation into a divine rubber stamp.²⁶

As to the capacity of just-war theory being used to limit wars in practice, serious doubts have been raised. Paul Deats draws attention to the fact that LeRoy Walters, in a "careful study of five just-war theorists, lends credence to the inherent possibility that once justified, a war cannot be effectively limited".²⁷ This confirms the need to heed Yoder's challenge to just-war theory and its application in history.

In the whole debate concerning the problem of violence and the use of force, Yoder makes a significant contribution. The radical challenge of Jesus for the social and political life of Christians is impressively argued, and demands response. His questioning of certain central assumptions of the mainstream Christian tradition is not only refreshing but powerfully challenging. He compels a much-needed reassessment of the meaning of power and its effectiveness in transforming society.

SECTION II : SOME CRITICAL QUESTIONS

Introduction

Three critical areas are identified as a framework of response to Yoder's ethic. It will be suggested that in spite of the obvious strengths inherent to Yoder's ethic, there are certain factors which ultimately render it less than adequate as a social and political ethic within the sphere of realistic contemporary society.

3 AREAS

- (a) His exegesis of the New Testament portrayal of Jesus and the implications for discipleship. In other words, an attempt will be made to show that both his exegesis and his hermeneutics are unconvincing in certain crucial respects.
- (b) The nature of man's responsibility for the world. In this section it will be argued that the heavy emphasis which Yoder places on the distinction between Christian ethics for Christians, and Christian ethics for the state, is not tenable. The problem of the ethics of the use of force which is raised, for example, by the admitted need for a police function, cannot be 'solved' by relegating this function to non-believers. What is involved here is also the critique of Yoder's ecclesiology.²⁸
- (c) The reality of ambiguous moral situations. It is not being suggested that Yoder is unaware of this reality, but rather that he is insufficiently aware of the implications of this reality. In his ethics for Christians, he dismisses too easily the ethic of "the lesser of two evils". The dilemmas involved in certain situations challenge and perplex believers as much as non-believers.

The New Testament portrayal of Jesus and the implications for discipleship

The first thing which needs to be said is that there is no such thing as the New Testament portrayal of Jesus, as if there is a single, identifiable portrait of Jesus and his teaching.²⁹ There are different portraits of Jesus in the New Testament. It is being naive to approach the New Testament, expecting to find one clear picture of Jesus and his message. Secondly, there is the problem of interpretation - of hermeneutics - which remains central for all biblical scholarship. Any consideration of a New Testament portrayal of Jesus must begin at this level. Thus, even though it is beyond the scope of this study to attempt to deal with this central issue in any depth, there are some factors which must be referred to, and taken into account.

In the present debate concerning Yoder's ethic, questions necessarily revolve around what Jesus actually said, and what he meant by what he said. These, of necessity, beg further questions as to how, for example, the New Testament writers understood him and what they thought he meant by what he said and did. Those who seek the will of God, as expressed in Jesus, cannot by-pass the reality of this hermeneutical problem; and when considering any issue which arises from a New Testament portrayal of Jesus, it must be acknowledged that it is impossible to arrive at any certainties. Yoder does not readily allow for this area of divergence in his ethic.

There is no space here for a lengthy consideration of the whole quest for the historical Jesus,³⁰ nor for the way the original quest was so radically undermined by the form critics.³¹ Suffice it merely to note that with the nineteenth century quest having been stored away as having failed, a new quest was initiated by Ernst Käsemann some thirty years ago.³² In The Point of Christology, Schubert Ogden has argued persua-

sively that the new quest has taken the matter no further.³³ His conclusion is that the "necessary process of empirical-historical inquiry" is "not a quest for the historical Jesus, but rather a quest for the earliest Christian witness".³⁴ As Käseman points out:

.... the message of Jesus given to us by the synoptists was minted by the faith of the primitive Christian community in its various stages.³⁵ History is only accessible to us through tradition and only comprehensible to us through interpretation.³⁶

Gustafson takes the implications further and warns:

We are too alert to the varieties of theology in the Bible to be able to go back to it for an indisputable, coherent, single theological viewpoint.³⁷

Yoder, it seems, is insufficiently alert to this reality. This is the almost inevitable failing of those who try to look 'to the Book alone' for the meaning of the Word, rather than also to the believing community in which it evolved and in which the Word still continues to live, and to which he still continues to give life and truth.³⁸

It appears that Yoder believes it is possible to assert without qualification, that the New Testament reveals Jesus as calling his disciples to follow him in adopting a radical pacifist ethic:

A social style characterised by the creation of a new community and the rejection of violence of any kind is the theme of the New Testament proclamation from beginning to end, from left to right.³⁹ 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 non-resistance in discipleship.⁴⁰

In the light of what has been indicated above concerning the quest for the historical Jesus, and the presence of "varieties of theology in the Bible", Yoder's very confidence must be regarded as a weakness. The way he articulates his position would hardly seem to do justice to the 'problem of hermeneutics' referred to in the preceding paragraphs. His

particular assertion that Jesus calls all disciples to absolute non-resistance will now be questioned.

1. Did Jesus teach total pacifism?

At first sight it would seem that, according to Matthew, Jesus' teaching on this matter was obvious:

But I say unto you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if anyone would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. (Matthew 5:39-41).⁴¹

Was Matthew intending that these words be understood entirely on the basis of their surface meaning - with complete literalness? Or are they meant to be understood in a figurative way? It will be argued that a careful analysis of the Gospel message will lead to a negative answer to both these questions, when phrased in this 'either/or' way.

Before undertaking an exegesis of these particular verses, it needs to be said that it is beyond the scope of this study to examine in detail all the passages in Scripture which may be considered relevant to the question of the New Testament basis of pacifism and the alternative positions. It is, therefore, necessary to be selective and focus on certain key texts.

There is no disagreement among biblical scholars that the meaning of a text or passage cannot be found except by considering it in its context. A text cannot be understood in vacuo; at very least it must be understood in relation to the whole scriptural record. In order to understand the fundamental teaching of these verses, it is necessary to look at other sayings of Jesus and, also, at his own actions.

In this respect there is a very significant incident described by John in his account of the trial of Jesus. Jesus was responding to questions put by the high priest when "one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand" (John 18:22). John then says that "Jesus answered him, 'If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness to the wrong; but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?'" (John 18:23). The record of the Johannine Jesus gives no indication that he turned the other cheek. Augustine comments on this incident:

It is true that the Lord himself, who was certainly the first to fulfil the precepts which He taught, did not offer the other cheek to the underling of the high priest who was slapping him.⁴²

Instead of submitting in silence to the evil done to him, Jesus questions the action with dignity and forthrightness. The nearest the Scripture comes to an account of Jesus being literally struck on the cheek, it indicates that, far from turning the other cheek, he in no way merely accepted sheep-like the evil done to him, but rather questioned it.

Another incident which is of particular significance at this point in the discussion, is the 'cleansing of the Temple'. (Matthew 21:12-13). Here Jesus was confronting evil in a way which could hardly be claimed as being in harmony with an ethic of total non-resistance. Although mild as a form of physical force it was, nevertheless, a form of resistance to evil of a positively physical nature. It may have been merely symbolic, but it remained a symbolic action of a kind expressed in the form of physical force. It is hard to reconcile this action of Jesus with a totally literal interpretation of "turn the other cheek".⁴³

Macgregor, in his book The New Testament Basis of Pacifism, makes the distinction between 'pacifism' and 'passivism' and insists that pacifism

is "not the repudiation of all use of force".⁴⁴ He goes on to point out that Jesus commonly made use of characteristic semitic hyperbole:

If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother" (Luke 14:26); "And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out" (Mark 9:47); turn the other cheek.⁴⁵

In apparent contrast to Yoder's statement that "every member of the body of Christ is called to absolute non-resistance in discipleship",⁴⁶ Macgregor's exegesis leads him to say: "Jesus does not refuse to countenance under any conditions a moral use of force".⁴⁷ This would seem to confirm that a merely literalistic exegesis of the "turn the other cheek" text is too simplistic.⁴⁸ Furthermore, when considered in the context of the example which follows in Matthew 5:40, if taken literally - taking the garment - as Manson points out: "The issue would be nudism, a sufficient indication that it is a certain spirit that is being commended to our notice - not a regulation to be slavishly carried out".⁴⁹

What then of the other question posed: Are these verses meant to be understood in some entirely figurative way? The obvious danger with entirely or merely figurative interpretations of Scripture is that they become ways of avoiding the implications of Jesus' demands for our actual practice. They are notoriously ways of 'watering down' the Gosepl. In this sense, they are 'bad faith'.

When Jesus said, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13), he surely meant that the way to love others is by sacrificial service, giving one's time, gifts and energies for the good of others; even to the extent of being ready to die for them in a physical way and not only in some figurative way. On the other hand, he did not mean that the only way to love others was by physically dying for them. Neither did he mean that the way a disciple

should lay down his life for others somehow excluded physically dying for them. All dimensions are included as open possibilities for one who truly loves.

Here is a clue to the more whole interpretation of Jesus' injunction to "turn the other cheek". Neither reducing its meaning to the entirely figurative, nor the entirely literal, does justice to the Scriptures. It is necessary to look for its deeper meaning which in no way waters down its direct challenge. Jesus was speaking in the context of a consideration of Moses' law - "an eye for an eye". Here is an ethic of rough justice - an attempt to keep control of a tendency for taking revenge to lead to an unending spiral of violence. Jesus then goes to the heart of the problem - the disciple must root out the impulse to revenge. He must not respond to evil out of a desire simply to 'get your own back'. However understandable this impulse may be, it must not be the spring and foundation of actions against evil. Battle with evil one must indeed, but from motives which are rooted in the goodness and love of God. This is the true foundation of truly Christian action, and to witness to it and live it, a disciple must be ready to control his own impulses, to 'swallow his pride' for the deeper cause of good. One must do this to the extent of 'keeping cool' even under the most extreme provocation, such as being slapped in the face without warrant. In this way, the follower of Jesus will not let his 'natural' impulse to retaliate, dictate his actions. It is precisely this impulse which so often dictates people's responses in situations of conflict, but it does not stem from love; nor is it what leads to the most effective fulfilment of God's purposes. It is these selfish impulses which Jesus is calling his disciples to renounce.

Jesus' teaching was not directed so much against the use of force under

any circumstances but against vengeance. As Moltmann emphasises, the roots and nature of Jesus' pacifism are to be found in his rejection of vengeance.⁵⁰ The way of love in the battle with evil and for the good, requires that disciples learn to control what is most difficult of all to control - their own pride as a motive, their own impulses when provoked. This is the secret of being fully human, and being most effective in the task of the Kingdom. This is the heart of the meaning of "turn the other cheek".

On the surface of it, nothing Yoder says by way of specific comment on this text would seem to differ necessarily with the above exegesis. As he puts it: "By non-resistant is not meant compliance or acquiescence in evil, but renunciation of retaliation in kind".⁵¹ And, again, "The resistance we renounce is the returning evil for evil" and replacing it with "creative concern for the person who is bent on evil, coupled with the refusal of his goals".⁵² Then Yoder concludes: "What in the old covenant was a limit on vengeance has now become a special measure of love demanded by concern for the redemption of the offender".⁵³

The rejection of vengeance⁵⁴ or retaliation⁵⁵ is not in question. What is in question is that any use of force in response to violent attack must, of necessity, imply a 'retaliation' or 'vengeance'. The defence of one's household against a group of violent robbers does not mean that one has fallen into 'vengeance' and 'retaliation'. Yoder fails to convince that "every member of the body of Christ is called to absolute non-resistance"⁵⁶ on the grounds that disciples are called to renounce vengeance. It is not being said that Jesus never calls a disciple to non-resistance in the spirit of his challenge to "turn the other cheek". What is being said is that one cannot derive from this text a general and

unqualified imperative that all Christians are called never to use force in response to violent attack.

In a tightly argued article, "What would you do if?"⁵⁷ Yoder deals with the ethical dilemma which arises for strict pacifists when challenged with the question: Would you defend your wife against a criminal assailant? Basing himself on the Christian faith in God's power to save in any situation, Yoder argues convincingly against those who assume too quickly that of course a Christian should defend his wife against attack. It may possibly be God's calling not to defend her by causing injury to the assailant. God might enable another way out. But there is nothing in Yoder's impressively articulated case which would warrant the further assumption that it is necessarily wrong to defend one's wife. It is true that Yoder never actually says as much, but the thrust of the article suggests that such defence is not open to a Christian. Against this, it should be said that while there is no absolute sense in which it can be said that a Christian must undertake such a forceful defence of a loved one, there is also no absolute sense in which it can be said that a Christian must never undertake such a defence.

The ethical issue, therefore, remains open. Furthermore, this kind of example illustrates the unhelpfulness of a literal understanding of "turn the other cheek" in situations where another person is being attacked.⁵⁸ To take another example from the South African political situation: What does this text have to say to Christians who feel moved to defend people against a tyranny which has caused the death by malnutrition of large numbers forced into 'Resettlement Areas'? An entirely literal reading of "turn the other cheek" has little to say about how to respond to such threatened death by malnutrition. The endangered infants themselves

cannot be preached to; they do not know one cheek from the other. Can it be seriously argued that it is up to their 'mummies and daddies' to turn their cheeks for them?⁵⁹

There is, of course, an important distinction to be made between self-defence and the defence of a neighbour. It is well known that Augustine, who was no pacifist, nevertheless understood the ethic of Jesus to mean that no disciple should kill in self-defence.⁶⁰ Luther followed him in this.⁶¹ Many might agree with this position while assuming, as Luther did,⁶² that it would be one's duty, let alone legitimate, to defend a neighbour against violent criminal attack. Others like Barth would argue for the legitimacy of self-defence in terms of the deepest meaning of 'turn the other cheek' for "the man who has left behind the mere impulse of self-preservation, the mere instinct, emotion, interest and arbitrariness of primitive self-defence".⁶³

It is not the intention to enter into the complex and unresolved debate about the specific issue of personal self-defence. The purpose of this section has been to show that one should not use the text "turn the other cheek" as the basis of an ethic which categorically disallows the participation by Christians in the use of force, either in fulfilment of the police function to maintain a just order, or in the context of a struggle to defend one's family and neighbours against violent injustice.

Before moving to the next section, some further points need to be made in clarification. In denying that the text "turn the other cheek" can be used as the basis for a categorical pacifist ethic demanded of all Christians, it is not being claimed that the case against such an ethic has thereby been demolished. There is, for example, another central text

which is regarded as confirming the claim that Jesus expected his disciples to adhere to a strictly pacifist ethic: "My Kingship is not of this world; if my Kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews". (John 18:36). The exegesis of this text will be dealt with in the section headed, "The Theology of Jesus' refusal to use power". It will be argued there that, as with "turn the other cheek", so this Johannine text cannot be used to support the claim by Yoder that "pacifism is not the prophetic vocation of a few individuals, but that every member of the body of Christ is called to absolute non-resistance in discipleship".⁶⁴

2. Jesus and the Zealot option - a false alternative

Yoder is convinced that the 'Zealot option' represented a real possibility, in fact, a real temptation for Jesus. It was this possibility to which he was particularly drawn in his debate with the tempter in the desert, at his baptism and, again, at his last trial in Gethsemane.⁶⁵ In questioning Yoder's emphasis here, an attempt will be made to show that, given the whole nature of the Zealot movement, it is unlikely that such option would ever have been seriously considered by Jesus.

A great deal has been written about the Zealots and their significance for Jesus and the implications of this for our understanding of him. On the one hand, Alan Richardson in The Political Christ virtually dismisses their significance, expressing the view that the Zealots were "not an organised party of revolutionaries at the time of Jesus".⁶⁶ On the other hand, S G F Brandon, in Jesus and the Zealots, virtually claims Jesus for the Zealots.⁶⁷

In contrast to these two extremes, Gustavo Gutierrez, leaning heavily on the work of Oscar Cullmann, acknowledges the importance of the Zealot movement for an understanding of the New Testament,⁶⁸ but points out why Jesus kept his distance from the movement.⁶⁹ The Zealots were narrow nationalists, whereas Jesus' message was universal. The Zealots despised and rejected the Samaritans. Jesus, by his example, pointed to a very different way. The Zealots were defenders of a conservative and literal adherence to the Law. Jesus' interpretation was radical and transforming. As José Comblin says, "... it is clear that the Zealot is essentially conservative To follow the Zealots was to adopt a regression into the past";⁷⁰ or again, in the words of Alan Boesak, "Jesus' revolutionary presence went beyond the dream of recovering a nationalistic, political-religious kingdom whose very core was a legalism that he denounced as oppressive".⁷¹ They failed to see the roots of oppression in their own theological and religio-political structures. They reduced the idea of liberation to a single dimension. Their goals would not have led people into the paths of fundamental liberation.

There is nothing in Yoder's writings which suggests that he would disagree with what has been said above about what the Zealots stood for in contrast to Jesus. How then can it be argued seriously that Jesus found the Zealot movement a tempting option? Yet this is precisely what Yoder claims.⁷² Quite apart from the whole question of the use of violence, the factors referred to in the previous paragraph would make the Zealot movement profoundly unacceptable to Jesus. This is a very significant consideration, which Yoder does not seem to take into account. It is unconvincing to argue that he was seriously tempted to join them. It is, furthermore, not legitimate to argue that since the Zealots used violence, and since Jesus rejected the temptation to join the Zealot movement, it

thereby follows of necessity that his reason for rejecting them was, first and foremost, their readiness to use violence.

On this point, Moltmann makes an important distinction which reaches to the heart of the issue:

What distinguishes Jesus from the Zealots is not the anticipation of the future of God as such, nor the principle of non-violence, but his freedom from legalism which led the Zealots to carry out here, and now the final judgement upon the enemies of God and Israel.⁷³

Jesus' call to love even enemies was the means by which the vicious circle of vengeance was broken. It is this rejection of vengeance, as opposed to force, which Moltmann sees as the basis of Jesus' pacifism.⁷⁴

That Jesus refused the road to power is not at issue.⁷⁵ What is at issue is his reason for rejecting this path. Without entering into too much detail and so anticipate the next section of this chapter, there are some points which must be made here in order to clarify why it is being argued that Yoder is in effect posing a false alternative.

Yoder would, perhaps, not disagree with Guiterrez when the latter says:

Jesus is opposed to all politico-religious messianism which does not respect either the depth of the religious realm nor the autonomy of political action. Messianism can be efficacious in the short run but the ambiguities and confusions which it entails frustrate the ends it attempts to accomplish. This idea was considered as a temptation by Jesus; as such he rejected it.⁷⁶

The disastrous attempt by the Calvinists to impose the rules of the Kingdom on the citizens of Geneva, provide a salutary historical example of how misguided and absurd it is to undertake such an enterprise. Not only does it make the questionable assumption that those who rule can know what the demands of the Kingdom are in all the details of social life, it

also makes the mistake of assuming that even if one knew what was best for people, one can convert them by the imposition of certain rules! This is the theocratic temptation of the Zealots and of many who follow in the traditions of the assumptions it makes. It was this which Jesus rejected.

Yoder presents the fundamental dilemma which faced Jesus in terms of the choice between violent means and non-violent means.⁷⁷ He argues that

the one temptation the man Jesus faced - and faced again and again was the temptation to exercise social responsibility in the interest of justified revolution.⁷⁸

He goes even further, and says that the option of the crusade was a "genuinely attractive" one for Jesus.⁷⁹ As if to give still greater emphasis to this assertion, he says elsewhere: "Jesus was tempted by righteous violence as not by other sins".⁸⁰

The nature of his temptation, however, went far deeper. Precisely because of his unique relationship with God the Father, Jesus, according to the Evangelists, was in a position to summon divine power with direct effect, in order to fulfil his plans. Miguez Bonino is surely correct in pointing out that "renouncing power meant for him renouncing the exercise of divine power to settle human affairs".⁸¹ He avoided a kind of divine "take over", leaving man free, in an essential sense, to follow the call of God to share in the life of love.⁸² It does not take much reflection to see why such a temptation was of the devil and that to heed it would have constituted a fundamental contradiction in the way God relates to humanity made in his image.

To deal with the nature of Jesus' temptations on the level of the option for violence versus the option for non-violence is far too simplistic, and that is why Yoder's formulation of the issue at stake should be judged as

inadequate. Jesus' temptation was not so much concerning the possible use of violence, but concerning the possible misuse of divine power.

In agreeing with Yoder's criticism of Brandon that the latter, "while illuminating at many points, is too conjectural and too interested in proving a thesis to be convincing",⁸³ it is difficult not to conclude that this is the very criticism which can, perhaps, be levelled at Yoder himself. In discussing the 'triumphal entry' of Jesus into Jerusalem, and his subsequent 'cleansing of the temple', Yoder says: "Jesus is now in control of the course of events. It would be but one more step to consolidate that control".⁸⁴ "The coup d'etat is two-thirds won; all that remains is to storm the Roman fortress next door".⁸⁵

It would be difficult to find such a view of this situation seriously supported by biblical scholars. On the contrary, for example, Albright and Mann have this to say: "The incident, however dramatic its implied interpretation of the Lord coming to claim his own, probably did not attract much attention apart from its immediate environment".⁸⁶ Jesus' action, "apart from those close to him may have appeared to be no more than a passing incident".⁸⁷ They refer to the incident as the acting out of a prophetic parable.⁸⁸ Schnackenburg argues that the story in John aims "at throwing light on the self-revelation of Jesus".⁸⁹ He suggests that in John 2:16, "Jesus' reprimand is directed to sellers of doves who refuse to be dislodged by the whip".⁹⁰ This is a far cry from a coup d'etat two-thirds won.

Speaking elsewhere of his "last trial in Gethsemane",⁹¹ Yoder presents Jesus once more struggling with the Zealot option. Again, in The Politics of Jesus, he says: "the real option of Zealot-like Kingship comes the

third time for the last time the option of the crusade beckons".⁹² Yet again, Yoder seems to be too intent on proving a thesis, and the result is that his understanding of the nature of Jesus' agony in Gethsemane is inadequate.

It is true that, in the last resort, it is not possible to arrive at any certainty beyond intelligent speculation. Other biblical scholars are, nevertheless, more convincing. Caird refers to the battle with the spiritual powers of darkness: "... part of his agony was his sense of appalling exposure to their final assault upon his integrity".⁹³ StuhlmueLLer refers to the cup as "... the sorrowful effects of sin which Jesus is enduring".⁹⁴ Albright and Mann, speaking again of the meaning of the cup, regard it both as an expression for destiny and a symbol of suffering.⁹⁵ Yoder, it would seem, is overstating his case when he suggests that the agony of Jesus revolved around the question of whether to use violence or not.⁹⁶

Having questioned Yoder's understanding of the basis of Jesus' refusal to take the Zealot option, it is now possible to deal more fully with the theology of Jesus' refusal to use power.

3. The Theology of Jesus' refusal to use coercive power

In spite of New Testament images of Christ the Judge at the Last Day executing violent sentence,⁹⁷ and in spite of the episode of the cleansing of the Temple it is arguable that the primary characteristic of the New Testament portrayal of Jesus in relation to the use of force is, in fact, his refusal to use it. In this he puzzled his disciples. "We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel", said the men on the road

to Emmaus. (Luke 24:21). Clearly, they expected a Messiah who would liberate Israel by military might, heavenly or otherwise. This raises again the question - Why did Jesus not involve himself in this way of liberation?

When dealing with Jesus' rejection of the Zealot option in the previous section, it has already been indicated in broad terms why Jesus rejected the theocratic temptation of the Zealots, and why to have fallen for such a temptation would have constituted a fundamental contradiction in the way God relates to humanity. In this section it is intended to consider more deeply the theology behind the Christian affirmation that it was through the death of Jesus that God fulfilled his work of salvation. Why did God will to fulfil his purpose through the death of Jesus, and not through a military messiah?

It is not the intention to embark on an extended outline of the Christian theology of Atonement, but rather to point to certain themes in the theology of the Cross, which explain the uniqueness of his role as Messiah.

(i) The Cross and the defeat of evil

When John records Jesus as crying out from the Cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30), he is asserting that Jesus in his death had completed the task he had been sent to accomplish and had in doing so defeated evil - "the devil", "satan". In so far as evil is rooted in a deliberate turning from the will of God, and in so far as it constitutes a turning aside from loving, it can be said that Jesus overcame evil in his own person because he lived and died still obedient to the Father. He lived and died still

loving. Evil, as it were, lost the opportunity of overcoming the obedient love of Jesus. His death sealed his victory over evil in its essence. A new reality is thus created; a new and sure basis of hope in what is possible in humanity and for humanity.

There was no other way such a victory could be sealed for ever incarnationally - in a human person - except by the completion of life in death. Thus, in the words of Karl Barth: "Jesus went to Jerusalem with an awareness of the necessity of his death".⁹⁸ This is why God willed his death for the defeat of evil. The Gospels were written by men who believed that Jesus' "... death was willed by God as a necessary means of salvation for mankind".⁹⁹ No military messiah could have defeated evil in this ultimate way.

(ii) The Cross as the manifestation of love and the means of reconciliation

"Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Jesus revealed the love of God through the whole way he lived. He showed people that to love involves the readiness to suffer and give life, even to the extent of being ready to die in the cause of efficacious love. There was no more powerful way he could personally have lived out his message of love than by revealing a God whose love for humanity is such that he will die for them. A victorious military messiah could never have revealed that reality. The cross is the transparent witness, the effective sign of God's personal readiness to suffer not, "... so much and no further", but even unto death - for the salvation of humanity.

Furthermore, it is only love which can finally woo and convert. Love is a

vital ingredient in total liberation. Military liberation can never be anything more than a partial liberation. Jesus, on the other hand, was called by God to reach to the very roots of man's condition; to establish and manifest for all humanity a ground of liberation in the human heart; to establish love as the impulse of all liberation and salvation. Having formed this foundation in history, it became possible for God's plan for the wholeness and freedom of his creation to unfold along authentic paths.¹⁰⁰

It is the Christian conviction that Jesus came to manifest and establish a truth that the alienated condition of humanity can only be restored by sacrificial love. "Only in man's risk of life is the human condition righted".¹⁰¹ Paul is asserting this faith when he writes to the Ephesians: "For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility through the cross". (Ephesians 2:14 and 16).

(iii) The Cross and Human Freedom

It is a fundamental Christian conviction that a person cannot be made to choose life rather than death, good rather than evil. Jesus renounced the use of divine power because to fail to do so would have been crucially undermining of human freedom. As Thieliicke points out, the powerlessness of Christ was the ".... necessary condition of his humanity",¹⁰² otherwise he would have compelled man and thus denied his freedom. Leivestad suggests that "The renunciation of dynamis in the gospels corresponds to Paul's idea of Kenosis".¹⁰³ From what has been said above, it will be easy to appreciate how contrary to his deepest purposes it would have been for Jesus to have become a military messiah.

What is being established here is that Jesus' refusal to use power is essentially linked to his unique understanding of the role as Messiah and that, for example, the general question as to the ethics of the use of force to maintain a just order in society is not the issue at stake. It is far too simplistic to derive from the work of Jesus as Messiah, a clear mandate for saying that Christians should in no wise use force to protect a city against the violence of a gang of ruthless criminals.

(iv) "My kingship is not of this world"

In John's Gospel, Jesus is recorded as saying in response to questions by Pilate: "My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from this world". (John 18:36). This verse should not be misinterpreted to mean that Jesus' refusal to use coercive power necessarily implies that his disciples were forbidden henceforth to resort to the use of force under any circumstances. The context is one in which Jesus himself had made a definite decision to go to Jerusalem, and face what he regarded as inevitable, namely, that the religious authorities would scheme to have him put to death. He was determined to go through with this in obedience to the will of his Father, whose deep purposes were to be fulfilled by means of his death.

Jesus, therefore, had no intention of resisting the worst they could do to him. On the contrary, he knowingly and freely, and in this sense, embraced death - the cross. He certainly did not want his disciples to attempt to intervene effectively. God had other plans, and since they would not be fulfilled except through the death of Jesus, there could be no question of his disciples "putting up a fight".

Concerning Jesus' explanation as to the nature of his kingship, Marsh says:

"Jesus proceeds both to admit his kingship and to remove it by definition from the area where a charge of sedition could be validly made".¹⁰⁴

"Jesus had not come to establish a political sovereignty, but to bear witness to the truth, the truth of God's sole sovereignty, eternal and universal in distinction from that of man's temporal and finite, partial and competitive sovereignties".¹⁰⁵

One cannot argue from this verse that, because Jesus did not want his disciples to take up arms on his behalf, one can derive a categorical imperative against using physical force to resist evil in every other possible circumstance. To have taken up arms to protect Jesus from death would have manifestly thwarted the purposes of God. It does not follow from this that to take up arms to defend the innocent against prolonged and vicious tyranny is necessarily manifestly thwarting the purposes of God. The consideration of the theology of Jesus' refusal to use coercive power has shown how inseparably this is linked to his unique role in the work of salvation. It is not possible to understand how Jesus is to be followed as the norm for disciples, except in the context of a full appreciation of his unique role as Messiah. It seems that Yoder has failed to take this adequately into account.

While it can be unreservedly accepted that Jesus is the norm for disciples, the question as to just what this means is far from straight forward. The way Christians understand the uniqueness of Jesus will affect the way they are to follow him as their example. This will now be analysed in the next section.

4. Jesus as norm and the implications for discipleship

When outlining Yoder's hermeneutical approach in the previous chapter, it was made clear that it would be accepted that Jesus is indeed the norm for Christians, but that disagreement arises over what this really means. For Christian ethics, the example and teaching of Jesus are fundamental: Christians are called to follow Jesus and, therefore, ethics in an important sense revolve around what it means to follow him.

At first glance it may seem that it should be no great problem to discover what this entails. However, reflection soon reveals the issue to be a very complex one. In fact, it raises the whole hermeneutical problem which was considered at the start of this chapter. In this section, the focus will be on that area of the problem which revolves around two interconnected themes: Jesus as unique, and Jesus as norm. It is necessary to distinguish between ways in which his being and work are unique, and ways in which they are normative.

(i) Jesus as unique

There are two senses in which Jesus' uniqueness needs to be acknowledged and understood:

- (a) his uniqueness as the Messiah - the Christ - the Son of God;
 - (b) his uniqueness as a human being - as every human being is unique - in his genetic, cultural, historical being.
- (a) Christians speak of Jesus as the one who was without sin, as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, as the Christ - the

Messiah - the one and only Son of God - the second person of the Trinity. These statements speak integrally of his being and work; of who he was and is, and what he came to do as God for man, and God as man.

The call to be like Jesus is not a call to take upon ourselves the mantle of Messiah. It is a call to serve the Messiah, to listen to him, to do as he bids us do. It is an invitation to be his friends, sharers and co-workers with him for his **Kingdom**. It is an exalted calling indeed, but one in which disciples remain the fragile, limited beings in constant need of the forgiveness and grace of God - dependent creatures of the Creator, upheld and sustained by the indwelling Spirit. It is true that Jesus was likewise sustained by the Father, but as the Christ - the Messiah - there was and is a dimension to his relationship to the Father which all Christians would regard as unique.

Whatever else may be meant by following Jesus and becoming like Him, no Christian would wish to say that we are called to act like "come again Christs", posing as "returned Messiahs". The attempt to play the same role as Jesus in this way would be as presumptuous as it would be impossible. In this respect, then, we are not intended to follow him!

- (b) It is commonly said that Jesus too was a man of his time - a Jew born and bred in the context of Jewish faith and culture, at a particular time in history. It would, in fact, be a truism to say that his consciousness as a human being was formed by his unique history. Clearly no one can follow Jesus in the uniqueness of his own history,

nor is it intended that his followers should try to do so as nearly as possible - immersing themselves in orthodox Jewish culture in a gallant attempt to be as like him as best they can, in that sense.

It is true that there is always a danger that an emphasis on the uniqueness of Jesus can be misused by disciples to distance themselves from the challenge and demands of his example. It is interesting to note that Jean Lassere uses the fact of Jesus' uniqueness to argue that Jesus' action in cleansing the Temple can have no relevance for disciples in understanding what Jesus means for them as their norm.¹⁰⁶

(ii) What it means to follow Jesus

In accepting that Jesus is normative for Christians, nothing said about his uniqueness should weaken the categorical nature of his being the norm for all his followers without exception. The crucial question, nevertheless, remains: in the light of what is commonly accepted as his uniqueness, what does it mean to say that he is the norm for Christians?

The idea of Jesus as norm is central to Yoder's whole position. It is equally central to the position of the present writer. The difference lies in how he is understood to be the norm. Yoder adopts the "imitation" model of discipleship but, as pointed out in the previous chapter, he is nevertheless careful to distinguish this from what he calls the "mendicant" model, which "centered its attention upon the outward form of Jesus' life; in forsaking domicile and property, his celibacy or his barefoot itinerancy".¹⁰⁷ This he sees as "a formal mimicking of his life style" (and a "distortion").¹⁰⁸

Yoder appears to be saying, in effect, that the Franciscan and Dominican Orders, for example, had a distorted understanding of what the imitation of Jesus really entails. It will be argued, on the contrary, that Yoder at this point reveals what seems to be his own failure to comprehend a central feature of the monastic understanding of the imitation of Jesus. This failure stems, in turn, from a failure to understand a crucial aspect of the vocation to follow Jesus, namely, the distinction between universal and particular dimensions of Christian discipleship.

It can be argued that authentic individual vocation is based upon three inseparable and interweaving factors:

- (a) the personal and particular call of God arising out of a relationship with Jesus;
- (b) the inspiration of the example of Jesus, and
- (c) an understanding of (a) and (b) in the light of the collective inspiration of the Believing Community in history, i.e. the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures and in the Church down the centuries.

A sound Christological basis for any individual Christian calling must include (a), (b) and (c), otherwise one will be led into false paths of presumptuous subjectivism or a new legalism. Attention to these three factors will prevent what may be intended as a particular call from becoming confused with a universal requirement which then, inevitably, becomes an absolute law.

It is not being said that Yoder is unaware of the distinction between

universal and particular dimensions of Christian discipleship but, rather, that he fails to affirm the distinction as being a central category for his ethic of 'imitation'. In dismissing the "mendicant" model, he fails to acknowledge that Saint Francis, for example, was not simply seeking to mimic Jesus, but responding to what he believed as a call by God to follow Jesus in a particular way. St Francis never generalised from his own calling into asserting that all Christians were bound to follow Jesus in the same way. There is a fundamental difference between following Jesus in terms of a personal call to imitate his life in some specific way, and imitating him because one regards that specific way as a new rule for all would-be followers.

The call of Jesus is universal, in that all are invited, and the two great commandments were issued to all. However, the way a person is called to follow and live out the two great commandments of love will vary, according to the particular invitation or call of Jesus to them. Like St Francis, many in have felt called to a celibate life in the monastic tradition. In this they were inspired by the example of Jesus, and regarded themselves as following him in this specific way.

Many, too, have felt personally called by the word of Jesus to the rich young man, "... sell all that you have and distribute to the poor". (Luke 18:22). The monastic tradition is a striking example of this understanding of vocation as the means by which people follow Jesus in different ways. This way of understanding what it means to follow Jesus, makes use of the 'imitatio Christi' model in a rich and powerfully inspirational way, and avoids the trap of turning imitation into a new universal and absolute law for all disciples.¹⁰⁹

Yoder, however, in developing the distinction between the "mendicant" model and the "imitation" model, then goes on to argue that his version of the "imitation" model leads in effect to a demand for all Christians to imitate the pacifism of Jesus:

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 non-resistance in discipleship.¹¹⁰

Yoder, it seems, employs the imitation model in an absolutist way.

There is one point at which Yoder seems to qualify, in a significant way, what he asserts in the above quotation. When dealing with the question: Can a Christian be a policeman?, Yoder goes on to ask:

.... Is the Christian called to be a policeman? We know he is called to be an agent of reconciliation. Does that general call, valid for every Christian, take for certain individuals a form of a specific call to be also an agent of the wrath of God? in truth we must hold that the non-resistant position is the normal and normative position for every Christian, and it is the use violence, even at the point where the State may with some legitimacy be violent, that requires an exceptional justification. This writer has met no one testifying to such an exceptional call".¹¹¹

Yoder speaks of this call as a "hypothetical extreme".¹¹² Nevertheless, he continues to defend it as a possibility, and reiterates his rejection of a Christian ethic based on "legalism" and "absolute rules".¹¹³

Here Yoder is using the term "normative position" in a way which distinguishes it from what is imperative and, therefore, required of all disciples. He is saying that the non-resistant position is normative, but that this does not necessarily mean it is an imperative of discipleship. He is also distinguishing the general call from particular calls. He refuses here to make an "absolute rule" out of the general call to non-resistance in discipleship. He is conceding the possibility of exceptional calls which differ in their specific form from the general call.

In the view of the present writer, this kind of ethical argument is uncharacteristic of Yoder. It would seem to have far more in common with Barth's ethics for exceptional borderline cases. Yet it is precisely at this point that he is most critical of Barth.¹¹⁴ Taking Yoder's major writings as a whole, it would be misleading to place too much weight on his treatment of what he regards as a "hypothetical extreme". His statement that "pacifism is not the prophetic vocation of a few individuals, but that every member of the body of Christ is called to absolute non-resistance in discipleship",¹¹⁵ represents the main thrust of his whole theology.

It is true, as pointed out in the previous chapter, that Yoder is at pains to distance himself from a pacifism based on principle as such. His appeal is "to Jesus alone", rather than to some absolute. Thus he asserts that non-resistance is "not a matter of legalism but of discipleship".¹¹⁶ Yet, in spite of his disclaimers, does he not seek to develop a theology of discipleship which, in practice, turns pacifism into an absolute for all Christians? If he is not doing this, then is he not, in the end, at the same point as Barth whom he nevertheless criticises so rigorously?

In fact, it does seem that Yoder in his understanding of discipleship, does turn pacifism into a new rule for Christians. His whole exegesis of Romans 13:1-7 and other related texts, in other words his theology of revolutionary subordination, all point to the central assertion of his position, namely, that Christians must not resist, must not partake in any force. In this way they are to imitate the example of Jesus. This is how the New Testament, according to Yoder, understands the imperative of discipleship. This will be analysed in the next section of this chapter.

It remains to examine still further what it means to say that Jesus is the norm for all Christians. It is common cause that all Christians are universally called to follow Jesus in obeying the two great commandments. It can also be assumed that the way a person is called to follow and live out the two great commandments of love will vary, according to a variety of particular callings.

Yoder attempts to show, with a few pertinent examples, that New Testament writers like Paul never regarded certain marked characteristics of Jesus' life, such as his celibacy, as part of the universal norm. This is not contended. He then goes on to conclude that

There is but one realm in which the concept of imitation holds - but there it holds in every strand of the New Testament literature this is at the point of the concrete social meaning of the cross in its relation to emnity and power. Servanthood replaces dominion, forgiveness absorbs hostility. Thus and only thus are we bound by New Testament thought to "be like Jesus".¹¹⁷

This statement comes at the end of an important chapter in The Politics of Jesus where, by means of many quotations from the gospels, epistles and the book of Revelation, Yoder lays out his understanding of the way of Jesus according to the Scriptures, and its implications for discipleship. The problem arises when one attempts to give specific content to the words used.

In his explanation of "servanthood in place of dominion",¹¹⁸ Yoder quotes Mark 10:42-43:

You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you.

Yoder's exegesis is not very clear on this point. He seems to be hinting, at least, that since Jesus rejected a 'role in government', taking on rather the role of a servant, that Christians ought to follow Jesus in this.

Jesus had instructed his disciples specifically to reject governmental domination over others as unworthy of the disciple's calling of servanthood.¹¹⁹

On the other hand, it has already been made clear in describing Yoder's position that he is not arguing for a total withdrawal by Christians from involvement in government.¹²⁰ This is the case in spite of his rather stark statement: "... the function exercised by government is not the function to be exercised by Christians".¹²¹ Perhaps what Yoder really means is that Christians should not hold positions of power which involve the exercise of coercion. If this is how he interprets the meaning of Mark 10:42-43, then such an exegesis is questionable.

Albright and Mann regard the passage in which this text comes as one about "precedence in the Kingdom",¹²² and that what Jesus is saying is that "the model for all who bear authority and responsibility should be Jesus himself".¹²³ Jesus is being critical of those whose motive is to dominate others. This is not synonymous with wielding the instruments of power. Jesus is not saying that a Christian cannot serve by ruling; he is calling his disciples to renounce all concern for promotion, "honour and grandness".¹²⁴

In his explanation of "forgiveness absorbs hostility",¹²⁵ Yoder quotes from Scripture to show that disciples must forgive as God has forgiven them,¹²⁶ and that they must "love indiscriminately as God does".¹²⁷ In the words of Scripture: "Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors" (Matthew 5:44). Here again, there is no question of disagreeing with any of this. The problem, as has been said, arises when one attempts to spell out what this might mean in specific situations.¹²⁸

The point being argued here is that Yoder fails to convince that the

meaning of these texts necessarily points to the pacifist imperative. He has not shown that a wider and deeper understanding of them is not, at very least, equally valid. For example, Birch and Rasmussen, acknowledging that "... the Bible can act as the giver of moral imperatives",¹²⁹ go on to find these in the two great commandments and in a radical identification with the poor and oppressed. They do not find a pacifist imperative.¹³⁰

It remains to reiterate here that so much of Yoder's argument from the Scriptures, about what it means to follow Jesus as norm, is somewhat in the form of Christian truisms all completely acceptable. To follow Jesus means to be forgiving, loving, serving, self-sacrificing, ready to suffer and even to die for the Gospel's sake. Where he ceases to be convincing is when he subsequently asserts, in effect, that this "one realm in which the concept of imitation holds where servanthood replaces dominion and forgiveness absorbs hostility",¹³¹ also means that Christians must be pacifists.¹³²

There is one further subtle but important distinction which emerges, concerning the essential basis of Yoder's pacifism. It is true that he regards Jesus as a pacifist. It is also true that he says disciples must imitate him in this. However, he does not in the last resort say that disciples must imitate this example simply because he was a pacifist. This is not the ultimate reason for the imperative to imitate him in this respect. This is so because Yoder in fact rejects certain other ways of imitating Jesus. He regards these other ways as mere mimicking and a distortion of what it means to treat Jesus as the norm for disciples. The way Yoder establishes the distinction between appropriate or inappropriate imitation, or what may be called categorical as opposed to optional imitation, is by appeal to the epistles of Paul and Peter.¹³³

In the last resort it seems that Yoder's claims concerning the specifically pacifist implications of the New Testament, appear to be based primarily upon his interpretation of certain key texts in the epistles. This will now be dealt with in the next section on his theology of revolutionary subordination.

5. A critical evaluation of Yoder's doctrine of revolutionary subordination

(i) The Haustafeln

Yoder's doctrine of revolutionary subordination forms the foundation of his Christian pacifism. It is his way of articulating the essential content of what it means to follow Jesus as norm. He bases this doctrine, in the first place, on his particular exegesis of the Haustafeln; the collection of "household rules" found in several of the New Testament epistles - Colossians, Ephesians, I Peter and Titus.¹³⁴ He then develops the doctrine further in terms of an exegesis of Romans 13:1-7. His interpretation of these passages confirms for him the understanding of Jesus which he finds portrayed in the Gospels. It is from this interpretation of the message of the New Testament as a whole that he believes it is possible to assert that

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 non-resistance in discipleship.¹³⁵ In the renunciation of the sword to which Jesus called his disciples is one of the keys to the rest of the problem of Christian faithfulness.¹³⁶ The rejection of violence of any kind is the theme of the New Testament proclamation from beginning to end, from left to right.¹³⁷

It will be argued here that this pacifism of absolute non-resistance can not be so dogmatically derived from the Haustafeln and Romans 13, as a virtual imperative for all Christians. It can be agreed with Yoder that

.... the early church had to develop an ethic for living within the structures of society which was not immediately apparent within the discourses of Jesus himself, pervaded as they are by the expectation of the imminent Kingdom.¹³⁸

The development of this ethic is found most clearly stated in the Haustafeln. Yoder finds in these injunctions to wives and husbands, to children and parents, to slaves and masters, "... the general imperative to be subordinate", and "the specific rooting of this call in the example of Christ".¹³⁹ He is careful to point out, however, that the Haustafeln

.... do not consecrate the existing order when they call for the acceptance of subordination by the subordinate person; far more they relativize and undercut this order by then immediately turning the imperative around.¹⁴⁰

In other words, the emphasis is on mutual subordination. The very significant exception to this, however, arises when the Christian is called to be subordinate as a political subject. "In these texts the exhortation is not reversed!".¹⁴¹

It would seem that, at this point, the logic of Yoder's argument weakens the position he is endeavouring to defend. He wishes to make it very clear that his position, far from consecrating the existing order is, on the contrary, one which challenges the status quo in a radical way. Yet the reason he gives as to why the Haustafeln "... do not consecrate the existing order",¹⁴² is because they call for mutual subordination.

It would appear to follow from this that if it were not for the demand for mutual subordination, then the injunctions would result in a consecration of the existing order. This is in fact the case, according to Yoder, when the Christian is called to be subordinate as a political subject. "In these texts the exhortation is not reversed".¹⁴³ Logically then, in the context of the Christian as citizen, the situation is one which would tend to result in a consecration of the status quo. This is so because the factor preventing such a consecration, namely, the demand for mutuality in subordination, is absent. This is why it is said that the logic of

Yoder's argument at this point would seem to undermine the position he is wishing to defend. Yoder's theological ethics concerning the Christian and the state will be analysed further when dealing with his exegesis of Romans 13:1-7.

In considering here his exegesis of the Haustafeln it is necessary to clarify, first of all, just what is meant by being "subordinate". When Yoder says that the injunction to slaves to be subordinate is also addressed to masters, what exactly is the content of the subordination expected of masters? If the slave happened to ask the master to free him, should not the master express his call to subordination by subordinating himself to this request from his slave? What exactly is the content of the subordination expected from the slave? Is it to obey his master in all things which do not conflict with his conscience? What if his understanding of the will of Jesus confirms his conviction that the very condition of slavery conflicts with conscience? When one speaks of mutual subordination, just what does this mean? Yoder finds here a message of absolute non-resistance. The view of other biblical scholars seems to differ subtly, but crucially, with Yoder.

Eduard Schweizer argues that the Christian household rules must be understood in terms of Jesus' teachings about servanthood (Mark 10:43-45). The dominant theme of this teaching is "that true greatness is attained in the very act of serving".¹⁴⁴ There is no reason to assume that the "act of serving" must mean absolute non-resistance.

Schweizer, while agreeing with Yoder that there is "no question whatsoever here of anchoring the differences (between masters and slaves for example) in the natural order",¹⁴⁵ goes on to make certain significant observations. He asks

.... whether setting the difference (inherent in nature) between parents and children alongside the difference (created by man) between masters and slaves does not pave the way to a disastrous development?¹⁴⁶

He then goes on to note the way the later Christian household rules developed. He shows how "Christianizing and paganizing go hand in hand. The dual character of the admonitions is no longer kept up in every case".¹⁴⁷ In Titus 2:4, "only wives are required to be subordinate to their husbands without there being any corresponding word to husbands".¹⁴⁸ In I Peter and Titus 2, directions are given to slaves but not to their masters.¹⁴⁹ He goes on to observe, "the emergence of the community hierarchy".¹⁵⁰ He adds that

.... a more calamitous development is the way the idea of service is gradually distorted; the fact that I Peter 2:21-25 offers Christ to slaves as their prototype, without their masters being mentioned at all could lead mistakenly to equating of service for Christ with service rendered to the next class up in the social order.¹⁵¹

It is all very well for Yoder to set out, once again, "from the canon"¹⁵² of Scripture and to reject what he regards as the mainstream tendency in biblical scholarship to reinterpret, and thus distort, the meaning of the canon from the assumptions of later tradition. Yoder, it seems, has failed to do justice to the fact of a development in the canon itself - in the way tradition of the Haustafeln recorded in the Scriptures is developed and subtly changed in the very canon. It can be assumed that, for all scholars, Jesus Christ is the norm and that, ultimately, all Scripture must be interpreted in a way which seeks to be as faithful as possible to who Jesus was and is, and what he came to teach.

It would, therefore, be wiser perhaps to interpret the most authentic Christian meaning of the Haustafeln, in terms of the teaching of Christ in Mark 10:43-45, rather than to seek the meaning of this Marcan passage in terms of the developing tradition of the Haustafeln. Might it not be said

that Yoder's doctrine of revolutionary subordination suffers from the tendency to follow the latter approach, and from the failure to observe the subtle process of development which takes place in the canon? Is it not true that, in the case of the Haustafeln the process takes a course which opens the way for a further misunderstanding of the teaching of Jesus? Schweizer has alerted all who seek the meaning of Jesus for ethics today to be careful how they proceed to derive their ethics "from the canon".

Is Schweizer, in his exegesis, not being truer to the heart of Jesus' message when he points out that the "paramount duty of the community remains the proclamation of the Lord who challenges people to protect the rights of others",¹⁵³ and that "every age has to consider what righteousness and fairness might mean in a particular situation"?¹⁵⁴

Eduard Lohse confirms Schweizer's exegesis of the Haustafeln:

... it is obvious that the content of the admonition is based upon a universally acknowledged rule of conduct. But now the members of the community are told that it is an expression of their confession of Christ as Lord, if they observe a social order which has been recognised as right and just".¹⁵⁵ As times change, so does the general estimation of what is fitting and proper.¹⁵⁶

It can surely be assumed that all, Yoder included, would agree that the abolition of slavery as an institution is very much in keeping with Jesus' ethic of love, as it is expressed in his teaching about serving and mutual subordination. The fundamental constant for all generations is "the admonition to be obedient to the Kyrios".¹⁵⁷ It cannot be said that the content of this obedience is to be found in the specifics of the Haustafeln, except in so far as these call Christians to the message of

Jesus, namely, the life of loving mutual service.

The fact that the Haustafeln do not include the command to masters to free their slaves does not bind Christians to an ethic which undermines the movement to free them. Lohse rightly points out that ".... it is evidence of unhistorical thinking to fault Paul and primitive Christianity on this point".¹⁵⁸

It should be emphasised once again that an acceptable exegesis of the Haustafeln must remain true to the central message of Jesus. Schweizer is, therefore, surely correct when he says that ".... consideration for others, especially those who are weaker, has become determinative".¹⁵⁹ Any understanding of the Haustafeln which, somehow, blunted this Christological touchstone would appropriately be regarded with suspicion.

It is true that in this discussion it must be kept in mind that ethical admonitions are addressed to Christians, both in terms of how they are to treat others and how they are to respond to treatment from others. Once again, however, it must be insisted that Christian ethics concerning the response to the treatment received from others must not be expressed in terms which undermine the ethics which focus on how Christians are expected to seek the good of others.

Markus Barth undertakes a detailed analysis of the meaning of the word "subordinate", and Paul's use of it in differing contexts.¹⁶⁰ He concludes that it is a ".... demonstration of that total humility, gentleness, mutual bearing, love, unity and peace",¹⁶¹ which Paul speaks of in Ephesians 4:1-3. He does not find in the meaning of subordination or mutual subordination an imperative of absolute non-resistance, as Yoder

does. On the contrary, he goes on to claim that since

.... the Christological argument has the strongest and the determinative position - the emancipation of those suppressed and exploited and their access to a moral and legal status of equality, are the necessary consequences of Paul's Christological argument.¹⁶²

This is not the emphasis of Yoder's exegesis of the Haustafeln. Instead, he derives a doctrine of revolutionary subordination expressed in absolute non-resistance. While this does not mean that Christians must accept the structures of this world as good or sacrosanct, it does mean loving subordination to them. Yoder's heavy emphasis on absolute non-resistance would seem, in effect, to undermine dimensions of Christian ethics which are central to the message of Jesus, namely, "consideration for others, especially those who are weaker".¹⁶³

As said above, Yoder seems to have interpreted Jesus' message too much in terms of the Haustafeln rather than vice-versa. Furthermore, he fails to take into account certain developments in the Haustafeln tradition, which opened the way to an ethic which was less faithful to the determinative message of Jesus which centred on service rather than absolute non-resistance as such. The exegesis of the scholars quoted above is, therefore, to be preferred as being truer to the message of Jesus.

These scholars preserve a more balanced ethic of love, as it addresses Christians, in terms both of the way they should respond to the treatment of others and the way they should actively seek the good of others. The doctrine of absolute non-resistance fails to maintain this necessary balance and is, consequently, too lopsided. In the last resort, it is an ethic too loaded against the one in the subordinate position. It is not enough to say to the slave that there is no need to struggle against the ".... structures of this world since they are about to crumble anyway".¹⁶⁴

Having examined Yoder's doctrine of revolutionary subordination in terms of his exegesis of the Haustafeln, it is necessary now to evaluate his exegesis of Romans 13:1-7, in which he applies the doctrine to the Christian as a citizen of the state.¹⁶⁵

(ii) Romans 13:1-7

As pointed out above, Yoder argues that there is a certain mutuality of subordination contained, for example, in the exhortation to wives and husbands.¹⁶⁶ In his view, however, there is a clear exception to this dimension of mutuality in the case of the Christian as a political subject. In this instance, the "... call to subordination is not reversed".¹⁶⁷ He believes this to be in keeping with the life and teaching of Jesus, with his own renunciation of any recourse to state power, or even resistance to it.¹⁶⁸ Christians, he says, must learn to live "... within the structures of society".¹⁶⁹ He finds that Romans 13:1-7 confirms the teaching of the Haustafeln.¹⁷⁰

His main point, however, is to distinguish between "being subject" and "being obedient". To "be subject" does not at all require of a Christian that he obey when called upon by the state to do anything contrary to the teaching of Jesus.¹⁷¹ Thus it would be the duty of the Christian to disobey the state's demand to worship Caesar. However, in the same breath as it were, Yoder re-emphasises that Christians are nevertheless called to submit, and not to resist, when Caesar chooses to kill them.¹⁷² "No state can be so low on the scale of relative justice that the duty of the Christian is no longer to be subject."¹⁷³ This begs the question as to what "being subject" really means for a disciple of Jesus.

C E B Cranfield turns to Calvin for an understanding of the deepest meaning of "be subject". Calvin interprets Ephesians 5:21 to mean that "... where love reigns there is mutual servitude. I do not except even kings or governors, for they rule that they may serve".¹⁷⁴ "It is Calvin", says Cranfield, "who gives us the right clue",¹⁷⁵ as to the meaning of this crucial term of "be subject". Cranfield, in his exegesis of Romans 13:1-7, argues that what is called for is "... the responsible acceptance of a relationship in which God has placed one and the resulting honest attempt to fulfil the duties which it imposes upon one. In so far as its existence is for the good of one's neighbour, one's service of it is a part of the debt of love owed to the neighbour The final arbiter of what constitutes hypotassesthai in a particular situation is not the civil authority but God".¹⁷⁶

C K Barrett opens a further dimension by emphasising the contextual realities of this passage. He argues that Paul's attitude to the state is "... that of the petit bourgeoisie under the Empire".¹⁷⁷ More important, however, is Paul's intention which should be understood in the "eschatological context of his thought as a whole".¹⁷⁸ The imperial government acted as a restraining power, which afforded the opportunity of preaching the Gospel in a world which was soon to come to an end.¹⁷⁹ As soon as it ceased to perform this function, then the church changed its view of the state.¹⁸⁰

C H Dodd, like Barrett, emphasises the need for an awareness of the contextual setting of the Epistle to the Romans. "Any attempt to understand the Epistle must begin with the recognition that it belongs to a world of thought different from our own".¹⁸¹ More specifically, in Romans 13:1-7, Paul was concerned to "... nip anarchic tendencies in the

bud".¹⁸² The Church at that time saw the positive value of the Roman Empire. While Paul was ".... clearly prepared to disobey in a case of a conflict of loyalties",¹⁸³ he was against the defiant spirit of Jewish fanatics.

As Joseph Fitzmyer points out, "The supposition that runs through this paragraph (Romans 13:1-7) is that the civil authorities are conducting themselves uprightly and are seeking the interests of the community".¹⁸⁴ Paul is concerned with "legitimate authority". The sword is the symbol ".... of the power legitimately possessed by the state to coerce recalcitrant citizens in its effort to maintain order. Paul stresses the delegated nature of civil authority".¹⁸⁵

What will happen when Christians come in a later age, to question the very legitimacy of a particular government to wield state power? When Yoder interprets Romans 13:1-7 to mean that ".... no state can be so low on the scale of relative justice that the duty of the Christian is no longer to be subject",¹⁸⁶ he appears to be pre-empting in advance questions about the legitimacy of a particular state authority. On the other hand, Yoder agrees with Cullmann and Cranfield¹⁸⁷ that in Romans 13:1-7 Paul is not laying down a principle of unconditional obedience. On the contrary, Paul is clear about the conditional nature of obedience due to the state.

It is true, of course, that Yoder makes a crucial distinction between "being subject" and "being obedient". Yet, if one accepts the principle of conditional obedience, on what grounds can one argue that this cannot possibly be developed in the direction of a principle of conditional legitimacy. Yoder does not argue that each and every particular government is somehow sacrosanct. Might it not then be argued that Yoder is

conceding in effect the principle of the conditional legitimacy of the state, when he points out elsewhere that "... the place of government in the providential designs of God is not such that our duty would be simply to do whatever it says".¹⁸⁸

It is true that Paul was not addressing the question of conditional legitimacy when writing to the Christians in Rome. It would be "... evidence of unhistorical thinking to fault Paul and primitive Christianity on this point".¹⁸⁹ The complex ethical problems which arise for Christians, when confronted with a situation in which they are ruled by an illegitimate authority, cannot be resolved by recourse to scriptural passages which never even raise the issue. The fact that a scriptural passage does not raise the issue does not necessarily mean that the subsequent raising of the issue is thereby rendered 'out of court'.¹⁹⁰

Whatever Yoder might try to argue about the meaning of "being subject" to the government, as opposed to "being obedient" to the government, the demand to "be subject" can only relate to an authority which is legitimate. Paul, in stressing the delegated nature of civil authority, has opened the way for future generations to raise the question concerning the legitimacy of particular civil authorities.

Ernst Käsemann believes that in Romans 13.1-7, "Paul is calling enthusiasts back within limits of earthly order".¹⁹¹ He was writing to counteract "... the attitude which in virtue of heavenly citizenship, views earthly authorities with indifference or contempt".¹⁹² The obedience

.... owed to God demonstrates itself in earthly form otherwise one falls into anarchy, which will destroy love and peace in the community.¹⁹³

Käsemann is scathing about the attempt to "... combine the theology of the cross with submission to the authorities".¹⁹⁴ This text, he says, "... has been misused for a millennium".¹⁹⁵ Käsemann reiterates that in this context, Paul is "... plainly battling one sidedly against the peril of enthusiasm".¹⁹⁶

When outlining Yoder's position in the previous chapter, it was pointed out that a critical evaluation of his Christian pacifism would be undertaken in terms of his own hermeneutical approach, namely, by setting out with him "from the canon" of scripture. It is surely arguable that the comments of the scholars referred to above, show that they too were setting out from the canon. The fact that the specific historical context is often emphasised actually assists in the process of understanding Paul's meaning and intention. Such an emphasis does not undermine a hermeneutic which sets out from the canon; on the contrary, it enhances the search as to its real meaning.

There are, of course, certain potential pitfalls peculiar to such an approach which starts with the canon. Thielicke, in his Theological Ethics Vol 2, warns against the "... risk of anachronistically inflating to kerygmatic status the political reality",¹⁹⁷ in which the writers of Scripture found themselves. It seems that Yoder has failed somewhat in avoiding this risk, whereas the other scholars referred to have avoided it.

Yoder has not been sufficiently alert to the context in which Paul was writing, with the result that he effectively turns the meaning of "be subject" into an absolute imperative of non-resistance. Furthermore, Yoder develops criteria for what it means to "be subject", which are based

on a questionable interpretation of the meaning of following Jesus as norm. As pointed out above, there is no disagreement with Yoder concerning the distinction between "being subject" and "being obedient". Cranfield points out that if the verb hypotassesthai means to obey, then Paul could not mean it in an absolute sense.¹⁹⁸ In other words, the dimension of obedience in the idea of "being subject" is conditional. Why then should "being subject" necessarily mean, as Yoder asserts, that the Christian must submit to Caesar's decision to kill Christians. Why should the Christian obey by submission the command of Caesar at this point? Why is the acknowledged conditional nature of the obedience not applied in the instance of Caesar's command to kill Christians?

What are Yoder's criteria by means of which Christians are to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate obedience to the authorities? He provides examples of inappropriate obedience, namely, the call to military service and the worship of Caesar. These are not criteria. In the last resort, Yoder's one criteria is the particular example of Jesus. "We subject ourselves to government because it was in doing so that Jesus revealed and achieved God's victory".¹⁹⁹ Is it really sufficient simply to say that the oppressed must submit to Caesar, even if he should decide to kill them, because this is what Jesus did?²⁰⁰

It is necessary to refer again to the above section on what it means to say that Jesus is the norm for Christians. It was pointed out there that an authentic understanding of what this means can only be reached in the context of a full appreciation of the uniqueness of Jesus' role as Messiah. Thus Mouw directly questions Yoder's understanding of what it means to imitate Jesus in his work on the cross.

For Jesus was not simply facing death; he was facing an encounter with sin and death that no human being before or since need face. He had the encounter with death; his agony was proper because he was about to remove the curse of death.

Because he accomplished that, we can proclaim - as he could not, either in Gethsemane or on the cross - "O Death, where is thy sting?" We can now enter the domains of the Powers, seeking to promote justice and righteousness, in the confidence that they cannot separate us from God's love".²⁰¹

When outlining above the theology of Jesus' refusal to use power, the extent to which this non-resistance was profoundly related to his unique role as Messiah became very apparent. The call of Jesus to follow him, lies most deeply in the call to serve our neighbour in total obedience to the demands of love according to God's will for each disciple. Yoder's assertion that the demands of love must mean absolute non-resistance is not convincingly established against the views of others who also set out "from the canon".

All the scholars referred to, including Yoder, are agreed that to "be subject" does not mean unconditional obedience to any authority. Unconditional obedience is due to God alone. That obedience to God might require non-resistance is not in question. The demands of love may indeed lead the Christian to non-resistance, but it is another thing to assert that this is the only way in which love can possibly be expressed. It was pointed out above that Yoder's exegesis of the Haustafeln resulted in a lopsided ethic. In spite of his disclaimer,²⁰² he fails to show convincingly how his interpretation of these passages and Romans 13:1-7 does not in fact lead to a de facto 'consecration' of the existing order. It might now be said that his doctrine of revolutionary subordination issues is a reductionist ethic. He reduces, in effect, the ethic of love to this one dimension.

The meaning of the Sermon on the Mount, and the call to servanthood (Mark 10:42-45) is not to be confined to Yoder's interpretation of the

Haustafeln and Romans 13.1-7. These latter passages are not to be "inflated to kerygmatic status". This is not the whole of the Good News which Jesus came to preach to the oppressed, namely, that they should submit to an admittedly evil dispensation with the promise that it is "... about to crumble anyway".²⁰³

The Good News to the oppressed is more faithfully expressed in the assertion that the "... paramount duty of the community remains the proclamation of the Lord who challenges people to protect the rights of others",²⁰⁴ and that "... consideration for others, especially those who are weaker has become determinative".²⁰⁵

6. A note on the Biblical understanding of love : Christ the Lamb and Christ the Judge

A critical evaluation of Yoder's interpretation of the New Testament portrayal of Jesus and the implications of this for disciples, can be said to revolve around the biblical meaning of love. It seems that for Yoder the New Testament ethic of love as lived and taught by Jesus, and understood by the writers of the Epistles and Gospels alike, can be summed up in the idea of revolutionary subordination. This is the imperative of love; any alternative to absolute non-resistance cannot really be love. It will be argued here that such an understanding of the way of love is incomplete and does not do justice to the witness of Scripture.

The primary revelation for Christians is of a Trinitarian God who is Love. This is the touchstone in terms of which all other theologising is tested. If God is Love, it follows that all God's activity be understood as ultimately an expression of his love. Thus God's righteous anger, his

Father.²¹³ The same is true of Paul and the later New Testament writers:

By your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed".²¹⁴

Furthermore, it is not only God the Father who is understood to be the one who executes righteous judgment upon evil and upon those who persist in disobedience to his will. The Son of Man too, the Messiah, the Risen Lord, the Lamb of God, is also believed to be the agent of God's judgment - of God's "austere love".²¹⁵ It might also be recalled here that when Jesus cast out people from the temple, he was hardly manifesting the "perspicuous love" of God, but rather his "austere love" - his righteous anger.

To say that God's love is shown supremely in Jesus' self-offering on the cross, and in the words: "Father forgive them", is not to say God's love is absent in the words of Jesus: "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites" (Matthew 23:13), blind guides (verse 16), blind fools (verse 17), white-washed tombs (verse 27), you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity (verse 28), you serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? (verse 33)". Unless these extremely strong words of Jesus are integrated into an understanding of his love, there will be an implication that he was failing at this point to reveal God as love.

Thus, a fully Christological understanding of the nature of the loving, saving work of God in Jesus as the risen Messiah, must also include this dimension of "austere love". Just as there is an "austere love" of God the Father, so too is there an "austere love" in the activity of God the Son. This may indeed introduce a puzzling and disconcerting dimension into the image of Jesus the Christ as the revealer of God's "perspicuous

love". Nevertheless, to ignore this disconcerting dimension would be to ignore the whole witness of Scripture. It would fail to be a fully Christological account of the nature and activity of God in salvation history.

In Christ the Conqueror, Leivestad deals most thoroughly with this profound paradox which is manifested in the New Testament portrayal of the work of the Messiah. It is true of Jesus that "... from the beginning he refused the road of power".²¹⁶ It is also true that this Jesus, "... faithful unto death, gaining the crown of the perfect martyr returns with power to destroy the antichrist and his followers, establishing his reign on earth".²¹⁷

The sacrificial Lamb is the conquering Lion of Judah. In this paradox the John of Revelation expresses the cardinal point in the New Testament idea of conflict and victory.²¹⁸

The decisive victory was gained on the cross; that was his qualification to be exalted as King of Kings.²¹⁹

On his return, however,

.... the destruction of the enemies is not merely symbolic. They are actually killed. There is a real military conquest, though victory is gained in a supernatural way.²²⁰

This is the central Christian paradox.²²¹

Moltmann makes the important observation when commenting on Philippians 2, that the "fullness of God can dwell in weakness but it is not confined to weakness".²²² Leivestad points out that it was "... a fixed and important element in the early kerygma that Jesus was to come again to pass judgement on the quick and the dead".²²³

He concludes that it is not possible to establish from the New Testament portrayal of Jesus, a picture which is fully "harmonious and consistent".²²⁴ He does, however, find that for the writers of the New

Testament, this complex understanding of the role of Jesus as both man and Risen Lord is held without any sense of "unbearable contradiction".²²⁵ In other words, it can be said that for the New Testament writers, there was a deep awareness of Jesus the Christ as revealer both of the "perspicuous" love of God and of his "austere" love.

Yoder, in his understanding of the New Testament portrayal of Jesus as Messiah, does not do justice to the profound complexity which surrounds the nature of God's loving activity in all these dimensions. The result is that, in his doctrine of revolutionary subordination, he develops a theology of love which is incomplete. Love is not only manifested in absolute non-resistance. The canon of Scripture bears witness to other dimensions in the mystery of love.

The writer to the Hebrews quotes the Old Testament testament with approval, to show that a loving father will chastise his son because of his love for him (Hebrews 12:5-11). There is, at times, an element of coercion in this expression of love. In an adult context, one might refer to the coercion used to save a drowning man resisting help or, again, the coercion used to restrain a hijacker intent on blowing up a plane filled with passengers. This is an expression of love in its coercive dimension.

It seems that Yoder too, in his understanding of the "police function" in human society, is implicitly acknowledging the necessity for this coercive element in the ways God arranges and enables the functioning of human society. In The Christian Witness to the State, he begins by quoting what he clearly regards as a key passage from The Original Revolution. In this passage, he says:

The good are to be protected, and the evil doers are to be restrained.²²⁶

It is on these grounds that a police action can be justified.

Elsewhere, he argues in a way which suggests that coercion may legitimately be used by non-believers, to preserve an order which gives "... room for the growth and work of the church".²²⁷ Is there not a crucial sense in which this coercion is part of the activity of God? If it is part of his activity, it is surely an expression of his love, even if of his "austere love".

While it appears, therefore, that there is in Yoder an implicit acknowledgement of the "austere love" of God, both in maintaining order and in judging evil, he does not, it seems, integrate this into his understanding of love when he expounds his doctrine of absolute non-resistance. The whole thrust of his position is that a Christian must never exercise coercion, however noble the intent or goal. He bases this claim on a particular interpretation of the way of love manifested in Jesus. In this note on the theology of love, it has been argued that Yoder's interpretation is inadequate. It fails to do justice to the whole New Testament witness concerning the activity of God, in Christ the Lamb and Christ the Judge.

This activity of love is manifested in Lordship over evil, in maintaining an order and ultimate control. It is also manifested in bearing and suffering evil in order to defeat it. The Christ comes both as bearer of judgment and forgiveness, of wrath and mercy, of austere love and the perspicuous love of compassion. However, paradoxical from the human perspective, disciples of Jesus cannot ignore any of these dimensions as they seek to be faithful to their Lord, and offer themselves for his saving work in the world.

7. Summary of the criticisms of Yoder's exegesis and hermeneutics

Yoder believes it is possible, on the basis of an exegesis of certain relevant passages of Scripture, to assert that

.... 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.²²⁸

In the critical evaluation of his exegesis, an attempt has been made to establish the following points:

- (i) Yoder, it would seem, assumes that it is possible to find in the Scriptures a clear, easily identifiable and simple portrait of Jesus, and that it is possible to assert with confidence that his decisive message includes a call to absolute non-resistance. The prevailing consensus of biblical scholarship is far more hesitant about such assumptions. As Gustafson expresses it:

Sola scriptura as a basis for theology is harder to defend now than it was in the time of the Reformation. We are too alert to the varieties of theology in the Bible to be able to go back to it for an indisputable, coherent, single theological viewpoint.²²⁹

In this context, Yoder's confident assertions about: ".... the theme of the New Testament proclamation from beginning to end, from right to left",²³⁰ are unconvincing. Yoder's very confidence is a weakness. More plausible is Leivestad's conclusion that it is not possible to establish from the New Testament portrayal of Jesus, a picture that is fully "harmonious and consistent".²³¹ The Jesus who offered himself in powerlessness on the cross, and Jesus the Risen Lord who comes in judgment, this Jesus cannot be confined to the picture of him which Yoder offers.

- (ii) It is not possible to say that Jesus taught that all his disciples should be pacifists. For example, in his teaching about 'turning the other cheek', Jesus was calling his disciples to renounce all inclinations to vengeance and the resort to force, merely for the purposes of retaliation. He was not demanding absolute non-resistance in the face of evil. He was not, for example, saying that the Christian community must never use force in restraining a criminal gang from continuing its evil and violent activities.
- (iii) Yoder is unconvincing when he tries to persuade that Jesus was genuinely tempted to join the Zealots and to use violence as a means of achieving salvation. It has been shown how unlikely this would have been, and that the nature of Jesus' temptations was far more subtle and deep.
- (iv) In his understanding of what it means to say that Jesus is the norm for disciples, Yoder fails to do justice to the implications of Jesus' unique role as Messiah. The fact of his uniqueness inevitably complicates the hermeneutical task concerning the way disciples are expected to follow him.
- (v) Yoder's doctrine of revolutionary subordination is based upon a questionable exegesis of the Haustafeln and Romans 13:1-7. Furthermore, it has been argued that the tradition of the Haustafeln is actually developed and subtly changed in the canon itself. Yoder does not show sufficient awareness of this process. Consequently, he fails to take into account those developments in the Haustafeln tradition which opened the way to an ethic which was less faithful to the determinative message of Jesus, which centred on service rather than absolute non-resistance as such.

In so far as Jesus remains the norm and touchstone for all interpretations of Scripture, it is arguable that the most authentic meaning of the Haustafeln should be understood in terms of the teaching of Christ, for example in Mark 10:43-45. Yoder, it seems, opts for the contrary hermeneutical approach. He first establishes his doctrine of revolutionary subordination from this Haustafeln, and then proceeds to interpret a number of sayings of Jesus in the light of this doctrine. It is not possible on these grounds to insist upon a pacifist interpretation of the message of Jesus.

- (vi) Problems were found with Yoder's exegesis of Romans 13:1-7. He has not been sufficiently alert to the context in which Paul was writing. It is unconvincing to interpret the meaning of "be subject" as an injunction for absolute non-resistance in discipleship. The idea of revolutionary subordination, as developed by Yoder, results in a lopsided and reductionist ethic. It effectively reduces the demands of love to absolute non-resistance. It does not do justice to the wider message of the Good News.
- (vii) Yoder's theology of love fails to take sufficiently into account the witness of the New Testament to the "austere love" of God expressed so clearly, for example, in the work of the Risen Lord who is to return to judge the "quick and the dead". It also fails to acknowledge the implications of God's loving work in maintaining an order which forms the basis for the very possibility of human existence. All the dimensions of God's love must be held in awareness, as disciples seek to discover what it means to be co-workers with Christ in doing God's will on earth.²³²

(viii) Yoder concedes that:

Troeltsch and his disciples were right; the early church had to develop an ethic for living within the structures of society which was not immediately apparent within the discourses of Jesus himself, pervaded as they are by the expectation of the imminent Kingdom.²³³

Here it seems he is making an important 'hermeneutical concession'. The implication appears to be that it is not possible to find what it means to say that Jesus is the norm for disciples simply by returning to his words and deeds. However, if it is necessary to turn to the early Church, then it is arguable that it is appropriate to turn to the whole tradition of the Church in the ongoing task of discovering the meaning of Jesus for today.

In the last resort, it is not possible to assume that the 'canon speaks for itself'. In criticism of such an approach, Birch and Rasmussen comment:

The tendency is to speak as if God's disclosure of his will is limited to the past, and as if it is only in the written record of the past that his presence and will can be known It is as if God ceased to be active after the closing of the canon.²³⁴

The hermeneutical task of discovering the content of what it means to accept Jesus as norm is far more complex. It is, in fact, more complex than is apparent from the way Yoder proceeds to develop his position. In the end, Yoder fails to establish a clear and convincing hermeneutical model. Thus it is both on exegetical and hermeneutical grounds that Yoder's position is found wanting.

The nature of man's responsibility for the world

1. The necessity for the police function in maintaining peace and just order

It was pointed out, in outlining the particular strengths of Yoder's

position, that he rightly questioned uncritical assumptions about the effectiveness of power in creating a more just and humane society. There was also agreement with Yoder's emphasis on the fact that it is God, and not man, who ultimately guides and controls history. This is not to say, however, that Yoder identifies with the extreme position which would argue that power, as force, should never be used by man.

In outlining his theology of the 'powers' and the role of the state, it became very clear that Yoder accepts the necessity for a police function in society. The state, says Yoder, has a "... responsibility for the maintenance of order".²³⁵ This is not simply any order, but a peaceful and just order.

The state has 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".²³⁶ The function of the state in maintaining an ordered society is thereby a part of the divine plan for evangelization of the world.²³⁷ In other words, the nature of man's responsibility under God, and as an agent of God, includes the use of force in maintaining peace and just order. As Yoder himself puts it:

If the use of force is such as to protect the innocent and punish evildoers, to preserve peace so that "all might come to the knowledge of the truth", then the state may be considered as fitting within God's plan, as subject to the reign of Christ.²³⁸

It is surely the implication of the above quotation that there is indeed, for Yoder, a legitimate use of force in God's ordering of the world, and that man is expected to be an agent of this necessary and appropriate use of coercion. The criteria for such legitimate use of force are clearly stated in terms of a concept of justice - the protection of the innocent and the punishment of evildoers; the preserving of peace and social

cohesion; to make the old aeon more tolerable. The maintaining of such a society makes possible the plan of God for the evangelization of the world.

This is in keeping with the convictions of other pacifists like William Penn, Roland Bainton and G MacGregor. The Quaker leader, William Penn, proposed the idea of an ".... international police force to coerce the recalcitrant".²³⁹ MacGregor speaks of the need for ".... certain restrictive and even forcible social sanctions otherwise no moral order of society could exist".²⁴⁰ Bainton, on the same grounds approves, albeit with sadness and reluctance, the violent intervention of Hindu police to halt a Hindu massacre of Muslims.²⁴¹

Pacifists, like MacGregor and Bainton, seek to establish a fundamental distinction between the role of a policeman and that of a soldier. It might be said that their whole case for a pacifist ethic, as opposed to a just-war ethic, rests on the viability of such a radical distinction. Yoder, too, accepts this distinction, arguing that the police function within society ".... has nothing to do with war. War differs qualitatively from the police function".²⁴² While it might be agreed that there are certain qualitative differences, it is not tenable to rest one's whole position vis á vis the ethics of the use of force on the distinction between the role of the policeman and that of the soldier.

Historically speaking, there are many situations of conflict and violence in which the role of the policeman and that of the soldier overlap to a considerable extent. In modern military states, it can hardly be claimed that the distinction between soldier and policeman is really significant.

Returning to Yoder's specific position, there is a crucial distinction between him and the pacifist writers referred to above. All are agreed that man has a responsibility, under God, to undertake a police function in society. Yoder, however, develops a strong case against participation by Christians in any role which involves being an agent of coercive force.²⁴³ He admits nevertheless that the police function is necessary in that the state has the "... obligation to serve God by encouraging the good and restraining evil".²⁴⁴

Hauerwas sums up his understanding of Yoder's position concerning this issue:

The state thus uses its force legitimately as long as it serves to protect the innocent, punish the evildoer, and preserve peace so that the church might have the opportunity to confront all men with the Gospel.²⁴⁵

Christians, on the other hand, are called to be pacifists.²⁴⁶ It is, therefore, the work of non-Christians to undertake the police function in society. From one perspective it can be said that the viability of Yoder's whole position revolves around the crucial distinction which he develops between Christian ethics for Christians, and Christian ethics for the state. The validity of this distinction must now be evaluated.

2. A critique of Yoder's Christian ethics for Christians versus Christian ethics for the state

In an important critical appreciation of Yoder's theological ethics, Hauerwas points to the crucial significance for Yoder of

.... the necessary dualism between the norm of Christ and the form of this world. The kind of life assumed by the faithful Christian is not the same as the secular man of good will.²⁴⁷

.... there must be a clear distinction between ethics for the Christian and for the non-Christian and their institutions.²⁴⁸

.... ultimately the question of the form of a Christian social ethic for Yoder is the question of ecclesiology.²⁴⁹

According to Yoder, there is a sense in which it is naive and misguided to expect those who do not believe in Jesus to live according to his demands. Yet Christians, in their witness to the state, will rightly encourage those in authority to live out the ideals they claim to follow. Yoder is, therefore, showing sound practical and pastoral good sense when he says:

We need not be embarrassed when the politician 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.²⁵⁰

On the basis of this kind of practical realism, there are ways in which it can be agreed with Yoder that

We need to distinguish between the ethics of discipleship which are laid upon every Christian believer by virtue of his very confession of faith and an ethic of justice within the limits of relative prudence and self-preservation, which is all one can ask of the larger society.²⁵¹

It is when Yoder effectively identifies "... the ethics of discipleship" with "... absolute non-resistance"²⁵², that his distinction between Christian ethics for Christians and Christian ethics for the state leads to implications which are highly questionable.

Given that for Yoder all Christians are called to be pacifists; given that the state is essential in God's arrangements for the present human dispensation; given moreover that the state must use violence; "... to reject all violence would be to deny the legitimacy of the state".²⁵³ Given the above, a number of extraordinary conclusions surely follow. Non-Christians are required to perform the crucial role of maintaining "... the social cohesion in which the leaven of the Gospel can build the Church".²⁵⁴ The role of non-Christians becomes essential in God's scheme of things "in maintaining an ordered society", which forms the foundation

upon which the "evangelization of the world" can function,²⁵⁵ in ".... preserving the fabric of the human community as the context within which the Church's work can be carried on".²⁵⁶

It is not necessary, in this critical evaluation of Yoder's position, to enter into a lengthy discussion about his theology of the 'powers' as they relate to the state. There need be no fundamental disagreement with Yoder here. It is not as if he understood the nature of the state in entirely negative terms, as simply the instrument of fallen 'powers' held in check by the providence of God. This negative dimension is a reality, but not the only reality. As with the 'powers', so with the state, there is an essentially positive dimension as well:

It is the divine purpose that within human existence there should be a network of norms and regularities to stretch out the canvass upon which the tableau of life can be painted".²⁵⁷

Without these structures which, "in their general essence", are "parts of a good creation", there ".... could not be society or history, there could not be man".²⁵⁸ It is in this context that Yoder accepts the police function as playing a positive role in the state. With this, too, there is substantial agreement. The point at which he needs to be questioned, however, is where the state's role in maintaining peace and just order is effectively denied to Christians.

The combination of Yoder's commendable practical realism concerning the need to control power for good in the human community, with his effective instance on a pacifist stance for Christians, leads him to a position which is profoundly unconvincing. The logic of this combination seems to be that God needs non-Christians to perform a vital role as keepers of the peace and upholders of just order. Christians, it seems, require non-Christians to do a task which would be immoral for Christians to

perform. For non-Christians this task is not immoral, but has the highly commendable function of maintaining "... the fabric of the human community within which the Church's work can be carried on".²⁵⁹

Surely, if a task is necessary in God's scheme of things, it is legitimate for Christians to perform it? More than this, one should be glad when Christians of integrity find themselves called to it, precisely because the task will be better performed by those genuinely committed to the values of the Gospel. This is not to say that Christians should allow themselves to be used uncritically in all activities of a modern state; for example, in the secret security apparatus. It is only to argue that Christians are not necessarily wrong to participate in governmental functions which involve the use of force to maintain a just peace.

It was argued in the previous section on the New Testament portrayal of Jesus and the implications for disciples, that Yoder's insistence that all Christians are called to be pacifists, is not borne out by the witness of Scripture. In this section, it has been shown how Yoder attempts to develop a distinction between ethics for Christians and ethics for the state, which hinges around the use of coercive power for maintaining peace and just order. It has been argued here that his conviction that all Christians are called to absolute non-resistance leads him to conclusions which are profoundly unconvincing. In the last resort, the implications of his own appreciation for the need of a police function in society, support the finding that his assertions about the Gospel demand for absolute non-resistance, are themselves questionable.

It is true that Yoder's position is emphatically not that of a "withdrawal" ethic. Much of his work is devoted to arguing why and how Christians ought to be involved in society.²⁶⁰ As Häuerwas points out:

Yoder has challenged the

.... basic presupposition that the issue of a Christian social ethic is the question of withdrawal or responsibility. He has argued correctly that the issue is not whether the Christian is to be responsible or not, but rather what form that responsibility is to take.²⁶¹

Nevertheless, the practical effect of requiring absolute non-resistance of all would-be followers of Christ is one which results in a withdrawal by Christians from certain crucial tasks in government.

(i) A note on Yoder's ecclesiology

Philip Wogaman, in his penetrating study, A Christian Method of Moral Judgement, relates Yoder's ethic to the broader matter of ecclesiology. Yoder, in spite of his denial, in the end adopts a form of sect-type ethics.²⁶² For Yoder, true to his Mennonite heritage, the Church is always a special minority called to radical discipleship, and with no sense of particular responsibility for the stewardship of creation. This contrasts with the ecclesiology of the mainstream Christian tradition, in which the Christian community came to accept full responsibility for the stewardship of God's world. In practice, Yoder's ethics for Christians is the ethics of a small minority group in society. It is hardly an ethics for Christians who may form a majority among the citizens, and who regard it as their duty to take positions of responsibility in running the affairs of state.

It is Yoder's view that the new aeon inaugurated by Jesus Christ can be found in the Church, whereas the old aeon is identified with the world and society.²⁶³ It is doubtful, however, whether such a distinction is tenable. The Kingdom of God cannot be simply identified with the Church.

In questioning the viability of Yoder's dualism, Hauerwas argues that:

The church is not directly God's agent for the realization of the Kingdom but rather it is God's harbinger of the Kingdom.²⁶⁴

Wogaman is critical of what he calls the new evangelical perfectionism of which he regards Yoder as an important representative. He points out that

.... all society including the 'new community' are affected by problems of power and selfish motive.²⁶⁵

It does not seem that Yoder takes this reality sufficiently into account.

It is difficult to envisage how Yoder's dualism would be applied in a country where virtually all the people were members of the Church. Would Christians have to opt out of positions which involved the use of coercive power? To whom would such positions be given? Would non-Christian foreigners have to be called in? The prospect is absurd.

As already pointed out, it is true that Yoder not only allows for, but encourages, Christians to participate in certain governmental processes and functions. However, the fact remains that he does not, in practice, allow for Christians to participate in any governmental role which would involve the wielding of coercive power. It is precisely at this point, however, at which it is being argued that the implications of his position lead to questionable conclusions.²⁶⁶

The alternate position is far more tenable, namely, that Christians do have a responsibility before God, to ensure that that power is controlled and wielded according to God's purposes. This will mean that some Christians will be called by God to tasks which involve the use of coercive power, in spite of the great dangers attached to this role. Mouw is, therefore, critical of Yoder's remark that Christians must see their ".... obedience more as praising God, and less as running His world for Him".²⁶⁷ Mouw asks:

How does it relate to the biblical mandate for human beings to "have dominion" in the created order? If God does require us to do things, some attempts to "run his world for him" might be an important means of praising him.²⁶⁸

The Gospel values of service and the protection of the weak are primary and will remain the touchstone. Jesus' ethic of sacrificial love, subordinating oneself to the demands of love, renouncing all concern for self-aggrandizement, shunning any tendency to lord it over others - these will be at the centre of every Christian's endeavour. This does not mean the renunciation of the responsibility and calling to be stewards of God's world, and stewards of a power which comes from him. It does mean that, as stewards, this responsibility must be wielded with love and in obedience to him. This will involve nothing less than the way of the cross, laying down one's life for others in the way of love, in obedience to the will of God.²⁶⁹

(ii) The 'pacifist practice' of the early Church - some implications

At this point it is appropriate to turn briefly to the debate concerning the 'pacifist practice' of the early Church, and the subsequent shift away from this practice.²⁷⁰ The phenomenon of the 'pacifism' of the early Church might be taken as confirming Yoder's position against that of Mouw, with regard to the way Christians are meant to take on responsibility, in and for the world. The substance of the debate, however, revolves around the reasons for this initial pacifist stance and subsequent shift.

Broadly speaking, pacifists tend to argue that the early Church was pacifist in practice, out of faithfulness to the message and example of Jesus, as understood and expressed by the writers of the New Testament.²⁷¹ Their explanation for the shift which took place, and which was consoli-

dated by Constantine's conversion to the Christian Faith, is that there was a 'falling away' from the true and simple message of the Gospel.²⁷²

Just-war theorists, on the other hand, tend to emphasise other factors when seeking an explanation for the initial 'pacifist practice' and subsequent shift away from this. Their explanations are of a contextual nature:

- (a) No Christian could even contemplate becoming a soldier, as long as it was required of soldiers to offer incense to Caesar. It would have involved a Christian in idolatry to join the army.
- (b) The early Church was deeply affected by the expectation of the imminent Second Coming of Christ. This meant that there was little interest in the affairs of the world, and that the issue concerning whether or not to be a soldier was simply irrelevant.

With regard to the shift away from this position, it argued that when heightened expectations of an imminent return of Christ began to wane, the Church inevitably readjusted its perceptions and concerns. The Church began to be more concerned about the ongoing life of the human community on earth. It became necessary to evolve an ethic which was appropriate for this changing orientation and context.

With the conversion of Constantine, and the great increase in the number of Christians in society, the Church ceased to be a small minority sect and, instead, came to represent a significant proportion of the citizens. Christians increasingly felt that it was part of their duty, as servants of Christ, to play a part in government. The question of the ethics of participation in the army naturally flowed from this new reality. Further-

more, the problem of idolatry, which had previously precluded participation, now ceased to be an issue.

Given this new situation, Christians were bound to have to grapple with the difficult ethical problems surrounding the wielding of power. The fact that many Christians became soldiers did not necessarily mean that they had 'fallen away' from the Faith.

The above represents a broad summary of the differing positions vis á vis the pacifist practice of the early Church and the eventual shift away from this practice.

In this context, the following point of Yoder's is of special interest:

Troeltsch and his disciples were right; the early church had to develop an ethic for living within the structures of society which was not immediately apparent within the discourses of Jesus himself, pervaded as they are by the expectation of the imminent Kingdom.²⁷³

At very least, this statement indicates an acknowledgement by Yoder that there was a move away from the expectation of the imminent Second Coming and that this move involved the need to develop an ethic appropriate to the new situation.

Very significant too is the assessment of the 'pacifist' historian, Geoffrey Nuttall. In his book, Christian Pacifism in History,²⁷⁴ he confirms the view that early church pacifism was very much affected by time-bound contextual factors: (a) The Jews, though not pacifists, were exempt from military service, and the Church which began as a Jewish sect automatically fell in with this situation.²⁷⁵ (b) The fear of idolatry was probably the main factor preventing the early Christians from participation in army and state. Nuttall concludes his outline of this period with the comment:

We are no longer antipathetic to government as such. This raises problems more acute than most of us, I fancy, are inclined to face.²⁷⁶

Adolf Harnack, in his important study, Militia Christi, The Christian Religion and the Military in the First Three Centuries, argues for the position that

.... the Christian ethic generally prohibited participation in war but that complete certainty about this was never achieved, and the prohibition was not really upheld.²⁷⁷

As Harnack's translator, David McInnes Gracie, warns: "Scholarship on this question can easily be divided between hawks and doves, with excesses committed on both sides".²⁷⁸

For the purposes of this study, it has only been necessary to draw attention to this debate by means of the above brief outline. The fact remains that Yoder does not base his Christian pacifist position so much on the pre-Constantinian practice of the Church as upon the example and message of Jesus and the teaching of the New Testament as a whole.

(iii) Conclusion

Returning then to the criticism of Yoder's insistence that all Christians are called to absolute non-resistance, it must be pointed out that the contemporary debate is actually at a different point. The discussion does not essentially revolve around whether Christians can participate in the structures of government which involve the use of coercive force. The need for a police function in the state is too widely accepted to make this a real question. The debate centres, rather, around the purpose for which this coercive force is employed - whether as a means to oppress or as a means to promote a just order of human society. The issue is not really over whether there is a legitimate use of coercive force, but over

the criteria and characteristics by means of which the legitimate use of force can be distinguished from its illegitimate use.

In spite of the fact that this is the central concern of the contemporary debate concerning the use of force, it is not the central issue for Yoder when it comes to Christian ethics for Christians. Central to Yoder's position is the assertion that Christians cannot participate in the coercive use of force for any purpose. Strictly speaking, therefore, the debate concerning the 'right' or 'wrong' use of force is, in Yoder's view, irrelevant for Christians as Christians. Its only relevance is for Christians when they try to develop an ethic for non-Christians.

The purpose here has been to evaluate Yoder's position, rather than enter the main concern of the contemporary debate. This will follow in a subsequent chapter. All that has been attempted thus far is to evaluate Yoder's own position and to do this in terms of his own assumptions and assertions. It has been shown that his position concerning ethics for Christians and ethics for non-Christians is not really viable, in the light of his own positive understanding of the necessity for the use of force in society.

The reality of ambiguous moral situations - contradictions in love

It has been shown that for the Christian pacifists a fundamental problem arises from the acknowledged necessity for a police function in society. Yoder finds a way around this dilemma by arguing in effect that this task can be done by non-Christians. This approach enables him to keep intact as it were his teaching of absolute non-resistance for Christians. This way of 'getting around' the problem was shown to be unconvincing. It

will not do to demand that a function, which is by common consent required by God as part of his arrangements for the existence of society, is not to be undertaken by Christians, but must be left to the non-Christians to perform.

In arguing for an alternative position, namely, that Christians also, and not just non-Christians, are called to wield coercive force in keeping with God's purposes, it is not to say that real and indeed agonising dilemmas do not arise. They do indeed arise. There is a need in fact to face these dilemmas fully and to recognise the reality of what might be called ambiguous moral situations. They are situations which involve contradictions in the demands of love.

It is one of the main shortcomings of Yoder's whole position that he fails to acknowledge sufficiently the reality of these ambiguous moral situations. There is a sense in which it becomes a major thrust of his Christian ethics for Christians to relegate the real ethical dilemmas concerning the use of force to the sphere of ethics for people who do not accept commitment to Jesus.²⁷⁹

In this final section on the evaluation of Yoder's Christian pacifism, it will be argued that these dilemmas are real for Christians as Christians, and that they cannot be 'solved' by reducing all Christian ethics for Christians to an imperative of absolute non-resistance. The demands of love for faithful disciples are far more complex. The ethical questions raised in terms of the concept 'lesser of two evils' are real, and cannot be argued away. The problem is graphically illustrated in a parable told by Mahatma Gandhi:

I am a member of an institution which holds a few acres of land whose crops are in imminent peril from monkeys. I believe in the sacredness of all life and hence I regard it a breach of

'ahimsa' to inflict any injury on the monkeys. But I do not hesitate to instigate and direct an attack on the monkeys in order to save the crops. I would like to avoid this evil. I can avoid it by leaving or breaking up the institution. I do not do so because I do not expect to be able to find a society where there will be no agriculture and therefore no destruction of some life. In fear and trembling, in humility and penance, I therefore participate in the injury inflicted on the monkeys, hoping some day to find a way out.²⁸⁰

It would be mistaken to dismiss the message of this parable on the grounds that people are different from animals. The point of the story is to show that there are situations in human life where people are presented with alternatives, both of which involve action which cannot be regarded as good in itself. It is not good to let people starve, and it is not good to kill monkeys. Yet, one must choose one of the alternatives. Gandhi was quite clear about which alternative he would recommend in this instance, but his clarity as to what was required did not turn the necessity into a positive good.²⁸¹

Such situations involve a real conflict of love. One must act, but either way, love is involved in an action which conflicts with love. One must choose, as the familiar phrase goes, the 'lesser of the two evils' - one must decide on the most loving action possible under the circumstances. It will not do to deny that such situations exist; they do. It will not do to shrink from believing that God could ever place a person in such a contradiction; He does.²⁸² This was Bonhoeffer's agony.

Bonhoeffer's dilemma - an historical example

It may be helpful to turn from a parable to what has become a classic historical example of the kind of dilemma being considered here. The purpose is simply to highlight, by way of an historical illustration, the nature of ambiguous moral situations. While Yoder is certainly not

unempathetic to such situations, it does seem that the logic of his position fails to do justice to the reality of these dilemmas.

Bonhoeffer's commitment to Christ drew him ever more deeply into the search for a specific response to the appalling reality of the tyranny of the Hitler regime. He began his journey of commitment with strong pacifist tendencies. It has been said of his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, published in English as The Cost of Discipleship, that ".... it is difficult to find any purer and unambiguous pacifist interpretation than is found in his exegesis of this sermon".²⁸³ In time, however, he found himself pushed as it were by the ambiguous demands of love into an eventual involvement in the conspiracy to kill Hitler.

The question - what does God expect of Christians when confronted with the phenomenon of a Hitler? - does not allow for an automatic answer. Like Gandhi, Bonhoeffer never regarded the taking of life as a 'good in itself'. To this extent he remained true to his pacifist impulse.²⁸⁴ What is a Christian to do, however, when confronted with the horror of innumerable people being cruelly put to death? Bonhoeffer found himself unconvinced by the assumption that the demands of love can and must be confined to the pacifist response. Just supposing this demonic evil could be checked by taking the life of one man, what does love require? The fact that one cannot be sure that the evil would be checked by such an action does not necessarily mean that the question does not remain a legitimate one.²⁸⁵

A person involved in a situation bears a responsibility for it, to the extent to which he has the power to alter it. Bonhoeffer and the co-conspirators believed they were indeed in a position to alter the

situation in a way which would, at very least, save thousands from death. They believed that this could be done by killing Hitler.

Here is a conflict for love; a situation of moral ambiguity. What does love require? The universal call or Gospel imperative to love all allows no exceptions. How was Bonhoeffer to love the Jews and Hitler? Assuming that he was actually in a position to kill Hitler and this would actually have meant an end to the killing of Jews, how can he love Hitler by killing him? How can he love the Jews by leaving them to their fate? The questions cannot be separated. Many would say that the answer to Bonhoeffer's dilemma is obvious: love of the thousands of innocent victims being cruelly killed requires the death of one man.²⁸⁶ Others would be far more hesitant, and would struggle with the dilemma.

The point is that it cannot be taken as a foregone conclusion that love requires one to leave Hitler unharmed. To find oneself arguing dogmatically for such an interpretation of the meaning of love is surely a sign of certain doctrinaire assumptions about the demands of love. It is this kind of prejudging of the issue, in the face of real ethical dilemmas, which reveals a weakness in the strict pacifist position. It fails to acknowledge the reality of ambiguous moral situations, of the kind illustrated in Gandhi's parable, and here in the case of Bonhoeffer who agonised over the meaning of responsible Christian discipleship in the context of Hitler's tyranny.

Bonhoeffer's dilemma is by no means exceptional. It arises in all kinds of less dramatic ways in everyday life. It is frequently the case that people are faced with what McCabe calls "overlapping situations" in which the ethical problem becomes one of "discerning priorities".²⁸⁷ In the

New Dutch Catechism it is acknowledged that there can be circumstances when it might be right to lie.²⁸⁸ Gustafson goes as far as to say:

Often, and always in complex situations, there is no morally or socially perfect way to meet the needs described.²⁸⁹

To follow some rule as an absolute can lead to a situation which defeats the very rule itself. McCabe refers in this context to the issue of therapeutic abortion.²⁹⁰ If the issue is two lives or one life, then the principle of 'respect for life' might be better served by taking one life to save another. It is "... possible that slavish following of the rule will defeat the purpose for which the rule was made".²⁹¹

Once this is acknowledged, however, a major problem arises, namely, the problem of measurement. Thus, while it is not denied that Bonhoeffer faced an agonising dilemma, the weakness of his position, as Rasmussen has shown,²⁹² lies in what may be regarded as the 'unmeasurable' nature of his ethic. This is particularly relevant to the evaluation of Yoder's own criticism of the alternate position, namely, that of the just-war tradition. It is this issue concerning the problem of measurement which is at the centre of Yoder's critique of Barth's ethics. This will be evaluated in the next chapter.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the strengths and weaknesses of Yoder's Christian pacifist position have been considered. It has been argued that Yoder's position, for all its challenge, is not in the last resort tenable. A summary has already been offered of the criticisms of Yoder's exegesis and hermeneutics.²⁹³ His doctrine of revolutionary subordination, issuing in

an ethic of absolute non-resistance, was found to be reductionist and lopsided and, consequently, unconvincing.

Yoder's treatment of the nature of man's responsibility for the world involving a dualism between Christian ethics for Christians and Christian ethics for the state, was shown to lead to an unacceptable sectarian ethic, based on a sectarian ecclesiology. While he does not support a withdrawal by Christians from political involvement he, in effect, relegates the necessary wielding of coercive power in society to non-Christians. This was found to lead to implications which are decidedly questionable.

Finally, it was shown that Yoder fails to do justice to the reality of ambiguous moral situations. As just pointed out, he appears to relegate the dilemma concerning the use of force to the sphere of 'ethics for non-Christians'. This procedure is profoundly unconvincing.

For these reasons, Yoder's form of Christian pacifism is, therefore, found wanting in crucial respects. While this is so, his challenge to the alternate position remains to be evaluated. It is essentially the problem surrounding the question of making exceptions to norms. It is the methodological problem relating to measurement in ethics. This must now be considered more fully in the context of an evaluation of Yoder's critique of Barth's Grenzfall ethics.

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For a more optimistic view concerning the more direct accessibility of the historical Jesus, see I H Marshall, I Believe in the Historical Jesus, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1979.
In the opinion of the present writer, the view taken by Ogden & Käseman is more convincing.
37. Gustafson, Theology & Ethics, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1981, p 152.
See also Leonardo Boff, Jesus Christ Liberator, Chapter 2, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 1978.
38. Bruce Birch & Larry Rasmussen, Bible & Ethics in Christian Life, Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1976, p 147.
39. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 250.
40. Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 72.
41. See also Luke 6:29.

42. St Augustine of Hippo, The Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland, 1948, p 72.
43. See the next section of this thesis on Jesus and the Zealots, for further consideration of the meaning of this incident.
44. G H C MacGregor, The New Testament Basis of Pacifism, Fellowship Publications, New York, 1954. p 11.
45. Ibid, p 35.
See also J G Davies, Christian Politics & Violent Revolution, SCM Press, London, 1976, p 151, where he argues that Jesus "could equally well have used a different illustration and could have suggested that if someone takes your purse, you should give him the money he has missed in another pocket".
46. Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 72.
47. MacGregor, The New Testament Basis of Pacifism, Op Cit, p 39.
48. T W Manson, The Sayings of Jesus, SCM Press, London, 1949, p 51.
49. Ibid, p 51.
50. Jürgen Moltmann, The Crucified God, SCM Press, London, 1974, p 143.
51. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 204.
52. Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 48.
53. Ibid, p 49.
54. F V Filson, A Commentary on the Gospel According to St Matthew, Adam & Charles Black, London, 1960, p 89.
55. G B Caird, The Gospel of St Luke, Seabury Press, New York, 1968, p 104.
56. Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 77.
57. John H Yoder, "What would you do if?" Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, No 17, December 1976, p 3-24.

58. Roland Bainton, Christian Attitudes Towards War & Peace, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1960, p 240.
59. J G Davies, Christians, Politics & Violent Revolution, Op Cit, p 240.
 "Moreover even if this saying were taken to mean that one of Jesus' followers should literally turn the other cheek in his or her own case, it does not enjoin that the disciple should lift up the face of another oppressed person for the blow to be received on his or her cheek", p 150 and 151.
60. St Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, Letters, Vol 1, ed Marcus Dodds, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1872.
Letter 47.5: "As to killing others in order to defend one's own life, I do not approve of this", p 181.
 Augustine goes on to qualify this in the case of a soldier defending himself in his official capacity.
61. Martin Luther, Luther's Works, Vol 21, Concordia Publishing House, St Louis, 1956, p 111.
 Luther teaches that a Christian "must not defend your own person".
62. Ibid, p 109.
 Luther teaches that "in relation to your servant you are a different person, and you are obliged to protect him".
63. Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol III, 4, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1961, p 435.
64. Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 72.
65. Ibid, p 22.
66. Alan Richardson, The Political Christ, SCM Press, London, 1973, p 42.
67. Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, SCM Press, London, 1973, p 245.
 See his comments on Brandon's view of Jesus' ties with the Zealot movement.
68. Ibid, p 226.
69. Ibid, p 227-232.

70. Ibid, p 246.
71. Alan Boesak, "To Break Every Yoke ... Liberation and the Churches in Africa", S A Outlook, October 1981, Vol 111, No 1324, p 161.
72. Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 22.
73. Moltmann, Crucified God, Op Cit, p 140.
74. Ibid, p 143.
75. Leivestad, Christ the Conqueror, Op Cit, p 27.
76. Guiterrez, Theology of Liberation, Op Cit, p 227-228.
See also Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 23 and 24.
77. Martin Hengel, Victory over Violence - Jesus and the Revolutionists, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1973.
Here is a position very similar to that of Yoder's.
78. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 98.
79. Ibid, p 98.
80. John H Yoder, The Church and Change, Unpublished lecture delivered to the Annual Conference of the South African Council of Churches, p 10.
81. Mfiguez Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Age, Op Cit, p 124.
82. Ibid, p 125.
83. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 47.
84. Ibid, p 51.
85. Ibid, p 52.
86. W F Albright & C S Mann, Matthew, Doubleday, New York, 1971, p 254.

87. Ibid, p 254.
88. Ibid, p 255.
89. Rudolf Schnackenburg, The Gospel According to St John, Vol I, Seabury Press, New York, 1980, p 343.
90. Ibid, p 247.
91. Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 22.
92. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 57.
93. G B Caird, The Gospel of St Luke, Seabury Press, New York, 1968, p 242.
94. Carroll Stuhlmueller CP, The Gospel According to St Luke, in the Jerome Biblical Commentary, Vol II, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1968, p 159.
95. Albright & Mann, Matthew, Op Cit, p 327.
96. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 55.
97. This dimension of the role of Christ the Messiah will be considered in the section following in this thesis, headed "A note on the biblical understanding of love".
98. Barth, Church Dogmatics, Op Cit, Vol III, 4, p 404.
99. Leivestad, Christ the Conqueror, Op Cit, p 63.
100. Gutierrez, Theology of Liberation, Op Cit, p 225-232.
101. Herzog, Liberation Theology, Op Cit, p 49.
102. Helmut Thielicke, Theological Ethics, Vol II, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1969, p 240.
103. Leivestad, Christ the Conqueror, Op Cit, p 295.

104. John Marsh, Saint John, Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1968, p 601.
See also C K Barrett, The Gospel According to St John, SPCK, London, 1967, p 447.
105. Marsh, St John, Op Cit, p 602.
See R Bultmann, The Gospel of St John : A Commentary, Blackwell, Oxford, 1971, p654.
See also C H Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Paperback edition 1968, p 427.
106. Jean Lassere, War and The Gospel, Herald Press, Scottdale, Pennsylvania, 1962, p 45.
107. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 133.
108. Ibid, p 133-134.
109. Boff, Jesus Christ the Liberator, Op Cit, p 204.
He speaks of the ambiguities of imitating Christ.
110. Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 72.
See also Richard Mouw, Politics of the Biblical Drama, Op Cit, p 112-116, for a critique of Yoder's understanding of what it means to imitate Jesus in his work on the cross.
111. Yoder, Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 56-57.
112. Ibid, p 57.
113. Ibid, p 58.
114. See previous section in Chapter 3 of this thesis, entitled "The basis of Yoder's disagreement with Karl Barth concerning just-war theory", and also Chapter 5 of this thesis.
115. Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 72.
116. Ibid, p 57.
117. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 134.
118. Ibid, p 126.

119. Ibid, p 188.
120. Yoder, Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 27-28.
See also the Chapter 3 of this thesis under the heading, "Can a Christian participate in government?"
121. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 199.
122. Albright & Mann, Matthew, Op Cit, p 241.
123. Ibid, p 242.
124. C F D Moule, The Gospel According to Mark, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1965, p 84.
125. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 134.
126. Ibid, p 118 f.
127. Ibid, p 119.
128. Jesus' whole relationship with his enemies - the scribes and pharisees for example - was fraught with bitter and escalating controversy to the very end. One of the most striking aspects of the portrayal of Jesus in all four gospels is the record of his extremely strong, critical language against these groups of people.
129. Birch & Rasmussen, Bible & Ethics in Christian Life, Op Cit, p 186.
130. Moltmann, The Crucified God, Op Cit, p 143.
See where he points out that the pacifism of Jesus was rooted in the rejection of vengeance.
131. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 134.
132. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 5.
As Yoder says, it is "the simple rebound of a Christian pacifist commitment as it responds to the ways in which mainstream Christian theology has set aside the pacifist implications of the New Testament message".
In Original Revolution, p 72, he asserts that "every member of the body of Christ is called to absolute non-resistance in discipleship".

133. It will be shown, when analysing Yoder's interpretation of the relevant passages in the Epistles, that his argument appears to become circular. His claim as to the pacifist implications of these texts is, in the last resort, justified in terms of the fact that Jesus was non-resistant. Yet his claim that disciples are called to be non-violent is based, in the last resort, upon a particular interpretation of the passages in the epistles.
134. The Haustafeln, found in Colossians 3:18-4:1, Ephesians 5:21-6:9, I Peter 2:13-3:7. See also Titus 2:1-3:1.
135. Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 72.
136. Ibid, p 9.
137. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 250.
138. Ibid, p 191.
139. Ibid, p 180.
140. Ibid, p 181.
141. Ibid, p 188.
142. Ibid, p 181.
143. Ibid, p 188.
144. Eduard Schweizer, The Letter to the Colossians, Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1982, p 215.
145. Ibid, p 216.
146. Ibid, p 216.
147. Ibid, p 217.
148. Ibid, p 217.
149. Ibid, p 218.

150. Ibid, p 218.
151. Ibid, p 219.
152. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 24.
153. Schweizer, Letter to the Colossians, Op Cit, p 229.
154. Ibid, p 228.
155. Eduard Lohse, Colossians & Philemon, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1971, p 158.
156. Ibid, p 157.
157. Ibid, p 157.
158. Ibid, p 162.
159. Schweizer, Letter to the Colossians, Op Cit, p 217 and p 227.
160. Marcus Barth, Ephesians, Doubleday & Co, New York, 1974, p 709 f.
161. Ibid, p 710.
162. Ibid, p 756.
163. Schweizer, Letter to the Colossians, Op Cit, p 217.
164. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 192.
165. Yoder appears to treat the position of the slave as an essentially domestic issue; part of relationships within the household. On the other hand, the position of the Christian as a citizen of the state he treats as another issue of a directly political nature. This distinction seems an artificial one. The position of the slave in the household might better be regarded as an issue which begs many political questions.
166. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 187 f.

167. Ibid, p 188.
168. Ibid, p 190.
169. Ibid, p 191 and 192.
170. Ibid, p 204.
171. Ibid, p 211.
See also Yoder, Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 75.
172. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 212.
173. Yoder, Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 77.
174. C E B Cranfield, A Critical & Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Vol II, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1979, p 661.
175. Ibid, p 661.
176. Ibid, p 662.
177. C K Barrett, The Epistle to the Romans, A & C Black, London, 1957, p 248.
178. Ibid, p 248.
179. Ibid, p 248.
See also Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 191.
180. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 249.
181. C H Dodd, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, Fontana Books, London, 1959, p 24.
182. Ibid, p 204.
183. Ibid, p 210.
184. Joseph Fitzmyer, The Letter to the Romans, Jerome Biblical Commentary, Vol II, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1968, p 326.

185. Ibid, p 326.
186. Yoder, Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 77.
187. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 211.
188. Ibid, p 211.
189. Lohse, Colossians & Philemon, Op Cit, p 162.
190. It is not necessary at this point to discuss the meaning of Jesus' teaching about rendering taxes to Caesar (Matthew 22:15-22; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25). Yoder does not base his teaching about revolutionary subordination on these passages. The meaning of "render to Caesar" will be analysed in Chapter 6 of this thesis, when outlining the theology of the conditional legitimacy of the state.
191. Ernst Käseman, Commentary on Romans, William B Eerdmans, Michigan, 1980, p 350.
192. Ibid, p 351.
193. Ibid, p 351-352.
194. Ibid, p 355.
195. Ibid, p 355.
196. Ibid, p 357.
197. Thielicke, Theological Ethics, Vol II, Op Cit, p 5.
198. Cranfield, A Critical & Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Op Cit, p 660.
199. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 213.

200. See reference 133 hereto, where it was pointed out that Yoder's exegesis appears to become circular. He is using the example of Jesus as the basis of his theology of revolutionary non-resistance yet, in his previous exegesis, Yoder was trying to base his case for his pacifist interpretation of the message of Jesus upon the meaning of the Haustafeln and Romans 13:1-7.
201. Mouw, Politics and the Political Drama, Op Cit, p 115.
See also p 112-116 for Mouw's critique of Yoder's understanding of what is expected of a disciple in imitating the life of Jesus.
202. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 181.
203. Ibid, p 192.
204. Schweizer, Letter to the Colossians, Op Cit, p 229.
205. Ibid, p 217.
206. Hosea 9:15; 11:8-9; Jeremiah 31:3; 9:24.
207. Hebrews 12:7 ff.
208. Paul Tillich, Love, Power & Justice, Oxford University Press, NY, 1960, p 49.
209. Ibid, p 49.
See also Alves, A Theology of Human Hope, Op Cit, p 126.
210. Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol III, 4, Op Cit, p 513.
211. Herbert McCabe, "The Class Struggle and Christian Love", In Agenda for Prophets, eds Rex Ambler & David Haslam, Bowerdean Press, London, 1980, p 167.
212. Isaiah 5:25 and Jeremiah 23:20.
213. Matthew 18:5 ff; 11:20-24; Luke 19:41-44; Matthew 21:33-46.
214. Romans 1:18; 12:9; Ephesians 5:6; II Thessalonians 1:8; Hebrews 3:10; James 5:1; II John verse 7; Acts 12:13; and the account of the death of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11.

215. Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 19:15. Note also the strange account of the killing of the swine in Matthew 8:28-34.
216. Leivestad, Christ the Conqueror, Op Cit, p 27.
217. Ibid, p 241.
218. Ibid, p 238.
219. Ibid, p 247.
220. Ibid, p 246.
221. Ibid, p 247.
See also Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 51. When he says: "we love to the point of refusing to kill because God is like that", he is begging the question as to what God is like according to the Scriptures.
222. Moltmann, Crucified God, Op Cit, p 276.
223. Leivestad, Christ the Conqueror, Op Cit, p 286.
See also Matthew 16:27; 19:28; John 5:27; Acts 10:42; 17:31; II Corinthians 5:10; Ephesians 6:8; II Timothy 4:1; I Peter 4:5; Revelation 2:23.
224. Ibid, p 309.
225. Ibid, p 296.
226. Yoder, Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 5.
227. Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 59.
See also Yoder, Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 11, 12, 31, 36.
228. Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 72.
229. Gustafson, Theology & Ethics, Op Cit, p 152.
230. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 250.

231. Leivestad, Christ the Conqueror, Op Cit, p 309.
232. It will not do to describe the essence of love as non-resistance. The essence of love is better described in terms of the offering of one's life in obedience to God, to live as his servant to fulfil his loving purposes.
233. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 191.
234. Birch & Rasmussen, Bible & Ethics in Christian Life, Op Cit, p 147.
235. Yoder, Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 5.
236. Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 72-73.
237. Yoder, Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 13.
238. Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 59-60.
239. Bainton, Christian Attitudes Towards War & Peace, Op Cit, p 180.
240. McGregor, New Testament Basis of Pacifism, Op Cit, p 63.
241. Bainton, Christian Attitudes Towards War & Peace, Op Cit, p 239-240.
242. Yoder, Karl Barth & The Problem of War, Op Cit, p 102.
243. Yoder, Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 56.
The possibility Yoder poses concerning Christian participation in the police function, was discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis. It was found that Yoder's argument at this point was at variance with the main thrust of his theological ethics. See also p 136 of this thesis.
244. Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 72 and 73.
245. Hauerwas, Vision & Virtue, Op Cit, p 208.
246. Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 72.
247. Hauerwas, Vision & Virtue, Op Cit, p 205.

248. Ibid, p 206.
249. Ibid, p 207.
250. Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 75-76.
251. Yoder, Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 23.
252. Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 72.
253. Yoder, Karl Barth & The Problem of War, Op Cit, p 46.
254. Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 72.
255. Yoder, Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 13.
256. Ibid, p 11.
257. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 144.
258. Ibid, p 144.
259. Yoder, Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 11.
260. See the section in the previous chapter of this thesis, headed "The Role of the Church and of Christians in the World".
261. Hauerwas, Vision & Virtue, Op Cit, p 214.
262. J Philip Wogaman, A Christian Method of Moral Judgement, SCM Press, London, 1976, p 188.
263. Hauerwas, Vision & Virtue, Op Cit, p 207.
Hauerwas also understands this to be Yoder's position.
264. Ibid, p 221.
265. Wogaman, Christian Method of Moral Judgement, Op Cit, p 192.

266. Yoder, Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 79.
Yoder's attempt to show how Christians would influence society while abstaining from undertaking a police function is most unconvincing.
267. John H Yoder, The Biblical Mandate, Post-American, April 1974, p 25.
268. Mouw, Politics & The Biblical Drama, Op Cit, p 108.
269. The content of this responsibility and the problems associated with it will be analysed in Chapter 6 of this thesis, "An Alternative Response - the Just-War Position".
270. Bainton, Christian Attitudes to War & Peace, Op Cit, p 68.
It is common cause that Christians did not become soldiers before 170 AD. The first evidence of a Christian presence in the Imperial Army is in 173 AD, at the time of Marcus Aurelius.
The major shift took place with the conversion of Constantine, and finally at the Council of Arles in 314, the refusal to fight in the army meant being excluded from communion.
See also Adolf Harnack, Militia Christi, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1981, p 100.
271. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 5.
272. Yoder, Sources of Western Social Axioms and Politics of Jesus, Address given at Diakonia House, Durban, July 1979, where he discusses the nature of the 'constantinian shift' and its effects.
273. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 191.
274. Geoffrey Nuttall, Christian Pacifism in History, World Without War Council, Berkeley, California, 1971.
275. Ibid, p 11.
276. Ibid, p 14.
277. Adolf Harnack, Militia Christi : The Christian Religion and the Military in the First Three Centuries, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1981, p 34.
278. Ibid, p 17.

279. Yoder, Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 49.
For example, Yoder asserts that "certain concepts, such as that of the lesser evil, while illegitimate for guiding Christian discipleship, are still relevant in the elaboration of an ethic for the state".
See also Guy Hershberger, War, Peace & Nonresistance, Herald Press, Scottdale, Pennsylvania, 1969, p 190. Hershberger appears to adopt a very similar position to that of Yoder. "The Biblical non-resistant declines to participate in the coercive functions of the state, but nevertheless regards coercion as necessary for the maintenance of order in sinful society, and is not anarchistic". What Hershberger seems to be saying is that non-Christians may wield the coercive functions of the state. In this sense he is recognising an ethic of the lesser of two evils but for non-Christians only.
280. UNESCO, "All Men are Brothers", Life and thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi as told in his own words, p 37.
281. Yoder, "What Would You Do If?" Op Cit.
In this article, Yoder is certainly aware of the range of possibilities. In this sense he is implicitly aware of the dilemmas. What he argues for is the possibility of a third way, namely, one which in God's grace might avoid both violence being done to, or perpetrated by, either party. The point Yoder is making is a valid one. There are, however, situations in which violence is being committed, and where the kind of stark alternatives suggested by Gandhi's parable are only too real. It is the reality of such situations which Yoder appears reluctant to face and handle as a problem for Christian ethics.
282. MacGregor, New Testament Basis of Pacifism, Op Cit, p 103.
MacGregor's assertion, that God would never place a Christian in this dilemma, does not ring true to human experience.
283. Dale Brown, Bonhoeffer & Pacifism, unpublished lecture, 1976, p 5.
See also Larry Rasmussen, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Reality & Resistance, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1972, p 94-126, especially his chapter on the character of Bonhoeffer's pacifism.
284. In Chapter 6 of this thesis it will be shown how the pacifist position and just war theory in fact share a common starting point.
285. See the next chapter in this thesis for a discussion on the question of 'certainty' in moral calculations.

286. What does it mean to love Hitler under such circumstances? Is it loving to leave him to continue in his evil madness of killing the Jews? How does God love him? He is caring; concerned for his good, his salvation; concerned, therefore, to bring an end to the evil which is destroying his soul. Does God's love for Hitler require that he be left to continue in uncontrollable wickedness? How can one assume, as the pacifist does, that he must be so left? It cannot be assumed that it is intrinsically unloving in God's eyes to stop Hitler in his soul-destroying demonic activity. His ultimate salvation is in God's hands - his death is not the most evil thing to befall him. See the next chapter in this thesis for Barth's understanding of the relationship between 'respect for life' and the command of God.
287. Herbert McCabe, Law, Love & Language, Steed & Ward, London, 1968, p 33.
McCabe quotes E M Forster: "If I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country".
288. New Dutch Catechism, Burns & Oats, London, 1967, p 443.
289. Gustafson, Theology & Ethics, Op Cit, p 333.
See also Charles Villa-Vicencio, "Southern Africa Today: A spiral of violence", Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, March 1983, No 42, p 59-63, for a useful contextual application of this dilemma, drawing also on the experience and reflections of the Federation of Protestant Churches in the German Democratic Republic.
290. McCabe, Law, Love & Language, Op Cit, p 10.
291. Ibid, p 11.
292. Rasmussen, Dietrich Bonhoeffer : Reality & Resistance, Op Cit, p 149-173.
See especially his chapter on the critique of Bonhoeffer's methodology. This will be considered further in the following chapter of this thesis.
293. See page 161 of this thesis: "A summary of the criticisms of Yoder's exegesis and hermeneutics".

CHAPTER 5

AN EVALUATION OF YODER'S CRITIQUE OF BARTH'S GRENZFALL¹ ETHICS -
THE METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEM

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the conclusion was reached that Yoder's position is not, in the last resort, without its problems. It was acknowledged, however, that his challenge to the alternative position is a serious one, and this needs to be addressed more specifically in this chapter. It concerns the problem of measurement in ethics, particularly as it arises when making exceptions to norms. This challenge will now be evaluated in terms of Yoder's critique of Barth's Grenzfall ethics. This evaluation will lead to a brief consideration of the methodological problem in ethics generally.

In the chapter outlining Yoder's Christian pacifist position, a brief account was presented of the basis of his disagreement with Karl Barth concerning just-war theory. This was done both as a means of illustrating the central features of Yoder's pacifism over and against the just-war tradition, and also in order to focus on the primary issue with which this whole study is concerned, namely, the ethics of the use of force.

The purpose here is to weigh Yoder's and Barth's different interpretations of Scripture and theological emphases, and consider which is the more plausible and convincing. In preparing the ground for this evaluation, it is necessary briefly to describe the foundations of Barth's theological ethics, in terms of which he develops his ethics of the Grenzfall, or borderline, case.

AN OUTLINE OF BARTH'S GRENZFALL ETHICS

For Barth, all ethics stems from the will of God - his command. In his Church Dogmatics Vol II.2, Barth develops his position at length, under

three main headings: "The Command as the Claim of God", "The Command as the Decision of God", and "The Command as the Judgement of God". God's will is prior to all formulations of ethical rules and principles. His will can in no way be bound by man's assumptions about right and wrong.

The grace of God protests against all man-made ethics as such. But it protests positively. It does not only say No to man. It also says Yes. It does this in Jesus Christ.²

It is a mistake, therefore, to absolutise any norms and ethical laws, because to do so might limit the sovereign will of God - his apparently exceptional command. "The divine command", says Barth, "requires our obedience, i.e. that we should live in this surrender to God which he both wills and effects".³

This ethics, based on the free and unfettered will of God, has certain important implications. Even the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount need to be understood in terms of God's freedom to command what he wills.⁴ For Barth these are a framework of indications, rather than a code of absolute rules.⁵

It is certainly not the case that according to the Bible, God commands only or even primarily where these universally valid rules are thought to be discovered. We should rather consider the fact that the whole relationship of God with man in the course of the historical unfolding of His covenant of grace, which forms the true content and object of the biblical witness, is continuously realised in the shape of the divine commanding and prohibiting, the divine ordering and directing.⁶

Barth regards it as "an exegetical question of the first importance",⁷ whether these special texts are to be interpreted in terms of the Bible as a whole, or vice versa. Barth argues that to interpret the Scriptures in terms of special texts would be "taking a disastrous freedom with the Bible".⁸ Those who do this "must be reminded that they are appealing to a Bible which they have first adjusted to their own convenience".⁹ Barth is emphatic that, however tempting the alternative hermeneutic may be, it is essential to interpret even these great texts in terms of the Bible as

a whole, and not vice versa. For him, it is clear that the Bible witnesses to the free command of God, which cannot be limited to any single formulation of it, however authoritative. The function of the Sermon on the Mount is to place the Christian "in the position where he can hear the definite command of God".¹⁰

When it comes to hearing the definite command of God, man seeks to do this and respond as a free and responsible creature made in God's image. It is at this point that the man of faith must use his rational faculties in seeking to discern and test what may be the command of God in a given situation. The fact that God issues his command to man as a creature made in his image, indicates that the ethical process is inevitably a dialectical and relational one. Man discovers the will of God in the dialectic of relationship. The dialectic consists, in the relationship between God and man, in the tension between "intuition (command) and rationality".¹¹

Man is able to discern the will of God in Jesus, in so far as he indeed belongs in living relationship with Jesus. Barth effectively sums up his whole understanding of ethics in these terms. He deliberately frames the crucial question in scriptural terms - "What ought we to do?" (Acts 2:37). The answer is given by Peter, in terms of entering a relationship with Jesus: "and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". (Acts 2:38).¹²

It is in terms of this theology of the freedom of the divine command, expressed in a dialectical relationship with man, that Barth develops his ethics of the Grenzfall. "Barth's theology of the command of God is the superstructure on which his concept of Grenzfall rests".¹³ Barth expands on this in Vol III,4 of his Church Dogmatics.

Concerning the crucial value of "respect for life",¹⁴ Barth applies his concept of Grenzfall in terms of the ethics of the divine command, in the following way:

As Creator and Lord of life, God can destroy life and in this too he is man's gracious Father. God is leading (man) through this life to the other. The respect for life commanded by Him cannot then be made by man a rigid principle, an absolute rule to be fulfilled according to rote. Unless we qualify "respect for life" and place it under God we turn it into a principle of idolatry.¹⁵ But the application of this reservation cannot have more than the character of an ultima ratio, an exceptional case.¹⁶

Temporal life is certainly not the highest of all goods Just because it belongs to God, man may be forbidden to will its continuation at all costs. He may be ordered to risk and expose it to varying degrees of danger.¹⁷ Jesus went to Jerusalem with an awareness of the necessity of his death.¹⁸

It is on these theological grounds that Barth argues that it may be justified to take life. One cannot say beforehand that God could not will such an exceptional act. Thus there can exist exceptional circumstances in which a departure from the norm becomes ethically justifiable as a "borderline case", willed by God.

Yoder shows a real appreciation of what Barth means by the Grenzfall when he explains that it is:

.... the denial of man's right to refuse God the freedom to make exceptions if he so wills He does not contradict what God originally said, but rather limits man's capacity and right to make affirmations about what God's words mean.¹⁹

It should be emphasised that for Barth the very word 'exception' could be misleading. It expresses the whole issue from man's perspective, rather than from God's perspective. God is not making exceptions to his will. He is making exceptions to norms which are generally accepted formulations concerning his will but which are, in reality, not absolute statements but only indicators. They are exceptions only in terms of man's understanding of God's will, but not to God's will as such. Thus Yoder rightly observes

"that what is apparently an exception is actually a deeper faithfulness to the law, the most concrete form of obedience".²⁰

AN EVALUATION OF YODER'S CRITICISM

Enough has been said by way of outlining the basis of Barth's ethic of Grenzfall, and it remains to examine Yoder's criticisms.

1. How can a person know when the exception is commanded?²¹ Barth is fully aware of the problems related to this question. He asks it himself: "Have we any guarantee that in our enquiry as to the divine command we will not go astray?".²² He is completely clear in his answer: "we have no guarantee against this".²³ For Barth this should not be a source of fundamental anxiety for a Christian. Although there is no guarantee as such, it is central to the Christian faith that God does, nevertheless, reveal his will to his people:

We are able to hear it, as surely as we belong to Him and to no-one else.²⁴

This is "made plain by the witness of scripture".²⁵

In the end, for Barth it is a simple statement of faith that Christians can and do hear the command of God. He does speak and guide.

Inevitably, therefore, all our answers that we think we know are weighed again and thrown into the melting-pot.²⁶

The Church is most faithful to its tradition when, linked but not tied by its past, it today searches the Scriptures and orientates its life by them Similarly, the individual is true to himself, and to the history of the act of God from which he derives, when he allows his baptism to be the sign which stands over every new day.²⁷

Yoder's criticism of Barth is that, because a Christian cannot know |

when the exception is commanded, he has no right to undertake such an exceptional course of action. Barth would agree that there can be no guarantees about being right. He would argue, nevertheless, that the Christian can and must, in relationship to God, be open to hear his word and be ready to follow in faith (John 16:12), in a way which constitutes an apparent²⁸ exception to the norm.

The problem with Barth's position, however, is that it can be seen from a certain perspective to be vulnerable to the charge of subjectivism. Methodologically speaking, he does not provide any model of measurement, apart from the individual's faith experience, informed as it is by the tradition of the Church. The problem with Yoder's criticism is that he appears to assume that it is possible, in ethics, to achieve verifiable certainty based on the explicit teaching of Scripture. The implication is that if one does not have this kind of verifiability, then it is not legitimate or ethical to undertake a particular action while ascribing it to be the declared will of God. There are serious weaknesses, however, to any ethics which presume on the possibility of certainty. The specific problems concerning Barth's position and Yoder's criticism of it, will be addressed in the following section on the methodological problem in ethics.

2. Yoder criticises Barth for shifting the basis for his ethic of the Grenzfall from a theological and dogmatic foundation to an essentially secular one. He accuses Barth of failing to keep his ethics Christologically based. For example, in criticising Barth's understanding of justice, Yoder asserts that he is borrowing this "not from Christ and not even from the Old Testament, but from

Rome".²⁹ This is a questionable interpretation of Barth's theological ethics. He, in fact, specifically bases his understanding of the command to respect life on the incarnation.³⁰

It seems also that Yoder has failed to appreciate the dialectical nature of Barth's ethics. As was shown above, Barth was aware that in the process of discovering the divine command, the man of faith rightly uses all his God-given faculties, which include a rational examination of the context in the light of God's word.³¹

It also appears that Yoder may be confusing Barth's ethic of the Grenzfall with the way Barth applied this ethic to the case of the possible defence of Switzerland. Barth's application of his ethic of Grenzfall should not be confused with his ethic as such. One may well find fault with his application of it to the defence of Switzerland, but this does not thereby destroy the general validity of his Grenzfall ethic.

3. Taking his criticism further, Yoder puts the question: "Whence and how does this commandment come?"³² Clearly, it comes through Jesus Christ and, therefore, it is claimed the Grenzfall ethic must be rejected because "we cannot count on situations ever arising in which God would take back what He said in Christ".³³ Yoder reads the Scriptures to say that Christ called every Christian to absolute non-resistance. Yet the greater part of the previous chapter was spent in questioning precisely this reading of the Scriptures.

Yoder himself concedes that "many pacifists would agree with Barth that in extreme cases the maintenance of an absolute refusal to

take life may be impossible".³⁴ He adds that some will "admit that the police function within society may be justified".³⁵ Such pacifists, if they are Christians, would perhaps also differ from Yoder and not find, as he does, that discipleship necessarily entails absolute non-resistance.

For a Christian, it is a truism to say that "God would not take back what He said in Christ". Nothing in Barth's theology suggests that God does take back what He says in Christ. Yoder's criticism of Barth at this point is crucially weakened by his own fine articulation of what the Grenzfall really means:

.... it does not contradict what God originally said, but rather limits man's capacity and right to make affirmations about what God's words mean.³⁶

Barth's argument is that God can command a course of action which makes an exception to man's usual understanding of Christian norms. These norms, however, are not to be taken as absolute rules. In the last resort, they are only indicators of the one absolute which is the sovereign command of God. Yoder's concern, whilst legitimate, must ultimately be tempered in the light of Barth's wider understanding of the will of God known in Christ.

4. It is in respect of Barth's justification of the defence of Switzerland³⁷ that Yoder's criticism is, perhaps, most plausible. He puts "pertinent questions which suggest that Barth's decision to defend a threatened Switzerland is problematic".³⁸ On this point, the debate appropriately remains open, for this is a debate not about the merits of the Grenzfall ethic as such, but concerning an application of it.

As was pointed out above, Barth is fully aware that there can be no

guaranteed knowledge of God's will. Man must search in faith, and respond in faith, to what he believes is the command of God here and now.

If we err today, tomorrow or the next day, we shall have the opportunity to retrieve an error of today by new instruction and conversion.³⁹

Thus Yoder's criticisms of Barth's application of the Grenzfall ethic to the defence of Switzerland is by no means decisive when it comes to a question of evaluating the theological validity of the concept of Grenzfall itself.

Altogether, therefore, there are serious weaknesses in Yoder's criticisms of Barth's Grenzfall ethics. Far from finding Barth's ethics of Grenzfall unhelpful as an ethical tool,⁴⁰ there is much that can be said for its manifest strengths. As a conclusion to this section, these can now be summarised:

- (1) His theological ethics guard against all attempts to express man's understanding of God's will by absolutising them in the form of rigid rules.
- (2) His ethics are profoundly God-centred, in the full Trinitarian sense.
- (3) He appropriately leaves room for the necessary dialectic which must take place in the process of man's attempt to hear and understand the will of God. Man must use all his faculties in seeking God's will. There is an openness here for an emphasis on the importance of an analysis of the actual context.
- (4) Since all Christians appear to admit, in some form or another, to the need at very least for a conditional use of force in a fallen world,

in the form of a police function,⁴¹ Barth's ethics provide a fundamentally theological basis for this.

- (5) In relegating the use of force to the border, or edge, of Christian ethics, he is placing the moral presumption against the use of force clearly at the centre of what is normative for Christians. In this way he is guarding against the danger of ever allowing 'just-war' theory to slide into a crusade mentality. War, for Barth, is fundamentally contrary to the normal Christian way. This is why Yoder rightly accepts Barth as speaking from the pacifist camp.
- (6) In so far as Barth develops a theology which would not totally exclude the possibility of Christian participation in the use of force, even perhaps in a war situation, he does so in terms which would require full theological explanation to justify what is undoubtedly a departure from the normally accepted Christian position. In other words, there is certainly no need for a Christian to justify a refusal to participate in conflict. The onus for justification lies heavily on the one who presumes to depart from the normal Christian position by deciding to participate in armed conflict. Each application of the ethical concept of Grenzfall requires a rigorous rationale in terms of the deepest demands of the Christian faith.

Nevertheless, as acknowledged above, for all the strengths of his theological ethics, Barth does lay himself open to the charge of subjectivism. In the final analysis, he appears to base the measurement of the exception to the norm upon prayerful intuition. Yoder, on the other hand, appears to demand and expect certainty in the field of ethics. It is, therefore,

necessary to give some consideration to the problem of methodology in ethics generally.

THE METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEM

The critical evaluation of Yoder's Christian pacifist position points to the need to give special attention to the methodological problem. It is the problem raised by the need to establish a means of measuring the moment for making the exceptional (Grenzfall) decision. It is not only a Grenzfall ethic, however, which begs this methodological question. An ethical model, which assumed the possibility of absolute norms, equally begs the question: who is to decide as to which norms are absolute? Do some norms have more weight than others? How does one, for example, relate the injunction against stealing to the command to feed the hungry? (Matthew 25:35). If it is agreed that ethics cannot in fact be reduced to a series of harmonious and unquestioned absolutes, then the methodological problem is already raised in crucial form.

In a thorough analysis of the "question of moral norms and their grounding",⁴² Richard McCormick reviews the recent literature on this complex subject. He asserts quite unequivocally that

The notion of possible exceptions to concrete moral norms by the presence of proportionate reason has been a staple of Catholic theology for many centuries.⁴³

Clearly, the problem of methodology in ethics is central for all traditions, and can by no means be confined to Barth's Grenzfall ethics alone.

In an article on "Christian Social Ethics as a De-absolutizing

Discipline", Charles Villa-Vicencio observes:

.... the presence of a cautious relativism in present Catholic theology that seeks not to abandon all norms other than the "situation" and "love" - but neither does it cling to absolute norms. Proportionate reason is not an affirmation of situationalism but rather a wrestling with conflicting 'oughts'.⁴⁴

Furthermore, if ethics is to be distinguished from ethos, and it is conceded that "the ethical arises only when the normal moral course is called into question",⁴⁵ then all the more can it be said that, in the last resort, all ethics begs methodological questions. This needs to be borne in mind while attention is focused more specifically here on the problem of methodology in Grenzfall ethics.

Once it is accepted that exceptions can be made to the normal understanding of an ethical precept, the methodological problem clearly becomes fundamental. If it can be right to use force in certain situations and on certain conditions, then the central problem becomes one of establishing criteria for distinguishing between the legitimate and illegitimate use of force.

In many ways, Yoder's strength lies in the way he raises this vital methodological question in relation to Barth's Grenzfall ethic. How can one know that the time has come to make an exception to the norm? Yoder's questioning of Barth's ethics is really a questioning of his methodology. Yoder makes a strong case and yet, perhaps, the very strength of his position becomes his weakness. He finds that there is no sure way around the methodological problem. The implication of Yoder's reasoning seems to be as follows: since there is no means of measuring with any certainty when the exception to the norm can be made, it can never be right to make an exception. This is a way of denying the issue as an ethical one for Christians. Concerning the issue as to when force might

legitimately be used by a Christian, Yoder effectively denies such an ethical possibility and thereby eliminates any problems of measuring such possibilities. Yoder, it seems, develops a position which itself lacks a methodology for dealing with certain ethical dilemmas.

As was pointed out in the previous chapter, Yoder in practice refuses to give sufficient recognition to the reality of ambiguous moral situations. In this way he is able to criticise the methodology of Barth without having to provide an alternative one for situations of ethical uncertainty. Yoder seems to back away from this dilemma. The ethical dilemma, however, remains only too real, and this reality compels the Christian to attempt to develop a methodology which relates in a meaningful way to the dilemmas. While there are real problems in establishing a convincing methodology, this can never provide the grounds for dismissing the seriousness of the dilemmas as such. The fact remains that there are times when people find themselves in situations where the norms, as generally understood, do not provide unambiguous guidance.

Gustafson speaks of conditions which "are not such as to provide absolute certainty about God's purpose. And thus moral life will continue to have its risks".⁴⁶ Time and again, people have to plunge uncertainly into one decision or another. The path taken by Bonhoeffer amid profound uncertainty is now a classic case in point. However, everyday examples are legion, and provide the very stuff of all ethical debate of consequence.

The question which needs to be addressed is: how can one find a way through the methodological problem which does not ignore Yoder's challenge, and yet does not duck the issue by refusing to do justice to

the reality of the ethical uncertainties? It might be feared that, in the last resort, there is no convincing way through and that, although a human being is 'forced' at times to act 'against the norms', it is impossible to provide an ethical methodology for coping with such eventualities. It might be argued that ethics as such collapses at this point, only to be substituted by the act of "pure faith".⁴⁷ It might be thought that normative or prescriptive ethics is simply cast aside, to be replaced by sheer individual subjectivism. McCormick strongly criticises this way of thinking:

.... there is nothing in the teleological understanding of moral norms that suggests such individualism Because the individual must make such assessments at times does not mean that the assessment is correct just because the individual has made it.⁴⁸

It will, therefore, be argued that there is, after all, a workable way through the methodological impasse, which avoids an either/or approach to ethics. It is a way which does not capitulate to the polarization of prescriptive and intuitive (subjective) ethics, but rather holds both these dimensions together in creative dialectic tension.

After clarifying this dialectic methodology, an attempt will then be made to show that, in regard to the ethical ambiguities surrounding the use of force, the so-called just-war criteria provide a workable and objective means of testing the moment for the exceptional (Grenzfall) decision. The just-war criteria are the product of a long corporate tradition within the believing community - the Church. In this sense, they provide criteria which are not merely subjective. By means of these criteria, it is possible to subject a particular individual's specific action to more objective assessment by fellow members of the Church. The criteria allow for an evolving critical assessment through historical perspective.

When evaluating Yoder's critique of Barth, it was shown that Yoder did not do sufficient justice to the dialectic nature of Barth's ethics. In this instance, the dialectic is that which takes place between the command of God and the Christian using all his God-given faculties to discern the command. However, the way through the methodological problem is not solved by means of this one dialectic process alone. There remains a weakness in the methodology of the Grenzfall ethic which needs to be faced. As expounded thus far, it is very vulnerable to the criticism of its being too subjective. This vulnerability is articulated in a formidable way by Larry Rasmussen.

Rasmussen applies his critique to Bonhoeffer's methodology. What he has to say, however, poses a direct challenge to the viability of Barth's methodology concerning his Grenzfall ethic. His criticism is more telling than Yoder's because, he addresses the reality of ambiguous moral situations in a more direct manner. Rasmussen's strength lies in criticising the methodology from within the theological and ethical framework which he is studying. Rasmussen acknowledges his deepest respect for the way Bonhoeffer "enacted his own Christology with extraordinary power".⁴⁹ He, nevertheless, believes that he failed to provide a convincing answer to the question: "how is the exceptional command to be tested as exceptional?"⁵⁰

While Bonhoeffer might have sought and applied appropriate criteria in his political discussions, he did not explicitly do this in his ethical theory as such. Bonhoeffer was not, however, a mere intuitionist employing a relational model through a life of prayer. In Rasmussen's own lengthy description of the development of Bonhoeffer's ethics of resistance, the manifest, even if unconscious, application of just-war criteria becomes

very apparent.⁵¹ In this sense, Rasmussen's criticism of Bonhoeffer's methodology is, perhaps, somewhat overstated. Yet, the fact remains that while Bonhoeffer engaged in a great deal of political analysis in his ethical practice, he did not build such contextual analysis into the methodology of his ethical theory.

On the other hand, the very fact that he consistently refused to justify his option to use violent means, reveals his implicit recognition of the place of normative (prescriptive) ethical precepts. If his ethics had excluded these fundamental assumptions, the agonising problem of guilt would not have arisen. These normative assumptions provided an essential axis in his ethical searching. Like Barth, however, Bonhoeffer was convinced that such norms cannot be absolutes; hence the necessary dialectic which must take place between norms and situations, with the fallible human being having to make decisions.⁵² For this reason, Rasmussen is not altogether fair in his criticism.

Apart from this one qualification, however, it does seem that Rasmussen's critique is otherwise valid, namely, that Bonhoeffer does not deal adequately with the problem of measurement in his ethical theory.

Rasmussen quotes Bonhoeffer as saying:

Before other men the man of free responsibility is justified by necessity; before himself he is acquitted by his conscience; but before God he hopes only for mercy.⁵³

This is certainly a striking affirmation of "ethics done in the relational mode".⁵⁴

There are two ways in which Bonhoeffer might have provided a more adequate framework from which to develop a more objective ethical methodology. Firstly, he might have done this by embracing the dialectical approach more explicitly in his ethical theory. He might have consciously taken

up and worked with the just-war criteria as an ethical instrument to be applied in the dialectic process between relational and prescriptive ethics. Secondly, and essentially related to the first point, he could have integrated his ethics far more into his ecclesiology. If he had found a place for the Church⁵⁵ in his measurement of the Grenzfall he would, to a great extent, have freed himself from the accusation of intuitionism.

Admittedly, given his experience of the Church to which he belonged, even in its confessional expression, it is not surprising that he failed to find the normative guidelines and means of ethical measurement in that ecclesiological framework. His honesty, compassion and courage drew him ever more deeply into the desperate circumstances of his time, and confronted him with extreme choices. He was left lonely and, indeed, cut off from a more normal methodological framework.

In spite of this historical explanation, Rasmussen's critique of his methodology remains telling. It is a critique which might well be applied to Barth's Grenzfall ethics. It has been shown how Yoder honed in on this weakness of Barth's ethics but, himself, failed to face sufficiently the reality of ethical ambiguities. In practice, the mainline Christian tradition sides with Barth in asserting that, since norms cannot be absolutes, there must be a place for exceptions, and that there must be a working means of measuring them.

Certainly man is unconditionally obligated by the absolute value of the ethical; but as a contingent being in a contingent world, he can realise the absolutely obliging bonum only in and through bona which, as contingent goods or values, are relative and as such can never be shown a priori to be the greatest value which cannot concur with another value.⁵⁶

Perhaps Barth might have answered Yoder's criticism more decisively if he too had further developed his dialectical approach to ethics. This

enabled a ready application of the just-war criteria as the 'ethical measuring-stick' provided by the ecclesia, in her tradition, to test when that moment has arrived to take an exceptional course of action.

There is, of course, no easy way around the perennial problem of methodology in ethics. Who decides what is right? How do we decide? The fact remains that people have to, and do, make ethical decisions when the means of knowing what is right offer no certainty. Not only the individual but the Church too, says Rahner, "can be wide off the mark".⁵⁸ This, however is

.... a risk that must be taken if the Church is not to be seen to be pedantic, to be living in a world of pure theory, remote from life, making pronouncements that do not touch the stubborn concreteness of real life.⁵⁹

In closing, attention should be drawn to Paul Lehmann's concept of a Koinonia ethic. He gives a more central emphasis to the ecclesiological framework for Christian ethics:

We have been urging that Christian thinking about ethics starts with and from within the Christian Koinonia. In the Koinonia it makes sense to talk about the will of God as the answer to the questions: What am I, as a believer in Jesus Christ and as a member of his church, to do?⁶⁰

Yet, for the purposes of a satisfactory methodology as such, Lehmann does not seem to give sufficient place to the historical dimension. The 'rightness' of a prophetic action can often only be subsequently assessed and judged by the Church. At the time, the Koinonia may not be in a position to measure the prophetic act. This inadequacy of the Koinonia at a given time was precisely the predicament in which Bonhoeffer found himself. Lehmann's Koinonia ethic is most helpful when held together with this historical perspective. In a real sense, the methodological process of assessing Bonhoeffer's option is still being worked through in the living, changing Koinonia.

Only a methodology which is dynamic - which includes within its theoretical framework the fact that the measuring or verification process includes the test of time - only such a dynamic methodology can provide the means of measuring the ethical quality of the prophetic action which bursts contemporary norms. It is often in the very nature of such prophetic ethical action that there can be no clear means at the time of measuring it. It reflects a misunderstanding of the nature of prophetic ethical action to expect and demand a methodology which gives the answers then and there. Yoder, it seems, does not show sufficient awareness of this.

A person who dares to take an action, which is exceptional in terms of given norms, must offer the action for the penultimate judgment of the Koinonia over time, leaving the ultimate judgment to God. Bonhoeffer and Barth were clear about the ultimate judgment being left to God, but for the purposes of providing a measure by means of which exceptional options can be judged, it does seem that they failed to provide for this penultimate role of the Church as an essential factor in their respective ethical methodologies.

CONCLUSION

The thrust of this brief chapter is certainly not to make any bold assertions. All that has been attempted is to acknowledge some of the weaknesses in Bonhoeffer's methodology, and in Barth's Grenzfall ethic, and to point to some directions which may provide a workable way through the scylla of subjectivism and the charybdis of absolute ethical norms. It has been suggested that the way through is along the lines of a dialectic

tical approach, within a frankly ecclesiological historical perspective. It is in this context that the just-war criteria, for all their weaknesses,⁶¹ can be taken up and applied as the means of assessing when the moment of exceptional decision, or Grenzfall, is reached.

As was pointed out above, in reality the central debate between Christians today is not around whether coercive force is theologically justifiable, or not. Virtually all theologians concede to the need to use such force in certain situations and on certain conditions. The essential debate revolves around the criteria for such a legitimate use of force; in other words, around how to distinguish the legitimate use of force from its illegitimate use.

Simple sanity teaches that there comes a time, "a last resort", to use the language of just-war theory, when any individual or community resorts to violence to obtain a "just end".⁶²

This study has been concerned with a critical evaluation of Yoder's Christian pacifism. It is not sufficient simply to criticise his position without giving proper attention to the alternate position, which he rejected. For the sake of completeness, therefore, the viability of the alternate position needs to be assessed.

CHAPTER 5 - REFERENCES

1. It is generally agreed that English translations of "borderline case", "limiting case", "extreme case", "exceptional case" do not capture the complete meaning of the German word Grenzfall. The German term will, therefore, be used here.
2. Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol II 2, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1961, p 517.
3. Ibid, p 632.
4. Ibid, p 683-700.
Lengthy footnote in which Barth argues for this important assertion.
5. John H Yoder, Karl Barth & The Problem of War, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1970, p 25.
See also E C Williams, A Critical Appraisal of the Grenzfall in Karl Barth's Ethics, unpublished thesis, UNISA, Pretoria, June 1981, p 68.
6. Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol II 2, Op Cit, p 672.
See also p 673-675 for examples cited from Scripture.
7. Ibid, p 680.
8. Ibid, p 681.
9. Ibid, p 681.
10. Williams, A Critical Appraisal of the Grenzfall in Karl Barth's Ethics, Op Cit, p 70.
11. Ibid, p iii.
12. Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol II 2, Op Cit, p 661.
13. Williams, A Critical Appraisal of the Grenzfall in Karl Barth's Ethics, Op Cit, p 74.
14. Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol III 4, Op Cit, p 339.

15. Ibid, p 342.
16. Ibid, p 343.
17. Ibid, p 401.
18. Ibid, p 402.
19. Yoder, Karl Barth & The Problem of War, Op Cit, p 35.
20. Ibid, p 57.
21. Ibid, p 31.
22. Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol II 2, Op Cit, p 648.
23. Ibid, p 648.
24. Ibid, p 670.
25. Ibid, p 671.
26. Ibid, p 647.
27. Ibid, p 647.
28. Yoder, Karl Barth & The Problem of War, Op Cit, p 57.
Yoder observes that for Barth "what is apparently an exception is actually a deeper faithfulness to the law, the most concrete form of obedience".
29. Ibid, p 113.
30. Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol III 4, Op Cit, p 339.
31. Ibid, Vol II 2, p 642. "The seriousness of the human situation consists in the fact that it is always lived in responsibility."
32. Yoder, Karl Barth & The Problem of War, Op Cit, p 47.

33. Ibid, p 67.
34. Ibid, p 102.
35. Ibid, p 102.
36. Ibid, p 35.
37. Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol III 4, Op Cit, p 462.
38. Williams, A Critical Appraisal of the Grenzfall in Karl Barth's Ethics, Op Cit, p 111.
39. Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol II 2, Op Cit, p 648.
40. Yoder, Karl Barth & The Problem of War, Op Cit, p 67.
41. Yoder effectively confines the undertaking of this function to non-Christians.
42. Richard McCormick, "Current Theology" in Theology Studies, Vol 39, No 1, March 1978, p 77.
43. Ibid, p 94.
44. Charles Villa-Vicencio, "Christian Social Ethics as a Deabsolutizing Discipline", Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, June 1980, No 31, p 14.
45. Larry Rasmussen, Dietrich Bonhoeffer : Reality and Resistance, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1972, p 30.
46. James Gustafson, Theology and Ethics, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1981, p 113.
47. Søren Kierkegaard, Fear & Trembling, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1970, p 69.
He regards Abraham as having "overstepped the ethical entirely" in his readiness to sacrifice his son, Isaac.
48. McCormick, "Current Theology", Op Cit, p 92.

49. Rasmussen, Dietrich Bonhoeffer : Reality and Resistance, Op Cit, p 149.

50. Ibid, p 153.

51. Ibid, Part II, Chapter 2.

52. McCormick, "Current Theology", Op Cit, p 103.

It is appropriate to refer here to the debate surrounding the notion of 'intrinsic evil'. McCormick in fact finds the notion fraught with problems. It "has such a variety of understandings that it is all but useless in contemporary discourse". If the term is, nevertheless, insisted upon then it becomes necessary to distinguish this notion from what is 'not a positive good'.

This distinction is implicit in Barth's ethics when he warns against turning any value, e.g. 'respect for life', into an absolute. The converse of this is that it cannot be said that the 'taking of life' is an intrinsic evil in some absolute sense.

In support of this point, it might be observed that the record of Scripture reveals a God who both 'takes life' and gives life. God cannot do what is 'intrinsically evil'. Nevertheless when man feels called to take life because this seems to be the most loving thing possible under the circumstances, this cannot be called a 'positive good'.

In holding in awareness the paradox of love, and admitting to situations which involve contradictions of love, it can be said that there is an essential, even if mysteriously subtle, distinction between saying that the taking of life in certain circumstances is not intrinsically evil, and admitting that neither is it a positive good. Hence the appropriateness of Bonhoeffer's guilt.

If one refuses to allow for this subtle ethical distinction, one will find oneself driven by an unconvincing logic, to say that Jesus, in helping Peter to catch fish, was involved in the intrinsic evil of killing! One would have to say that if it is true that God 'takes life', he is guilty of an intrinsically evil action - a hardly tenable position!

It is for these reasons that McCormick's point is well taken, namely, that the use of the notion of intrinsic evil is not helpful in contemporary ethical discourse.

53. Rasmussen, Dietrich Bonhoeffer : Reality and Resistance, Op Cit, p 53.

54. Ibid, p 151.

55. E Bethge, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Collins, London, 1970, p 42.
In another age, Bonhoeffer might have found a place for the Church as the community for discourse and analysis; as the context for the dialectical process between relational and prescriptive ethics. As Bethge pointed out when speaking of Bonhoeffer: "The idea of the living Church that made such an impact on him in Rome remained a permanent influence on his thought" The fact remains, however, that Bonhoeffer did not integrate his ethical methodology with his ecclesiology.
56. Frans Böckle, "Glaube und Handeln", Concilium, 120, 1976, p 644.
See McCormick, "Current Theology", Op Cit, p 77-104, for an incisive treatment of this issue.
57. Richard McCormick, "The Teaching Office as a Guarantor of Unity in Morality", Concilium, 150, 1981, p 72-81.
This dimension of the dialectical process is not confined to the relationship between a prophetic individual and the Church. It also exists in the Catholic tradition between the evolving faith of the whole people of God (sensus fidelium), and the recognised authority in the Church (the magisterium) which is responsible for providing authoritative guidelines in the light of Scripture and tradition. Note, for example, the dialectic taking place in the Roman Catholic Church over the ethics of birth control.
58. Karl Rahner, The Shape of the Church to Come, SPCK, London, 1974, p 79.
59. Ibid, p 79.
60. Paul Lehmann, "The Contextual Character of Christian Ethics", in On Being Responsible - Issues in Personal Ethics, eds James Gustafson & James Laney, SCM, London, 1969, p 136.
See also McCormick, "Current Theology", Op Cit, p 92. "The point is that sorting out the claims of conflicting values is a community task subject to objective criteria".
61. These will be assessed in the next chapter of this thesis.
62. Charles Villa-Vicencio, "Southern Africa Today - A Spiral of Violence", Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, March 1983, No 42, p 60.

CHAPTER 6

THE ALTERNATIVE RESPONSE - THE JUST WAR POSITION

INTRODUCTION

This study has addressed theological and ethical issues relating to the use of force. There has been a concern to relate this perennial question of ethics to the actual situation in South Africa. In Chapter 2 it was shown, through a brief historical outline, that this situation has been characterised by a history of prolonged and violent oppression. The question was posed: "What ought to be the Christian response to this violent oppression?" The quest for a theologically and ethically viable answer to this question provides both the motivation and final purpose of this theoretical study.

The first response considered was that of the Christian pacifist. Since there exists a wide variety of possible Christian pacifist positions, it was decided to focus on the position of one specific such pacifist, namely that of John Howard Yoder. A presentation and critical analysis of Yoder's position was then undertaken. It was shown that for Yoder, the pacifist response of absolute non-resistance was the only way a faithful disciple should respond to violent oppression.

While Yoder's doctrine of revolutionary subordination does not imply blind obedience to immoral commands, it does require that a Christian should never resist by forceful means. Yoder speaks of ".... the Christian who refuses to worship Caesar but still permits Caesar to put him to death".¹

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 non-resistance in discipleship.²

.... In the renunciation of the sword to which Jesus called his disciples is one of the keys to the rest of the problem of Christian faithfulness.³

It was argued that such an assertion is not theologically convincing and must, therefore, be rejected.

It needs to be emphasised that criticism of Yoder's position is not a denial of the profound validity of an individual vocation to a pacifist response in the face of violent oppression. It is simply to deny that this is the only possible vocation for a Christian.

If it is being asserted that pacifism is not in fact the only possible Christian response to the evil of violent oppression, it remains to present an alternative one. In the chapter on the methodological problem it was suggested that Yoder's critique of Barth's methodology was in part weakened by his failure to offer a convincing alternative. It is, therefore, similarly not sufficient simply to point out the weaknesses and shortcomings of Yoder's position. It is necessary to present an alternative, which is both ethically and theologically viable.

It is the purpose of this chapter to outline the theological framework in terms of which it is possible to argue for a use of force which is contextually justifiable, and to develop an ethic which grants the legitimacy of forceful resistance to violent oppression under certain rigorously considered conditions.

In this whole discussion it will be assumed that the debate concerning the use of force takes place in the context of what have been described as ambiguous moral situations; in other words, in an area of conflicting norms and overlapping values. In such situations the meaning of following Jesus in fulfilment of the two great commandments is far from straightforward. It will be argued that in the circumstances of this fallen

world, it is necessary and right that some form of police function be performed and that this is part of what is involved in the call to be God's stewards, sharing responsibility for the world. It will further be argued that this function cannot avoid the use of force, and that there is, therefore, an ethical as well as an unethical use of force.

Once this is accepted, the debate shifts yet again to the question of methodology. What are the criteria for distinguishing the ethical from the unethical use of force? Historically speaking, this debate concerning the use of force has been conducted primarily in terms of the use of force in war rather than, for example, in terms of the use of force in the exercise of the police function in times of peace. It should be pointed out that the debate concerning the use of force is wider than the question of the ethics of war, and should not be confined to this. Nevertheless, since the discussion on the ethics of the use of force has traditionally been conducted in terms of the ethics of war, it will be necessary to come to grips with this ongoing tradition, commonly called the doctrine of just-war.

In establishing an alternative response to that of Yoder, a critical assessment of the just-war doctrine will be undertaken. It will be argued that in spite of certain weaknesses, this theory provides a viable set of working criteria, by means of which the ethical use of force can be distinguished from its unethical use. These criteria are based in the last resort on biblical concepts of love and justice as they apply to situations of moral ambiguity and conflict. Just-war theory provides both norms for the ethical use of force, and a methodology by means of which these norms can be applied and assessed.

Since just-war theory was developed largely from the perspective of the ruling authorities, a type of hermeneutic is required in applying the principles of just-war theory to the ethics of resistance to prolonged oppression. This will mean that some attention will have to be given to the theology of state power, and the grounds for the legitimacy of such power.

It will be argued that the concept of 'just rebellion' is not only legitimate, but an integral part of just-war theory. In so far as it is possible to establish an ethical use of force, it is possible to apply such an ethic to establish the legitimacy of forceful resistance to violent oppression. In fact, the failure to give due place within just war theory to the concept of legitimate rebellion, lays the theory itself open to serious distortion.

To complete the theoretical section of this study, it will be shown that legitimate rebellion is best understood as a function of Grenzfall ethics in which the overriding purpose is to restore the rule of law. Law, here, is understood as essentially related to biblical values of love and justice. There will follow a final postscript in a concluding chapter, in which an attempt will be made to give indications as to how the theology developed in this chapter might be applied in the specific South African context.

MAN AS GOD'S STEWARD SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WORLD

In this chapter it is proposed to outline the theological framework in terms of which it is possible to argue for an ethical use of force. In many ways the debate revolves around the meaning given to the concept of

man as the steward of God's world. The idea of man as God's steward is not at issue. It is rather a question as to the content and limitations of that stewardship.

If it is agreed that God, in his creative and ordering activity, uses power as force, the crucial question is then whether man's stewardship of God's world extends to the stewardship of the use of force. Yoder seems to argue that for Christians it does not extend this far. It will be argued here, however, that God does in fact intend man to take up the extremely difficult task of being a steward of his power, which includes the use of physical force.

It might be agreed with Yoder that man has developed an inflated idea of his capacities and responsibilities as God's steward. Nevertheless, this does not change the fact that man is called to be a steward and, as will be shown, this includes a stewardship of power. It is true that the command to "have dominion" (Genesis 1.28) is qualified in a significant way by the call of Jesus to his disciples to be servants of humanity (Mark 10:43-45). Yet the warning against 'lording it over others' in no way undermines the call to be stewards. Nor is it necessarily in any way a decisive statement against the use of force, as Yoder seems to imply.⁴

Before developing the connection between stewardship and the control of power through the use of force, there is a need to expand briefly on the theology of stewardship in terms of the political dimensions of love and the dynamic of Christian hope, as well as the continuities and discontinuities between the political kingdom and the Kingdom of God.

The political⁵ dimensions of love and the dynamic of Christian hope

Christians, called as they are to love their neighbour and to seek God's will on earth, must work for a society which more faithfully reflects the values of the Gospel. It has been Moltmann's singular contribution to the understanding of the Christian responsibility to work for a better world, to root this calling in the concept of Christian hope as manifested in the Gospel.

Those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, and to contradict it Peace with God means conflict with the world.⁶

Hope makes the Christian Church a constant disturbance in society.⁷

Christians are called not to be conformed to the world. The Kingdom of God has social dimensions; this is why Christians are drawn into trying to change the world in the direction of God's will.⁸ The "Church for the world can mean nothing else but the Church for the Kingdom of God and the renewing of the world".⁹ This is another way of saying that a Christian must be involved in political life in the broadest sense. The command of love has decisive political dimensions, because Christians who care about their neighbours will care about the nature of the political kingdom, which so radically affects them.¹⁰

Continuities and discontinuities between the political kingdom and the Kingdom of God

This is a complex topic of major theological importance. Clearly it cannot be dealt with in the context of this study, except in the briefest form. The purpose here is to indicate some of the central issues which have bearing on the nature of man's stewardship as it relates to the question of political responsibility and the use of coercive force.

The command to love is the key to the relationship between seeking the Kingdom of God and working for a more just society - for a better political kingdom. It is common cause that the political kingdom is not synonymous with the Kingdom of God. In this context, Moltmann warns that there can be "... no equations only parables".¹¹ Míguez Bonino speaks of the necessity "... to reject as strongly as possible any sacralization of ideology and system".¹² Referring to "the risk of mystical identifications" he insists that "... there must be no room for theocratic dreams of any sort".¹³ Nevertheless, the nature of the political kingdom is of fundamental concern for Christians who seek the Kingdom of God.

A life of loving servanthood, as disciples of Christ, is the way Christians strive for God's Kingdom here and now, and in the future. This is how Christians become fellow workers with God for the establishment of his Kingdom.¹⁴ Seeking the Kingdom of God is inseparably related to concern for the human community. To speak of the human community is to speak of the political kingdom, broadly understood. In his parable concerning active care for the hungry, the naked and those in prison (Matthew 25:31-46) Jesus makes an essential connection between entry into the Kingdom of God and meaningful concern for the quality of the political kingdom.

However, since the Kingdom is only completed in Christ beyond the end of time, there can be no question of its being humanly realised. The objections against expressions like:

.... building the Kingdom, are legitimate protests against naive optimism or at times justified protection of the primacy of divine initiative.¹⁵

This is what some sects within Christendom have misguidedly set out to do.

Their lively sense of 'realisable eschatology' blinded them to the reality that the Kingdom, while realised in Christ, can only finally be realised for the whole of creation beyond history. Nevertheless, to say that it is impossible to achieve or set up the perfect society is not to say that one should not work for a better world.

Just because a goal is unrealisable does not mean that one should not work towards it. The validity of this assertion soon becomes apparent when one considers the example of the command to love. No person, but God in Jesus Christ, will ever love perfectly. This in no way vitiates the command to love, and the need to be continually striving to love with the very love of God. Just because disciples will never love fully does not mean that the most important human endeavour is not to strive to grow in love, and all that this means.

In the same way, precisely because Christians seek to love and grow in love, they seek to better the political kingdom, knowing that they can never reach, or set up, any perfect kingdom here on earth. As Moltmann puts it:

For the Christian faith history and the future come together in Christ in whom that qualitatively new future is present under the conditions of history.¹⁶

Because faith can hope for this future, it begins to resist and to change the scheme of this world and the systems of the present.¹⁷

A right understanding of Christian hope is, therefore, the key to understanding the relationship between history and eschatology - between God's work with man in history and the completion of his work beyond history. It is the Christian mission to "... search for possibilities that exist in the world in the direction of the promised future".¹⁸

As observed above,¹⁹ Yoder is critical of man's assumptions concerning the effectiveness of the use of power as force as a means of change in the direction of a more just and human dispensation. In his view, humanity needs to become more deeply aware of its limited power to manage history.²⁰ He suggests that Christians should regard their "... obedience more as praising God, and less as running His world for Him".²¹

While Yoder's criticism provides a salutary warning against the "naive optimism" spoken of by Miguez Bonino, his emphasis is, nevertheless, in danger of doing less than justice to man's stewardship function in creation. He fails to show an adequate appreciation of the complex, but vital, relationship which exists between working for the Kingdom of God and working within the context of the political kingdom. Moltmann has established far more convincingly the extent to which man is indeed responsible for the issues of political and social life.

As Mouw points out, in criticism of Yoder, "If God does require us to do these things, some attempts to 'run his world for him' might be an important means of praising Him".²² It is, therefore, essential to maintain a keen awareness of the continuities, as well as the discontinuities, in the relationship between seeking the Kingdom of God and working for a better world.

Jesus Christ does not come to superimpose a different, transcendent, or celestial reality on top of the realm of nature and history, but to reopen for man the will and the power to fulfil his historical vocation.²³

In seeking to love one's neighbour, the Christian "... begins to resist and to change the scheme of this world and the systems of the present".²⁴ This will mean being thoroughly concrete about involvement in the political kingdom. Christian hermeneutics must not remain abstract; they

must become "the theory of practice".²⁵ It has been the distinctive contribution of theologians from Latin America to take up this vital point and develop it. Míguez Bonino puts this question: "Are we really for the poor and oppressed if we fail to say how, are we "for them" in their concrete historical situation?"²⁶ Jon Sobrino emphasises that Christians need to seek out "concrete mediations of the kingdom".²⁷

It is in the striving for a better, more human community (political kingdom) that the Christian faithfully gives himself to working with God for his Kingdom within history and beyond history. In this way it can be said that man works for the Kingdom of God within the political kingdom, knowing that the Kingdom of God is realised beyond the political kingdom.²⁸

An eschatological faith makes it possible for the Christian to invest his life historically in the building of a temporary and imperfect order with the certainty that neither he nor his effort is meaningless or lost.²⁹

It is when Christians try to spell out and, even more, to live out what it means to work for God's kingdom within the present situation, that the whole question of the control of power for good and the prevention of its abuse is raised. It is because Christians seek to love in concrete ways that they are obliged to face the realities of power, the necessity to stem its abuse, and to harness it to God's purposes.

The reality of power : the ethical use of force, and the presumption against violence

It was made clear in Chapter 1 of this study that power is a reality of life which cannot be wished away. Power is part of creation, and an essential dimension of ongoing existence. Power in itself is not evil, but it can easily be used for evil purposes. In so far as power is used

for evil purposes, it is the duty of the Christian to act against such an abuse of power. There is, in other words, a moral presumption in favour of stemming the abuse of power.³⁰

This is not really in question. The crucial issue concerns - how? How is power to be controlled? Can force be used to control or stem the abuse of force? The whole ethical foundation for the exercise of the police function in society assumes an affirmative answer to the question. Even acknowledged pacifist theologians like MacGregor and Bainton³¹ concede the need for this function:

Jesus did recognise the place of law in an ordered society, and under certain circumstances would approve appeal to its sanctions. But only as a last resort.³²

So must our society have laws which demand penalties, otherwise no moral order of society could exist.³³

Yoder, too, fully recognised the need for this police function in society:

The good are to be protected, and evil doers are to be restrained, and the fabric of society is to be preserved³⁴

With the New Testament we shall affirm the necessity of orders and organization based on power in social relations.³⁵

If the use of force is such as to protect the innocent and punish evil doers, to preserve peace so that "all might come to the knowledge of the truth", then the state may be considered as fitting in with God's plan³⁶

The use of force must be limited to the police function³⁷

It needs to be reiterated that, for Yoder, this function was to be performed by non-Christians in terms of his Christian ethics for the state.³⁸

The crucial point, however, is that once the ethical legitimacy of the police function in society is accepted, the acceptance of the concept of an ethical use of force becomes common cause. In spite of the necessity

for the use of force "... to protect the innocent and preserve peace",³⁹ it nevertheless needs to be asserted that there is a "moral presumption against force".⁴⁰ Childress, in an article on just-war criteria, asserts the following:

.... non-violence has moral priority over violence, and violent acts always stand in need of justification because they violate the prima facie duty not to injure or kill others.⁴¹

In other words, the use of force can never have the status of a Christian norm, or positive ethical value. It only finds ethical legitimacy in the context of ambiguous moral situations. The use of force can only be justified in terms of a form of Grenzfall ethic, as a last resort.

The point made by Childress is very important. The use of force is never without ethical ambiguity. The prima facie duty not to injure is ever present. On the other hand, it is also very significant that Childress, through his use of the term 'prima facie', carefully avoids turning the norm into an absolute. In another article he points out that it can be "necessary and legitimate to override some prima facie duties".⁴² This happens, for example, in situations where there is "a conflict between prima facie obligations".⁴³

Childress is not denying that the use of force can be justified in certain circumstances. He is, however, saying that the use of force does need justifying. It is never an ethical norm; it is rather a Grenzfall situation which justifies it. It is not normally justifiable.⁴⁴ Even if the exercise of the police function in society necessitates the use of force, the fact of the prima facie obligation against its use continues to play an important qualifying role in the ongoing situation.

An overridden or outweighed prima facie obligation continues to function in the situation and course of action one adopts.⁴⁵

In spite of the prima facie duty to avoid the use of force, Childress has no doubt that there can be an ethical use of it.

It needs to be emphasised that this does not imply a rejection of norms, but rather a rejection of the idea of ethical absolutes. The distinction between norms and absolutes is well illustrated by Barth's comment on the norm, which upholds 'respect for life'.

As creator and Lord of life, God can destroy life and in this too he is man's gracious Father. God is leading (man) through this life to the other. The respect for life commanded by Him cannot then be made by man a rigid principle, an absolute rule to be fulfilled according to rote. Unless we qualify "respect for life" and place it under God, we turn it into a principle of idolatry.⁴⁶

But the application of this reservation cannot have more than the character of an ultima ratio, an exceptional case.⁴⁷

Temporal life is certainly not the highest of all goods Just because it belongs to God, man may be forbidden to will its continuation at all costs. He may be ordered to risk and expose it to varying degrees of danger.⁴⁸

Barth is expressing a profound truth at this point. If one believes it is not possible to base ethical life on a series of unambiguous and mutually harmonious absolutes, some form of Barthian model is the only viable one which does justice both to the biblical witness and the realities of daily existence.⁴⁹

Childress is essentially in agreement with Barth when he says:

If the Fifth (or Sixth) Commandment means "Thou shall not kill" it is prima facie rather than absolute; for the Hebrews admitted killing in self-defence, capital punishment, and war. If it means "Thou shalt not commit murder", it can then be taken as absolute, but it leaves open the question which killings are to be counted as murder.⁵⁰

The strength of the Barthian model lies in the fact that it gives due place to the presumption against violence, while allowing for an ethical use of force as a last resort. According to this model, 'justification' is always heavily qualified, never without ambiguities and dilemmas.

With the above qualifications in mind, it is possible to restate the main point being argued in this section, concerning the nature of man's role as a steward of God's creation. This stewardship includes full involvement in, and taking on responsibility for, the concrete realities of political life. The further implication is that because power needs to be controlled and its evil use stemmed, it is ethically permissible for human beings to exercise the use of force in certain defined ways,⁵¹ in order to "protect the innocent and preserve peace".⁵²

Once this is established, then the basic ethical foundations for the theory of just-war have essentially been laid. Wogaman rightly asserts this fundamental connection between the ethical justification of the exercise of a police function and the ethics of just-war theory. If one agrees that coercive police action is justifiable in certain circumstances to uphold just laws, then "one has unconsciously exchanged the pure pacifist position for some variation of just-war doctrine".⁵³ In order to explore further the nature of man's responsibility as steward of God's creation, and to continue the search for an answer to the question concerning the Christian response to violent oppression, an analysis and evaluation of the traditional just-war doctrine must now be undertaken.

JUST-WAR THEORY

Its function and purpose to limit violence and restore peace

It has been argued above that just-war theory derives from the prior conviction that it is necessary and proper in the conditions of a fallen world to use coercive force in the form of a police function, to maintain peace and just order. It derives from the conviction that given the reality of the abuse of power, action must be taken to control, stem and prevent this abuse of power. Where the peace is being undermined and destroyed, it is necessary to use the police function to restore peace and just order.

Just-war theory was developed with this purpose as its guiding principle, or intention. Theologians, like Jerome⁵⁴ and Ambrose⁵⁵ regarded the Pax Romana as establishing peace. It was on these grounds that Ambrose justified the defence of the empire. He regarded the empire as a context within which the faith could flourish. It is interesting to compare this with a statement of Yoder's regarding the role of the state, which he sees as having the

.... obligation to serve God by encouraging the good and restraining evil, i.e. to serve the peace, to preserve the social cohesion in which the leaven of the gospel can build the Church.⁵⁶

It was Augustine who developed the theological foundations of the just-war theory. Accepting that perfection on earth was not possible, that conflict was part of life, with peace as the ideal to be striven for, Augustine evolved a rudimentary code of war. War could only be waged if its purpose was just, i.e. for the sake of peace. "Even in the course of war you should cherish the spirit of a peace-maker".⁵⁷ Bainton sums up Augustine's intention: "He sought to restrain war by the rules of justum

bellum and the dispositions of the Sermon on the Mount".⁵⁸ The mainstream Christian tradition, Protestant and Catholic, has always adhered to this basic teaching of Augustine.

It was, however, Thomas Aquinas who developed the just-war theory in a fuller form, which was to become the basis of present day theory.⁵⁹ From this time on, just-war theory could be defined as "... a comprehensive set of guidelines for the initiation and waging of just-war".⁶⁰

The criteria outlined

The just-war criteria can be divided into two major categories:

- (a) criteria which concern the right to make war (jus ad bellum), and
- (b) criteria which affect the conduct of war, the law of war (jus in bello).

1. The criteria of jus ad bellum (the right to make war)

For the recourse to war to be ethically justified, the following criteria need to be applied:

- (i) It must have a just cause. For example, a just cause according to Augustine, would include the restoration of "what has been taken unjustly".⁶¹ On the other hand, it would be an unjust cause if the expressed or ultimate purpose was to dominate and exploit others. Childress notes an important qualification to the consideration of a just cause, namely, that the cause must be sufficiently serious and weighty to overcome the presumption against killing.⁶² He then offers three such instances which he would regard as sufficiently weighty:

- (a) protection of the innocent from unjust attack;
- (b) restoring rights wrongly denied, and

(c) re-establishing a just order.⁶³

O'Brien finds this "... an adequate basis for discussing the substance of just cause".⁶⁴

(ii) It must have a just intention. In the words of Thomas Aquinas:

It is necessary that the belligerents should have a rightful intention, so that they intend the advancement of good or the avoidance of evil.⁶⁵

O'Brien expands on the implications of this criteria in the following way:

"... right intention requires that the just belligerent have always in mind as the ultimate object of the war a just and lasting peace (and) insists that charity and love exists even among enemies.⁶⁶

(iii) There must be proportionality of means and ends. There must be a serious attempt to weigh the probable good against the probable evil which may result.⁶⁷ This links up with Childress' point about the cause needing to be sufficiently weighty.⁶⁸ Under this heading also, the consideration of the probability of success might also be included. To embark on a war which resulted in thousands of deaths, with minimal prospect of success, would seem to undermine the criterion of proportionality between the means and an ends, because the good envisaged is not achieved.

(iv) It must be a last resort. In other words, other means must have been seriously tried first, before the resort to the use of force could be regarded as justifiable. There would, for example, be no justification in taking up arms against prolonged oppression if democratic, peaceful channels were available for the achievement of a just cause.

(v) It must be declared by a legitimate authority. For Thomas Aquinas it

was only the ruler who had the authority to declare war, because "it is not the business of a private individual".⁶⁹ One of the concerns was, perhaps, to avoid giving any basis for an anarchist ethic which would justify any individual taking up arms in a personal and individual cause. The meaning and interpretation of this criterion is one of the most keenly debated of all issues in just-war theory.

At first glance it would seem that the implications are such as to undermine any case for an ethical recourse to war against a prolonged tyranny. If government is synonymous with legitimate authority, then it would seem that armed resistance to tyranny could never be justified in terms of just-war theory. In fact, however, both Augustine⁷⁰ and Aquinas⁷¹ raised fundamental questions about the legitimacy of the authority wielded by a tyrant. Calvin too was emphatic about the conditional nature of obedience due to those in authority.⁷²

This is why O'Brien, when discussing this just-war criterion which requires that the war be declared by a legitimate or competent authority, raises the whole question of the "rights of revolution".⁷³ He concedes that "catholic thought recognizes this right although often in a most reluctant and tortured fashion",⁷⁴ but he goes on to admit that "it will be necessary to assimilate revolutionary warfare problems into the traditional just-war categories".⁷⁵

When faced with the task of grappling with the ethics of a Christian response to prolonged oppression, the whole relationship between just-war theory and the concept of legitimate rebellion is of crucial importance. This question and others raised by this particular just-war criterion will, therefore, be dealt with further below.

2. The criteria of jus in bello (conduct in war)

The criteria for just conduct in war "... emerged rather late in the development of just-war doctrine".⁷⁶ Aquinas, for example, does not deal with these. However, it can soon be shown how indispensable they are as components of a mature just-war doctrine. In terms of international law, these laws of war have become enshrined in codes "... centering around the Hague Convention IV of 1907, the Geneva Convention of 1949, and the two 1977 Geneva Protocols to those conventions".⁷⁷

(i) There must be proportionality of means and ends

Although this criterion of jus in bello relates directly with the same criterion of jus ad bellum, the distinction is of value in an ethical analysis of armed conflict and war. In the conduct of war, the principle of proportionality concerns such issues as the use of weapons and methods which are subject to restraint, and avoiding wanton violence and atrocities. With the development of nuclear technology and the consequent quantum leaps in the powers of destruction, this principle of proportionality becomes of central importance.

(ii) There must be discrimination in terms of targets

This principle of discrimination prohibits "... direct intentional attacks on non-combatants and non-military targets".⁷⁸ This criterion begs a whole series of questions: how are non-combatants to be defined? How are military targets to be distinguished from non-military? These are vital questions. Nevertheless, the thrust of this criterion concerns the need to avoid injury being done to the innocent wherever possible. It is also in terms of this category

that many have argued for the banning of the use of nuclear weapons. With nuclear weapons, the principle of discrimination, it is said, can never be fulfilled and, therefore, their use is unethical in terms of just-war theory. On these grounds it is possible to be a "nuclear pacifist" while holding to just-war doctrines.

(iii) There are some means which are prohibited altogether

O'Brien includes this as a third and separate criterion, under the heading of jus in bello. Admittedly, this category might be considered as a development of the principle of proportionality. On the other hand, a different point is being made in this category, namely, that there are means which "by definition are considered disproportionate and cannot be used even if they can be discriminatory".⁷⁹ Under this criterion many would include the use of torture, napalm and other chemical weapons, together with nuclear bombs.

3. The concept of limited war

Having completed this brief outline of the just-war criteria, attention should be drawn to the concept of limited war. Although O'Brien and Johnson analyse this concept apart from the just-war theory,⁸⁰ they nevertheless regard it to all intents and purposes as a particular expression of the theory:

Overall the limited war idea is but a particular expression of the larger western consensus on restraining war called the 'just-war tradition'.⁸¹

and

.... underlying all of the jus in bello is the concept of limited war as a normative prescription.⁸²

For the purposes of this study, therefore, it will not be necessary to give further consideration to the concept of limited war as a separate category.

Just-war theory as an evolving ethical process

In describing the function and purpose of the theory, it was found helpful to do so in terms of its history. Such a brief historical outline could give the impression that the theory evolved as a simple linear theological development. In fact, the present theory is the product of a far more complex process. Contributions to this process have come not only from Christian theologians but also from international lawyers and military professionals.⁸³ Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as one single theory. Le Roy Walters delineates five classic just-war theories.⁸⁴ Johnson speaks of the "metamorphosis in just-war thought"⁸⁵ from a religious to a secular base. Given these complicating factors, he prefers to speak of the just-war tradition, rather than a just-war theory.⁸⁶

The awareness of the complexity of this issue may be thought to have a crippling effect on attempts to describe, clarify and apply the theory in any useful way. On the contrary, however, this awareness can in fact have a fruitful outcome. It prevents any attempt to conceive of the theory in a fixed and static way. The primary emphasis is placed on the open-endedness of the theory as an evolving ethical process which needs to relate in a dynamic way, with specific historical circumstances.⁸⁷ It enables a crucial distinction to be made between the primary intention, as opposed to specific formulations in time. It encourages a greater consciousness of the historically conditioned nature of certain past

emphases, and so enables a more objective application of the principles of the theory in the present context. Furthermore, it prevents one from making inflated claims for the theory in the form of a model which provides any ethical certainties. The tentative nature of the theory needs to be kept in mind at all times.

Just-war doctrine has been and remains a mere beginning, a set of questions to be considered by belligerents and those who judge their actions, and some indications of answers.⁸⁸

Finally, in spite of the complexity of the topic and the essentially tentative nature of this ethical process, Johnson is able to assert that in fact "... a great deal of consensus has evolved".⁸⁹ With these observations in mind, it is possible to proceed in a positive way with this analysis of the just-war theory.

Distinguishing the primary intention and principle of the theory from the specific formulations

Attention has been drawn to the dynamic nature of just-war theory. It is not a static theory, to be tied down to a set of timeless specific formulations. The specific formulations have been evolved through history, and in an important sense must remain open-ended. They have been developed with a view to establishing satisfactory guidelines in order to fulfil the basic intention of the theory. The basic intention is to seek a means of limiting violence and of maintaining or restoring the peace of the community. The primary principle of just-war theory is that there are circumstances in which coercive force may appropriately be used for the purpose of maintaining peace and just order. The criteria were developed to express this principle. If fault is found with the formulation of a specific criterion, it does not mean the collapse of the principle of the

just-war theory itself. Such a conclusion would be superficial.⁹⁰.

It is true that there is an important sense in which the separately listed criteria hang together, and none can simply be discarded without seriously undermining the whole. The list of criteria do have an authority as a whole. This is so, historically speaking, in so far as the tradition of the Church represents the collective wisdom of the Christian community under the guidance of the Holy Spirit down the centuries. It is also true in terms of their coherence as an ethical whole. It would, for example, be ethically inconsistent to assert that as long as the cause was just (criterion 1), it does not matter if other means have not been tried at all (criterion 5).

Nevertheless, it remains important to recognise the distinction between the specific formulations and the primary principle which they seek to enshrine. It might be that a certain reformulation of a criterion would be helpful, in the light of the changing historical context, or that some clarifications might enhance the applicability of the theory in a specific situation. As long as any reformulations did not undermine the intention and principle of the theory, they would be legitimate and proper.

For example, the fourth criterion states that the war ".... must be declared by a legitimate authority". It is widely known, however, that the concept of legitimacy is subject to keen debate; rather more so than at the time Aquinas evolved the particular just-war formulations. At that time it was more or less assumed that everyone knew who or what constituted the legitimate authority. In the modern world this has become a vital issue for secular and Christian political ethics. There is the question as to which criteria of legitimacy has ethical priority:

legitimacy based on de jure power or de facto power, or the support of the great majority of people? Who is the legitimate authority in Afghanistan, Namibia, or South Africa? These questions will be discussed further below. All that needs to be said at this point is that given the appropriateness of the questions being raised about the concept of "legitimate authority", further consideration as to the meaning of the terminology of the just-war criteria may be helpful to the ongoing and fruitful application of the principle of the theory.

Some basic assumptions

At this point it will be helpful to draw attention to a number of basic assumptions, which are actually implicit in what has been said above:

1. There is an ethical responsibility to control power for good and prevent its abuse.
2. There is a prior presumption against violence.
3. There is, nevertheless, a place for the ethical use of force in the fallen world.
4. The basic ethical model of the theory is that of a Grenzfall ethic. In other words, the use of force is only justifiable in terms of a last resort. The theory only becomes operable, as it were, in situations of moral ambiguity where there is an overlapping of norms, and a conflict between perceived prima facie moral obligations.
5. The concept of just peace is the touchstone and goal of the theory.
6. The effective application of the theory presupposes the need for a

rigorous and dispassionate analysis of the particular situation. In other words, the theory assumes a fully incarnational ethical process which seeks to relate norms to specific circumstances. These are all significant assumptions, and it will be necessary to expand on some of the implications.

The common starting point of pacifism and just-war theory

The whole debate around the problem of controlling power and the ethical use of force can easily be confused by assumptions which over-simplify the issues involved. An example of this confusion is the fallacious assumption that while pacifism speaks against violence, just-war theory speaks in its favour. For this reason there is a need to analyse further the relationship between pacifism and just-war theory. Far too much has been said by way of contrasting pacifism with just-war theory. It will be argued here that both in the theory and praxis, the just-war theory stands in a continuum with pacifism.

Childress makes an important contribution to this perspective:

Pacifists and just-war theorists are actually closer to and more dependent on each other than they often suppose. They share a common starting point non-violence has moral priority over violence, and violent acts always stand in need of justification because they violate the prima facie duty not to injure or kill others whereas only some non-violent acts need justification.⁹¹

There is an important sense in which all Christians are pacifists, in that they acknowledge that the use of violence is prima facie wrong. Thus, concerning war which is a particular manifestation of violence, all are against it, abhor it and wish to see it stopped and prevented. The question, however, remains: how is the conflict to be stopped or prevented, as the case may be? It is at this point that the ethical

agonising commences. The fact that some might consider the use of force as a necessary means of lessening, or stemming, or preventing the violence, does not mean that they are any less pacifist in terms of the conviction that violence is prima facie wrong.

It is significant that Bainton, as a self-confessed pacifist, argues for the rightness of the violent intervention by Hindu police to halt the massacre of Moslems by the Hindu mob.⁹² Here it would seem that Bainton is, in fact, employing the essential just-war principle, namely, that while there is a presumption against the use of force, there can be circumstances where it might be necessary and right to use it in order to halt violence. Here is a most telling instance supporting the position being argued at this point, namely, that in the theory and practice of the ethical process concerning the use of force, pacifism stands in a continuum with just-war theory.

It is on these grounds that Johnson takes Bainton to task for the way in which he categorises the response to the use of force in terms of pacifism, just-war theory and the crusade theology.⁹³ In his criticism, Johnson finds that "Bainton's ideal typology too neatly separates pacifism from just-war theory", because ".... like the concept of the just-war, that of pacifism is no absolute".⁹⁴ Johnson continues:

If a Christian must repudiate all violence to be termed a pacifist, the result must be to make many who would call themselves pacifists fall into the just-war camp.⁹⁵

In a detailed study of Bonhoeffer, Rasmussen shows that his ".... self-acclaimed Christian pacifism rarely meets the minimal requirements of any useful definition of pacifism".⁹⁶ It is significant that during the time when he was writing The Cost of Discipleship, Bonhoeffer ".... was angry when England and France failed to intervene militarily as Hitler took the

Rhineland".⁹⁷ It is Rasmussen's considered judgment that "... for most of the thirties Bonhoeffer's Christian 'pacifism' may well have been much closer to selective conscientious objection than to any Christian pacifism of a vocational sort".⁹⁸

The careful analysis done by Rasmussen, when taken together with the work of Johnson, gives considerable weight to the claim that pacifism stands in a continuum with just-war theory. When one recalls, furthermore, that pacifists like McGregor and Bainton defend the use of force in the proper exercise of the police function, then it becomes clear that, to a far greater extent than has been realised, pacifists and just-war theorists operate from what is essentially the same ethical model.

In the final analysis, the most significant finding concerning the relationship between pacifism and just-war theory is the existence of a common ground between them, not only in terms of a shared starting point in the presumption against violence,⁹⁹ but also in terms of an acceptance of the concept of an ethical use of force. It is hard to find a Christian pacifist whose ethical models leave no space at all for some idea of an ethical use of force.¹⁰⁰

Self-acknowledged pacifists and just-war theorists may have heated debates over the use of force in a particular context. More often than not, rigorous analysis might reveal that when they think they are discussing fundamental differences in principle, they are in fact arguing about differing assessments concerning the Grenzfall moment - the point when exceptional action becomes necessary and right - the point when, for example, it is judged as ethical for the Hindu police to intervene to stop a massacre.¹⁰¹

In the light of what has been pointed out concerning the strong presumption against violence as fundamental to just-war theory,¹⁰² it is clear that the term 'just' is not without its problems. It could give the impression that once a war has been judged as 'just', it thereby becomes 'good'. Given the basic assumption of the theory, a far more accurate term would be 'justifiable' or 'permissible' war.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, because the term just-war has become so firmly established as part of the language of the debate concerning the justifiable use of force in situations of armed conflict, it will continue to be used here. It will, however, be used with the above reservations.

Just-war theory as a "Grenzmoral"

John Courtney Murray S J, in his famous article: "Theology and Modern War", argues that just-war is a Grenzmoral:

.... in desperate cases, in which the conscience is perplexed
 hardly more than a Grenzmoral is to be looked for or
 counselled. In fact, the whole Catholic doctrine of war is
 hardly more than a Grenzmoral.¹⁰⁴

Once one accepts the presumption against violence, and at the same time draws the crucial distinction between the idea of prima facie duties and the idea of absolute norms, some form of the Grenzfall ethical model is unavoidable. This is the clear implication of O'Brien's point that

.... permissible war conveys the basic thought that recourse to war is an exceptional prerogative that has to be justified, not a right readily available to those who consider themselves just.¹⁰⁵

It is of course with Barth's name that the Grenzfall model is most closely identified. There is no need to go over the ground previously covered in this study. The point being made here is that the idea of just-war theory as a Grenzmoral is not simply being asserted on the basis of Barth's

theological ethics. Nor is it a question of somehow applying a Grenzfall model to just-war theory. It is, rather, being argued that inherent in the whole just-war tradition is the assumption of a Grenzfall model. Amongst other things, an awareness of this will prevent just-war theory from being manipulated as a tool for the glorification of any war. War is always abhorrent.

Just Rebellion as an integral dimension of just-war theory

It should be remembered that Thomas Aquinas, even in his time, was alive to the theoretical questions raised by the concept of just rebellion against a tyrant. There is an important strand in the mainstream Christian tradition from the time of Augustine onwards, which recognises this.¹⁰⁶ The Lutherans at Magdeburg in 1550 developed a theory of armed resistance, by which the "... electors could resist the emperor if he violated his oath".¹⁰⁷ It is well known that Calvin, in his political ethics, recognised the possibility that circumstances might arise in which it would be justifiable for the normal understanding of 'legitimate authority' to be reassessed, in a way which sanctioned resistance to the emperor. For example, he approved of the revolt led by the Bourbon prince Anthony of Navarre.¹⁰⁸

The fact that legitimate rebellion did not, however, become the primary version of the just-war theory adhered to in the mainstream of the Christian tradition, can probably be explained by two significant considerations:

- (a) From the time of Constantine onwards, the mainstream of the Christian tradition became 'established', in the sense that the Church was

embraced and in a real sense co-opted by the secular authority. Again, after the initial turmoil of the early Reformation period, the Catholic, Orthodox, Calvinist, Lutheran and Anglican traditions were legalised and protected in their main bases by the secular arm. Referring to the Lutherans and Anglicans, J G Davies points out that they were

.... compelled to ascribe authority to the monarch in order to put their programme of reform into effect.¹⁰⁹

Given this context, it is not surprising that these Churches developed a theology which was historically conditioned to regard legitimate authority as synonymous with governmental authority.

- (b) It pertains to the principle of the just-war theory, and not only to its specific formulations, that the wielding of coercive power should normally be administered by appropriate and accountable bodies, and not left to the whim of individuals. The presumption of the legitimate use of coercive force is in favour of properly constituted government as ordained by God. It is only when the nature of properly constituted government is justifiably called into question that the issue of legitimate rebellion becomes ethically relevant.

Nevertheless, it must be reiterated that the idea of legitimate rebellion has a definite place in the Church's traditional political ethics as a legitimate version of just-war theory. When conditions exist in which the previously accepted 'legitimate authority' is set in a direction which is radically undermining all the other conditions of just-war theory, in other words, violating the very principle of the theory, then the question of legitimate rebellion is appropriately raised. In these circumstances the legitimate rebellion version of the just-war theory becomes the most applicable

in terms of upholding the very principle which just-war theory seeks to enshrine.

For the sake of the very principle, the specific formulations must be approached in a dynamic way. Failure to do this can lead to the theory being misused to justify a political theology which absolutises the status quo. To assume that the 'legitimate authority' must mean the emperor, or even the previously recognised government, can lead precisely to this point. Yet an interpretation of the just-war theory which resulted in the absolutising of the status quo must clearly be rejected.

It is essential, therefore, to recognise the appropriateness of the concept of legitimate rebellion as a legitimate version of the just-war theory. Failure to do so almost inevitably opens the theory to its misuse, whereby regimes in power presume on the absolute right to hold power. It is already clear that much of the debate revolves around the question of 'legitimate authority'. This raises the wider question of the theology of state power and the concept of 'conditional legitimacy'. These will be discussed further below.

SOME CRITICISMS ASSESSED

The easy justification of war and the slide into crusade theory

While Augustine may have originally formulated the just-war theory as a means of limiting war, it is true to say that the theory has in the past been used as a means of providing a theological justification for wars made in national causes. Paul Deats points out that:

Most pacifists suspect that the use of the just-war argument almost invariably turns out to justify war, almost never to declare a war by one's own land unjust.¹¹⁰

This was acknowledged in Chapter 4 when outlining the strengths of Yoder's position, which include his appropriate challenge to the easy justification of war. Yoder went further to show not only how the theory is used to justify war, but also how easily just-war theory can slide into a 'holy war' position.¹¹¹

Johnson's criticism of Bainton's typology¹¹² would seem to support the point made by Yoder. Johnson questions an exaggeration of the distinction between just-war theory and the 'holy war' position. He draws attention to the fact that "Le Roy Walters has shown that the historic crusades were conceived by their participants as just-wars".¹¹³

Nevertheless, it cannot be said that there is no distinction between crusade theory and just-war theory. As Yoder himself points out:

The historic 'just-war' doctrine did not mean that a war that met its criteria would be righteous or holy, but only that it would be justifiable.¹¹⁴

It is this strong and continuing presumption against war which characterises the fundamental difference between just-war theory and the crusading tendency to romanticise and glorify war, and the killing of the enemy.

Rasmussen makes this point when he returns to the radical difference between Hitler and Bonhoeffer concerning the use of force. For Hitler, "... force was the prima ratio of his methods, not the ultima ratio".¹¹⁵ For Bonhoeffer, the use of force was always only ethically conceivable as an ultima ratio. Perhaps this is the best way to articulate the essential difference between the ethics of the use of force in just-war theory, as opposed to the extreme of a holy war mentality. In so far as just-war theory may slide into a crusading spirit, it must be insisted that this

would constitute a gross distortion of the theory, and forfeit any justification for a claim to the term just-war.

Ongoing awareness of this potential danger of a distortion of just-war theory is, none the less, very important. In his influential study - Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, Míguez Bonino warns against the attempt to turn any conflict or struggle into a divine cause. "There is no room for crusades, for sacred wars".¹¹⁶

Returning once more to Deat's point, that use of just-war theory is "almost never (used) to declare a war by one's own land unjust,"¹¹⁷ some qualification is necessary. The concept of selective conscientious objection is, of course, based directly on just-war theory. Selective conscientious objectors formed a significant proportion of those who rejected participation in the American Army during the Vietnam war. Quite apart from these men, much of the campaign against America's involvement in Vietnam (as opposed to America's involvement in World War II) was conducted on the basis of the conviction that America was fighting an unjust-war in Vietnam. In the South African situation, an increasing number of young people are questioning participation in the South African Defence Force (SADF), on what are essentially just-war grounds; namely, that to participate in the SADF is to participate in the furtherance of an unjust cause.

Finally, it should be remembered that in the campaign for nuclear disarmament, whether unilateral or multilateral, much of the debate is conducted in terms of just-war theory. The Catholic Bishops of the United States, in their recent letter,¹¹⁸ undertake a serious theological questioning of their country's nuclear policy. They base their stance on just-war theory.

In conclusion it may, therefore, be said that while it is true that just war theory has too often been used as an easy justification for war, this need not be the case. This admitted danger cannot be regarded as a decisive criticism of just-war theory. It can serve rather as an ongoing reminder of potential pitfalls, and a salutary warning against tendencies to distort the true function and purpose of just-war theory, which is to provide strict limits to the ethical use of force in the context of an ongoing prima facie presumption against it.

The lessons of the spiral of violence

In his book, "Spiral of Violence",¹¹⁹ Helder Camara speaks about a process of violence which has become a particularly characteristic phenomenon of Latin American history in recent decades. He distinguishes the primary violence (violence No. 1) of the oppressor, from the secondary violence (violence No. 2) of the oppressed seeking liberation.¹²⁰ He observes a tragic process which leads in practice to nothing more than yet further violence. The violence of the regime sparks off the violence of resistance, which in turn leads to further repressive violence by the regime. Frequently this circle of violence becomes a kind of nihilistic protracted vendetta between left and right wing groups operating some form of death squad; an unending exchange of avenging mutual assassinations. There is no way to end this spiral of violence through further violence.

Given that it is the very function and purpose of the just-war theory to limit violence and restore peace, the question then arises as to whether the theory can have any real meaning or applicability in the context of the phenomena described so tellingly by Camara. Given the realities of the spiral of violence, is not the lesson to be learned, to look elsewhere

than to just-war theory for long term solutions to the problems of oppression? How helpful is it, in practice, to argue for an ethical use of force in the struggle for liberation if the result is, nevertheless, an ongoing, unending history of violence?

The questions pose a challenge to just-war theory. It was acknowledged in the previous chapter that one of the strengths of Yoder's position was his questioning of assumptions about the effectiveness of power. In this context, what is being particularly questioned is the effectiveness of the use of force in the thrust for liberation from oppression.

It is important to point out that it is not only those coming from the pacifist camp who question the efficacy of violence. It is often not sufficiently appreciated that well-known liberation theologians and others known for their support of liberation struggles, have profound questions to ask about the usefulness of the use of force, even when the cause is judged to be just.

Miguez Bonino warns that:

Victorious revolutionary violence runs the risk of simply substituting one form of oppression for another and thus becoming really counter-revolutionary.¹²¹

José Comblin is extremely critical of simply equating revolutionary effectiveness with the use of violent means and says, bluntly, that some revolutionary movements only achieve an acceleration of "... the creation of the new rightist totalitarian system".¹²²

Davies, in his book, Christian Politics and Violent Revolution, speaks of the irresponsibility of leading people into fruitless violence.¹²³

McCabe, in an article, "The Class Struggle and Christian Love", speaks of

"adventurist violent posturings" which "are simply counter-revolutionary".¹²⁴ Moltmann speaks of "hopeless spirals, after the failure of reforms or revolutions the oppressors are better organised, and successful revolutions often organise new oppression".¹²⁵

The above quotations are important because they show how incorrect it is to assume that just-war theory can be equated with the dangerous idea that the use of force is always the most effective and best means of achieving just political ends, in a situation of oppression. Just-war theory does not make an idol out of the use of force as a means to achieve just ends. What the theory does assert is that there are circumstances in which, (after applying certain rigorous criteria), the use of force is legitimate. However, one of the assumptions which gives the basis of this legitimacy, is that there be a careful analysis of the situation, to consider whether indeed the use of force is likely to bring about a more just and peaceful society.

Camara's analysis is fully in keeping with the process of just-war theory. His knowledge of the Latin American situation and its history leads him to conclude that the use of violence in the situation, even in a just cause, will not in fact achieve the good ends desired. If his analysis is correct, and it seems to be so, then a sound just-war theorist would have no hesitation in agreeing with Camara that, in such a situation of a spiral of violence, the use of violence is unproductive and, therefore, difficult to justify.

It is worth noting that Camara does not appear to base his questioning of use of force on an appeal to any concept of absolute norms.¹²⁶ Miguez Bonino quotes these most significant words from an interview with Camara,

who says of armed revolt that it

.... is legitimate but impossible. Legitimate because it is provoked and impossible because it would be squashed My position in this regard is not based on religious motives but on tactical ones.¹²⁷

In this instance, Camara is speaking like a seasoned just-war theorist. In different circumstances, for example in the case of the successful revolt of the American colonies against Britain, the model of the spiral of violence is hardly convincing. It is possible to argue, therefore, that this model cannot be uncritically assumed to be applicable in all circumstances, for all time. While it is true that the phenomenon of the spiral of violence is characteristic of many situations of gross oppression, it does not follow that there can be no situations where the recourse to the use of force might not lead to the creation of a more just and peaceful society.

For the above reasons, it can be said that the lessons of the spiral of violence do not in any way lead to a rejection of the just-war theory. What they do call for, rather, is for just-war theorists to embrace these lessons in the sense of applying the criteria for the theory even more rigorously. In the light of this phenomenon of the spiral of violence, just-war theory can be used to expose and reject the rash, and purely destructive, use of force and to encourage a relationship of positive and critical solidarity with all who struggle for liberation from the violence of oppression. As James Finn points out, it is precisely ".... this theory which enables us to condemn the excesses".¹²⁸

Its inapplicability in a nuclear age

It is generally accepted that the modern phenomenon of nuclear weapons and the threat of nuclear war has caused an important shift in the debate

over the ethics of war.¹²⁸ This point was made very emphatically by the Second Vatican Council in the document *Gaudium et Spes*:

The horror and perversity of war are immensely magnified by the multiplication of scientific weapons. For acts of war involving these weapons can inflict massive and indiscriminate destruction far exceeding the bounds of legitimate defense. All these considerations compel us to undertake an evaluation of war with an entirely new attitude.¹³⁰

It was in response to this call for a fresh appraisal of war that the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the United States of America issued a lengthy pastoral letter on the subject of war and peace, in a nuclear age. In their letter, the Bishops state that

No previously conceived moral position escapes the fundamental confrontation posed by contemporary nuclear strategy.¹³¹

.... we must refuse to legitimate the idea of nuclear war.¹³²

We do not perceive any situation in which the deliberate initiation of nuclear warfare, on however restricted a scale, can be morally justified.¹³³

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr R Runcie, is also convinced that nuclear conflict could never be justified on just-war grounds, since "... there is no such thing as just mutual obliteration".¹³⁴

It might appear that the logic of the above quotations would lead to the conclusion that just-war theory can no longer have a meaningful place in the circumstances of a world dominated by the threat of nuclear war. This, however, would be a faulty conclusion for two important reasons. Firstly, it is precisely on the grounds of just-war theory that the Bishops develop and establish their case against nuclear war.¹³⁵ Their letter in fact provides a most impressive case study of the creative application of just-war theory to the question of nuclear war, and the analysis of the United States of America's defence policy. Far from undermining the value of just-war theory, *Gaudium et Spes* and the American Bishops' letter vindicate the role of just-war theory as a means of

seeking the limitation and prevention of war.

Secondly, it is an over-simplification of the social and political realities in the world today to assert that all war means nuclear war. In fact, in the same letter, the American bishops urge the provision of "an adequate alternative defense posture" to replace the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's nuclear strategy.¹³⁶ Another example might be the United Nation's peace keeping force in Lebanon. The debate for and against the value of such a force is not made irrelevant by the acknowledged hovering threat of nuclear war. Just-war theory continues to have real value when applied to situations of conflict. It is, therefore, unconvincing to speak of its inapplicability in a nuclear age.

Its use to underpin an unjust status quo

It has been a feature of the critique of the pacifist position that, in practice, it lends support to an unjust status quo. Because all use of force is wrong, it is regarded as immoral to fight against the totalitarian violence, even of a Hitler. It is not sufficiently appreciated that just-war theory has also tended to be applied with a distinct bias in favour of an unjust status quo.

From ancient times there has been among us the feeling that a conserving violence must be endorsed in preference to a liberating violence and that the power of government even when used unlawfully and unjustly, is preferable to active resistance against it.¹³⁷

The reason for this is not hard to find when analysing the historical development of just-war theory. It is the meaning and application of the criteria concerning the competent or legitimate authority which is really at issue here. The important question was discussed when considering the concept of just rebellion as an integral dimension of just-war theory.

The question of the authority to make war became the dominant issue in considering the ethics of war. Yet, as Johnson points out:

.... to subsume the other jus ad bellum characteristics under this one, was to distort Augustine and the subsequent just-war tradition.¹³⁸

Johnson then goes on to show most significantly how this process of distortion became compounded. He shows how the canonists, as men of their time, simply focussed on ".... who among existing political leaders had the authority to initiate war".¹³⁹ They failed to deal with the "more fundamental question of the nature of political authority itself".¹⁴⁰

For the purposes of this study, the importance of Johnson's observation cannot be over-estimated. He shows how the just-war criterion concerning the legitimate authority can in no way simply be made synonymous with de facto or even de jure authority and power. Two sets of questions need to be applied if this criterion of the theory is not to be distorted and misapplied. Firstly, the criterion must be applied in the light of other just-war criteria concerning just cause, and so on. In other words, the question of justice needs to be applied concerning the right of any authority to use force. Secondly, there is a need to deal with the "more fundamental question of the nature of the political authority itself".¹⁴¹

These important issues will be dealt with at greater length below. Enough has been said at this point to show that the underpinning of an unjust status quo constitutes a distortion of the just-war theory, and is certainly not inherent to the theory itself. It could hardly have been Augustine's or Aquinas' intention to develop a just-war theory which would be used to justify the continuation of tyranny.

The problem of measurement

Special attention was devoted to this problem in the previous chapter. The purpose here is to relate the issues more specifically to just-war theory. Just-war theorists are all keenly aware of the problem of measurement. Childress discusses the dilemmas at some length.¹⁴² Who is the legitimate authority? Who decides this question? How is one to measure the chances of success? Given the presumption against violence, and the need for sufficiently weighty reasons to override this presumption, how are the pro's and con's of relative justice to be weighed up and decided upon? If the resort to the use of force can only be justified as a last resort, after all peaceful means have been exhausted, how is it to be decided when the point is reached at which it can be said that peaceful means have in fact been exhausted?

Quite apart from the problem of measuring particular criteria, there are questions to be asked about the relative importance of the criteria themselves. "Do some criteria have more weight than others? Is a serial ordering possible?"¹⁴³ O'Brien asks the question "... whether a war can be just if a belligerent fails conspicuously to meet one of the conditions".¹⁴⁴ He goes on to point out that this raises the further "... problem of defining conspicuous failure".¹⁴⁵ Childress concludes his analysis by admitting to "... several unresolved issues in the application of just-war criteria".¹⁴⁶

The problem of measurement is a serious one. It might seem that just-war theory is, therefore, fundamentally unworkable as a result. Such a pessimistic view is far from being the only possible conclusion. A quick reading of the American Bishops' letter referred to above would be enough

to show how creatively the theory can be applied, in spite of the problems.

Furthermore, it is important to be aware that the problem of measurement is not one which only arises in the case of the just-war theory. The problem of measurement is the problem of virtually all ethical theory. Even ethical models, which seek to place all the emphasis on the idea of absolute norms, are not in the final analysis free from this problem. An ethical model, which presumed the possibility of absolute norms, equally begs the question: who is to decide as to which norms are absolute? Do some norms have more weight than others? The questions are the same as those raised concerning the just-war criteria.

This is not to say that the problem of measurement is not a real and serious one for the application of just-war theory, but it does mean that the problem must be appreciated in a far wider perspective. The point is that the problem of measurement is the problem of ethics, not simply the problem of just-war theory.

The very fact of the problem can be regarded in a positive light. It ensures that the tentative nature of the claims of just-war theory be kept to the fore. It provides a safeguard against unwarranted dogmatism. Man must act, and make ethical choices, but he makes them in the full consciousness of his fallibility. For fallible man there are no certainties. It is no argument against a particular ethical theory that it fails to provide certainties.

It must, therefore, be reasserted that the concept of an ethical use of force is not only tenable, but necessary, and that it is in no way

decisively undermined by the inevitable problem of measurement. O'Brien, who finds particular difficulty in applying just-war criteria to the area of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary conflict, nevertheless insists that "... some kind of jus ad bellum calculation applied in a case by case basis, remains the most promising approach to the continuing dilemmas".¹⁴⁷ Johnson, though by no means unaware of the problems of measurement, is perhaps even more positive. He concludes that the "... rediscovery of just-war tradition in all its breadth and complex moral wisdom, has been one of the achievements of Catholic doctrine since world war two".¹⁴⁸

THE STRENGTHS OF JUST-WAR THEORY

In the process of assessing the criticisms of just-war theory, and finding that, though serious they are far from decisive, what has in fact happened is to highlight the strength of the theory. All that is needed in this section, therefore, is to list in summary form what have emerged as the characteristic strengths of the theory.

Provides ethical guidelines for the control of power

In a world in which there is such a manifest misuse of power, there is an urgent and ongoing need to seek ways of stemming such misuse and bringing it under the control of moral norms. Just-war theory provides a workable set of ethical guidelines for the controlled use of force, where necessary for stemming the misuse of power.

Yoder himself concedes that in terms of an ethic for the state, the traditional just-war doctrine has value. The criteria

.... are useful attempts to delimit, in terms of the function of the state, the cases in which the use of violence is the least illegitimate.¹⁴⁹

Elsewhere he acknowledges that the

.... doctrine of "just-war" must be dealt with far more respectfully than most pacifists have been willing to do. It takes seriously, as other available thought patterns do not, that there can be an ethical judgement upon the use of violence in the name of the state.¹⁵⁰

As Childress points out:

Even the pacifist has a stake in the integrity of just-war criteria as the coin of the political realm.¹⁵¹

Bases the purpose of power in the prophetic Christian tradition

In listing the assumptions which form the basis of the whole just-war tradition, it was pointed out that the Christian concept of justice is both the touchstone and goal of all just-war theory. For a Christian, the concept of justice goes back to the Old Testament prophets, and their emphasis on the righteousness of God and the need for his righteousness to inform all relationships in the human community; in other words, all political, social and economic life. This was a tradition which Jesus incarnated, and which the Christian Church seeks to honour. A positive application of just-war theory will result in a revival of this prophetic tradition, as the Church applies the rigorous demands of this ethic to the realities of the political world and, particularly, in situations of serious conflict.

Prevents the absolutising of the state and the status quo

Since just-war theory assumes that Christian justice is the touchstone of all use of power, there can be no justification for an absolutising of

state power and, therefore, of any particular state. The ethical foundation of any state, or political status quo, is based on principles of justice. The implications of this point are of such importance to the purpose of this study that they will be dealt with under the next major section of this chapter entitled "A note on the theology of the state - conditional legitimacy". It can simply be stated here that a positive application of just-war theory not only prevents the absolutising of the status quo, but undermines any justification for the continuation of institutional violence.

Respects differing convictions

Just-war theory is essentially an open-ended ethical model. It leaves room for strictly pacifist options. It never assumes the right to insist on the use of force in a particular situation. It simply holds that such force may be permissible on certain conditions.¹⁵² From the perspective of just-war theory, there is no necessary theological conflict between the Christians who believe they are called to intervene by force to prevent a massacre, and Christians who believe they are called to throw themselves between the warring factions. From the point of view of just-war theory, both have equal claim to be following the command of Christ.¹⁵³

Gives due recognition to the reality of ambiguous moral situations

It constituted one of the main areas of the criticism of Yoder's Christian pacifism that he does not appear to give sufficient place in his theological ethics to the recognition of the ambiguity of moral situations. Gandhi's parable was used to illustrate the nature of such situations.¹⁵⁴

The reality of such situations in human existence is a matter of daily experience. It is a strength of just-war theory that it faces this, and takes it into account.

When two or more prima-facie obligations appear to come into conflict, we have to assess the total situation including various possible courses of actions with all their features of prima-facie rightness and wrongness to determine what we actually ought to do.¹⁵⁵

Demands rigorous analysis of the situation

Following directly upon the point made in the above paragraph is the fact that just-war theory requires that, in the ethical process, there is a duty to seek as far as possible an accurate knowledge of the actual situation. This is not to say the just-war theory is a situational ethic as such, as if traditional ethical norms do not form an essential axis in the just-war model. The fact that the presumption against war is "... the fundamental tenet of just-war doctrine",¹⁵⁶ should prevent any tendency to mistake just-war theory with a purely situational ethic. The requirement of an analysis of the situation is, on the other hand, a decided strength of the theory. It ensures that the ethical process is carried on, not in vacuo, but in the actualities of human life in all its complexity. This results in a thoroughly rooted incarnational ethic, which seeks to shed the light of the Gospel upon life as it is.

Provides a tool for the analysis of conflict

Assuming that it is necessary and proper in the conditions of a fallen world to use coercive force in the form of a police function to maintain peace and just order, the crucial question then becomes: how such use of

force is to be used without abuse? The question must be asked: is the use of force ethically justifiable here - in these particular circumstances? The formulations of the just-war theory seek to give guidance at exactly this point, where people find themselves in situations of conflict which are wider than the mere apprehension of a thief.

Conclusion

In conclusion to this outline of the strengths of just-war theory, it can be said once again that the criteria of just-war theory do in fact provide a valuable tool for ethical analysis. There is nothing infallible about them. It is the very nature of all ethics that there can never be infallible guides, or absolute certainties. Whatever limitations there may be to just-war (and legitimate rebellion) criteria, they still remain to be significantly improved upon. They still, therefore, remain important and helpful guidelines. Christians are bound to apply the questions implicit in the criteria before engaging any use of coercive force. If a Christian is asked to fight in an armed unit whose intentions and purposes are overwhelmingly unjust, it is clear that he should refuse. An intelligent and critical understanding of the issues raised by the just war criteria should be a central feature of every Christian's catechesis. Just-war theory must be commended as an important part of the moral formation of all disciples.

A NOTE ON THE THEOLOGY OF THE STATE - CONDITIONAL LEGITIMACY

The mainstream of the Christian tradition has always held a positive view of the governmental function within the state, in so far as this function is performed according to its purpose under God. Christian orthodoxy has

never supported the anarchist view, which questions the very principle of government authority. The tradition of the Church has recognised the positive role of government as part of God's intention for the carrying out of his will in the human community. The famous Barmen Declaration expresses it this way:

The Bible tells us that according to divine arrangement, the state has the responsibility to provide for justice and peace in the yet unredeemed world.¹⁵⁷

In other words, the final claim of government to legitimate authority must be tested against the touchstone of what is fulfilling of God's will and plan for humanity. In the words of Gaudium et Spes:

.... political authority must always be exercised within the limits of morality and on behalf of the dynamically conceived common good.¹⁵⁸

No recognised biblical scholar, therefore, would find scriptural grounds for arguing that the state has any absolute status, in terms of which it can claim an absolute obedience from its citizens. Theologically speaking, such a position is idolatrous. The fact remains, however, that in the daily arena of political debate there is a popular theology which argues for obedience to government laws as if the Word of God in Scripture commands such absolute obedience. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Luke 20:25), and "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities" (Romans 13:1), are frequently quoted in a way which assumes that the point is thereby established, namely, that people should be obedient to all government laws and that to defy a law is always immoral.

It is precisely this kind of view which is promoted through the ideology of the National Security State. It is essentially ".... a plan of promoting the state as a purpose in itself".¹⁵⁹ It stresses the idea of ".... supreme loyalty which is due to the Nation above everything

else".¹⁶⁰ Reminiscent of Hitler's regime, this ideology holds that the state is supreme and absolute and, therefore, has a claim to total and unquestioning obedience from all citizens. This ideology exploits the popular theology referred to above, and is prevalent in circles which seek to justify, or at any rate maintain, an unjust status quo. It is important to expose this idolatry for what it is.¹⁶¹

With regard, first of all, to the verse: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17), its meaning cannot be discovered apart from its context. As Nineham points out: "The pronouncement itself is almost certainly genuine, but it needs to be set against its original background if it is to be properly understood".¹⁶² Mark introduces this "typical pronouncement story"¹⁶³ by saying that "... they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians to entrap him in his talk" (Mark 12:13). They ask him a highly charged political question concerning the payment of taxes to Caesar. If he was to encourage the payment of such unpopular taxes, he would be discredited with the people for "... such advice would be regarded as a betrayal".¹⁶⁴ On the other hand, if he discouraged payment, his questioners "... would have no hesitation in denouncing him to the Roman governor as a rebel".¹⁶⁵

Jesus sees through their intentions and throws the question back at them by asking for a coin, and then obtains from them the admission that it is Caesar's coinage. The admission is important because, according to the custom of the time, to accept and use the currency was "... to put oneself under an obligation to the government which administers it: 'Pay Caesar what is due to Caesar', is the logical consequence to their own admission".¹⁶⁶ To this Jesus adds: "... and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17).

Jesus' whole pronouncement was not only very clever, it was deeply profound. He was not simply avoiding being drawn into an extremely difficult religio-political discussion with a group of dishonest hypocrites; he was intent on pointing to the deeper issues involved. He acknowledges that emperors (authorities) can have a certain legitimacy. He is not an anarchist. However, by adding the phrase about giving to God what belongs to God, he was placing the whole debate about authority within the framework of what belongs to God. Clearly, there is nothing that can be said that does not belong to the Creator of the universe. No Jew, or Christian, could think otherwise. Since, therefore, all belongs to God, what belongs to Caesar is derived, delegated and conditional upon the purposes for which it was delegated. While there is no denial of the need for government, this authority is always under God. It is essentially a conditional authority.

In his commentary on the Lucan text (20:25), Marshall concludes:

It is safe to say that Jesus is not setting up two parallel and separate realms. In the light of Jewish and biblical teaching it is more likely that Jesus is grounding obedience to the earthly ruler in obedience to God.¹⁶⁷

and, at the same time

.... indicates that the power of the earthly ruler is subscribed by that of God.¹⁶⁸

It is not being argued that any developed doctrine of relations between the Church and the state can be derived from this text. What does emerge, however, is that this text provides no basis for justifying the absolutising of state power and authority. On the contrary, Jesus in his reply was placing the whole political debate where it belonged - consciously under God. It is this fact which deabsolutises Caesar's authority and

opens the way for the concept of conditional legitimacy.

Turning now to the relevant passage in Romans 13, it will be recalled that an exegesis of these verses was undertaken in the chapter evaluating Yoder's position. It is sufficient to recall that among several scholars referred to, no justification was found for claiming that this text could support a demand for absolute obedience to the state.

It was, however, observed that Yoder makes a crucial distinction between "being subject" and "being obedient". He argued that while the text does not mean that a Christian must follow an unjust command and kill another person, it does mean that a Christian must not resist if the government should decide to "put him to death".¹⁶⁹ The Christian, in Yoder's view, is commanded to be subordinate, if not to obey. It seems that Yoder is begging the whole question of the legitimacy of the government or authority to which he expects Christians to be subject. There can surely be no question of being subject to an illegitimate authority. Furthermore, in the critical evaluation of Yoder's doctrine of revolutionary subordination, it was shown that Yoder was not sufficiently alert to the context in which Paul was writing, and that it is unconvincing to turn the meaning of "be subject" into an absolute imperative of non-resistance. It was pointed out how his particular interpretation of the Haustafeln and Romans 13:1-7 resulted in a lopsided ethic, and that his whole doctrine of revolutionary subordination is, in fact, reductionist.

It is not true that Jesus came to preach that the oppressed should submit to an admittedly evil dispensation, with the promise that it is "about to crumble anyway".¹⁷⁰ The Good News is more faithfully expressed in the assertion that the "paramount duty of the community remains the proclama-

tion of the Lord who challenges people to protect the rights of others",¹⁷¹ and that "consideration for others, especially those who are weaker has become determinative".¹⁷²

To return to the point made above, all scholars referred to are agreed that to "be subject" does not mean unconditional obedience to any authority. Unconditional obedience is due to God alone. As Yoder, himself, argues:

The place of government in the providential designs of God is not such that one's duty would be simply to do whatever it says".¹⁷³

The implications of this can be drawn out still further. In a statement on this issue, the Episcopal Synod of the Church of the Province of South Africa concludes that:

.... the state forfeits its authority over the individual progressively, to the extent that it departs from its role under God and pursues immoral ways, sectarian interest, or even its own glorification (which is a form of idolatry) rather than the purposes of God for which it has been established.¹⁷⁴

Cullman sums up the general New Testament understanding of the state by saying that:

.... according as the state remains within its limits or transgresses them the Christian will describe it as the servant of God or the instrument of the devil.¹⁷⁵

This biblical view of the state contrasts fundamentally with the ideology of the National Security State outlined above. The concept of obedience to God is central to the Christian faith, and implies a theology of the state which can never concede more than a conditional legitimacy to those who rule.

Upholding God's claim to prior obedience, Karl Barth issued a "radical theological-political directive for the Church, born out of his struggle against Nazism".¹⁷⁶

No sentence is more dangerous or revolutionary than that God is One and there is no other like Him It was on the truth of the sentence that the 'Third Reich' of Adolf Hitler made shipwreck.¹⁷⁷

In the South African context, this clash between Church and the state found classic expression in the stand taken by the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Geoffrey Clayton:

The Church cannot recognise the right of an official secular government to determine whether or where a member of the Church of any race shall discharge his religious duty of participating in public worship We feel bound to state that if the bill were to become law in its present form we should ourselves be unable to obey it or to counsel our clergy and people to do so.¹⁷⁸

This theology of the state, which insists on the conditional legitimacy of governmental authority, has further implications which must now be addressed.

LEGITIMATE REBELLION

Introduction

The purpose of this study has been to undertake a theological evaluation of certain Christian responses to the prolonged and violent oppression which characterises the South African situation. In this context, a crucial question becomes: is it legitimate for Christians, in such circumstances, to offer forceful resistance?

The response of the Christian pacifist would seem to be a clear "no" to this question. Yoder articulates this position forcefully:

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 non-resistance in discipleship.¹⁷⁹

Yoder's position poses a serious challenge to any alternative approach.¹⁸⁰

The major portion of this study was spent in attempting a critical evaluation of his theological ethics. In the end, certain limitations and weaknesses were found, which led to the conclusion that the Christian response to prolonged and violent oppression cannot be reduced to absolute non-resistance.

From this point, attention was turned to the consideration of an alternative response. This was found to be in the mould of the traditional just war theory. The question of resistance to prolonged violent oppression, however, clearly requires the application of that particular form of just war theory, called 'just' or 'legitimate rebellion'. It is important that this theory of legitimate rebellion be analysed in some detail.

Legitimate resistance as a form of just-war

Although attention was given to this point, it is important that it be restated and enlarged upon here.

There is another chapter in the history of the just-war theory that should be taken into account. This is the transformation of justified war into justified revolution.¹⁸¹

This is how Paul Ramsey introduces his important analysis of the theory of justifiable revolution. He shows that the extension of the criterion, requiring that the war be declared by a legitimate authority, provides the basis for the idea of justified revolution. Since the analysis of the changing understanding of this particular just-war criterion is of such importance, it will be dealt with under the next sub-heading. All that will be done at this point is to refer to the evidence for a doctrine of legitimate resistance in various Christian traditions.

In the Roman Catholic tradition, Aquinas says the following about a situation of prolonged oppression:

"But whatever opinion be formed of the acts of men, yet the Lord equally executed his work by them, when he broke the sanguinary tyrannical governments. Let princes hear and fear.¹⁸⁹

It was Beza who, as it were, took over where Calvin left off. He points out that "Nehemiah opposed unjust violence with a just defence".¹⁹⁰ He poses the question of justifiable resistance by subjects, and not only lesser magistrates,¹⁹¹ and concludes that if the magistrate does not do his duty which is to ensure justice,¹⁹² "then let each private citizen bestir himself with all his power to defend the lawful constitution of his country".¹⁹³ He points out that it is justifiable to resist highway robbers and that in exactly the same way it can be permissible to defend oneself against tyrants.¹⁹⁴ Beza's attempt to articulate criteria of justifiable rebellion is worth quoting in full:

1. the tyranny must be undisguised and notorious
2. that recourse should not be had to arms before other remedies have been tried
3. nor yet before the question has been thoroughly examined, not only as to what is permissible, but also as to what is expedient, lest the remedies prove more hazardous than the very disease.¹⁹⁵

In the same tradition, Knox develops a vigorous justification for defence against persecution and tyranny.¹⁹⁶

It was Augustine, writing centuries before, who made this crucial point:

Justice being taken away, then, what are Kingdoms but great robberies?¹⁹⁷

In the final analysis, the case for treating legitimate rebellion as a form of just-war tradition is based on the implications of Augustine's remark. John Rawls, in Theory of Justice, is essentially building upon Augustine when he says:

.... to employ the coercive apparatus of the state in order to maintain manifestly unjust institutions is itself a form of illegitimate force that men in due course have a right to resist.¹⁹⁸

O'Brien is emphatic that the question of resistance to prolonged violent oppression:

.... must necessarily be subject to the same normative conditions as international war, and a serious effort has to be made to evaluate revolutionary war by the traditional jus ad bellum categories.¹⁹⁹

The question of legitimate authority to conduct war

It is probably true to say that the central problem, concerning an ethics of justifiable resistance in terms of just-war theory, revolves around the criterion which requires that the war be declared by a legitimate authority.

It is common cause that the wielding of coercive power should normally be administered by appropriate and accountable bodies, and not left to the whim of individuals. In the case of the right to engage in armed conflict, the presumption is in favour of a properly constituted, just and accountable authority. Normally speaking, this authority would be a governmental one. There need be no disagreement about this. The problem arises when the concept of legitimate authority is confined to government, or when it is made synonymous with government without any conditions or qualifications. Rawls warns strongly against assuming that legitimate authority is the unquestioned prerogative of the state:

Given the predatory aims of state power, and the tendency of men to defer to their government's decision to wage war, a general willingness to resist the state's claims is all the more necessary.²⁰⁰

The concept of a moral presumption is certainly not to be confused with an absolute right, or an exclusive right. It cannot be assumed that

government authority is always the legitimate authority. It has been shown above that the very legitimacy of state power or governmental power is inherently conditional. From the perspective of a Christian theology of the state, the legitimacy of governmental power is based upon the fulfilment of the ethical purposes for which the government function was instituted in the first place. It follows that it cannot be said that governmental authority is automatically the legitimate authority for the purpose of conducting war. To claim such would be to distort the meaning and intention of just-war theory.²⁰¹

As already pointed out above, Johnson has shown that this is actually what happened in the history of the just-war theory. The canonists failed to deal with the "more fundamental question of the nature of political authority itself".²⁰² Just-war theory becomes reduced to the one criterion concerned with the authority to make war, and this authority was assumed to be a governmental one. By the time of Innocent IV, the theory as articulated by Aquinas had become seriously distorted:

If a prince could make war and get away with it, he had the authority to do it ... the moral component of authority (was) conspicuously absent.²⁰³

Just-war theory became harnessed to the status quo.²⁰⁴

Having exposed this distortion, Johnson addresses the question of the legitimisation of the rebel cause. After analysing the views of a number of authors, he concludes:

There seems no reason not to argue that the limits on violence developed in just-war tradition in principle apply here as much as in cases of conflict between de jure or de facto international persons.²⁰⁵

In discussing the source of the legitimate authority to conduct a defensive war against prolonged and violent oppression, Michael Walzer makes the important distinction between guerillas and mere criminals. It

is a "... significant degree of popular support",²⁰⁶ which constitutes the basis of the guerilla claim to legitimate authority. This, when taken with all the other just-war criteria, becomes the basis of the theory of legitimate rebellion.

Elsewhere, Walzer comments on the refusal by the South Vietnam government to hold elections. This amounts to a refusal to be accountable. The consequence was that they

.... clearly lost whatever legitimacy was conferred by the agreements What is crucial is the standing of that government with its own people.²⁰⁷

Ramsey develops this even further in his chapter on justifiable revolution. He shows how the concept of legitimate authority undergoes what is in effect a democratising process. The changing understanding through the centuries of the source of authority can be traced from the divine right of kings, through to Magna Carta,²⁰⁸ and finally through to

.... locating in the people themselves the power and right to hold princes and governments politically accountable.²⁰⁹

.... the most ancient divinity that hedged Kings was the sole authority to declare war and take sole initiative in the use of armed force, according to the Church's theory of just-war; and against that background, historically speaking, only this same principle of legitimacy, brought down to the level of the people generally, acting magisterially could unhedge a king or the standing order.²¹⁰

In Ramsey's judgment it was Calvinism which "... provided the ground for political and revolutionary initiative to be taken by the common man".²¹¹ Perhaps, however, it is not only Calvinism but also the growing emphasis, from within the Roman Catholic tradition as well, upon the dignity of human beings, and the central importance of liberty as a safeguard and expression of that dignity, which is also significant in this process:

Man is only truly man in so far as, master of his own acts and judge of their own worth, he is author of his own advancement, in keeping with the nature which was given him by his creator.²¹²

The implications of this kind of teaching would suggest that the concept of legitimate authority cannot be divorced from individuals in their corporate life in community. It is not government as such which constitutes legitimate authority, but government which reflects or expresses the dignity and liberty of citizens of society as a whole. In so far as government fails to be this expression, it forfeits its authority.

It can be argued that the state forfeits its authority over the individual progressively, to the extent that it departs from its role under God and pursues immoral ways.²¹³

This underlines the fact that the concept of legitimate authority can never be automatically identified with government authority. Governments can, and do, forfeit their moral authority.²¹⁴ It is, therefore, more plausible to argue that the concept of legitimate authority is more authentically grounded in the stewardship of people who genuinely and manifestly seek the liberty which God wills for all humanity.

In other words God, as the ultimate source of authority, delegates authority to humanity, for the fulfilling of his purposes. The governmental authority is derived from this process and is conditional upon it. There can be no divine right of government; only the responsibility to humanity to fulfil God's purposes. In so far as the government fails in this responsibility, human beings as the stewards of God's power have a right, and even a duty, to take it up. Legitimate authority, in the final analysis, rests with people as God's stewards. There is, therefore, no inherent reason why the just-war criterion concerning the legitimate authority to conduct war, should provide any serious problems for the application of the theory as a whole, to the question of armed resistance to prolonged violent oppression.

Legitimate rebellion as a Grenzfall to restore just order

It can sometimes happen that the time of a state in its present form of existence has expired.²¹⁵

No doubt, when he wrote these words, Barth must have had in mind the specific instance of the Third Reich under Hitler. It is well known that he actively supported the resistance to Hitler, "compelled 'by my concern for an orderly theology' and also guided by it".²¹⁶ Walzer makes essentially the same point:

.... there are historical moments when armed struggle is necessary for the sake of human freedom.²¹⁷

Clearly, before any decision to undertake armed resistance to state violence can lay any claim to moral legitimacy, it must be rigorously tested in terms of all the criteria of just-war theory. Since they have been outlined above, it is not necessary to repeat them here. There are, however, a number of observations which need to be made. It is important to draw out what it means to say that rebellion (or any war) can only be justified as a Grenzfall, as a last resort in extreme circumstances.

There is, of course, no such thing as a perfectly just state, nor will there ever be. It would, therefore, lead to an absurd and anarchic situation if rebellion became justified by any transgression of justice. The fact of a just cause is no justification by itself for taking up arms. As just-war theory makes clear, it is necessary that all other peaceful non-violent means be tried first, before any resort to arms can be considered justifiable.

Because war involves overriding important prima-facie obligations not to injure or kill others, it demands the most weighty and significant reasons.²¹⁸

It is for these reasons that the Church is rightly wary about permitting armed resistance (or any war) simply on the grounds of injustice. There is the obligation to weigh up the extent and nature and degree of the injustice, before it can be judged permissible to resist it. This seems to be the import of the following passage from *Gaudium et Spes*:

Where public authority oversteps its competence and oppresses the people, these people should nevertheless obey to the extent that the objective common good demands. Still it is lawful for them to defend their own rights and those of their fellow citizens against any abuse of this authority, provided that in so doing they observe the limits imposed by natural law and the Gospel.²¹⁹

The editor of the document adds an explanatory footnote:

The reference to limits here suggest the usefulness of such classic concepts as that of the conditions for a just-war.²²⁰

Perhaps this is also the import of Ramsey's emphasis on "constitutional" revolution.²²¹ It is not enough for there to be certain infringements of justice in order to justify engaging in rebellion.

Instead, one must wait - long past the point where simple justice began to be violated and until there arises someone or some group capable of representing a better *pax-ordo*.²²²

There will always be much debate about the meaning and content of the "weighty and significant reasons" which justify overriding the *prima-facie* obligation not to injure or kill. Nevertheless, it is central to just-war theory and, therefore, to the concept of legitimate rebellion, that there can be an ethical use of force, and that it is possible for such "weighty and significant reasons" to exist.

Childress, therefore, insists that:

.... when two or more *prima-facie* obligations appear to come into conflict, we have to assess the total situation including various possible courses of actions with all their features of *prima-facie* rightness and wrongness to determine what we actually ought to do.²²³

This is what it means to say that legitimate rebellion must be understood as a Grenzfall ethic. The very concept of Grenzfall implies a context of moral ambiguity where the straightforward following of ethical norms has become problematic for the simple reason that the norms involved are experienced as conflicting. There is the prima facie obligation not to injure or kill others, as well as the obligation to protect the innocent, and stem the evils of exploitation and injustice. The requirements of the great command to love one's neighbour are far from clear in such a context.

If, having assessed the total situation and weighed up all the conflicting obligations, it is decided that the historical moment has arrived "... when armed struggle is necessary for the sake of human freedom",²²⁴ the Christian who feels called to take this option can never be anything other than a "reluctant revolutionary".²²⁵ In the same way, Bonhoeffer never argued that the use of force was good in itself.²²⁶ This is so precisely because

.... an overridden or outweighed prima-facie obligation continues to function in the situation and the course of action one adopts.²²⁷

and

.... the traces or residual effects of the overridden prima-facie duty are extremely important.²²⁸

The concept of "reluctant revolutionary" suggests an ongoing problem of conscience for one who, after thorough analysis, takes this option in faith. However, as Moltmann points out, it should be remembered that this problem of conscience is not confined to the one who undertakes active resistance. It is

.... basically none other than the problem of conscience associated with a government's normal exercise of power and the participation therein of Christians.²²⁹

Anyone who approves of the normal exercise of power by the state for the sake of love as unavoidable or who is not a pacifist in the fundamental, anarchical sense cannot suddenly make resistance an extreme case of conscience.²³⁰

In other words, Moltmann is saying that the problem of conscience issue is a general characteristic of all Grenzfall ethical options, and not only relevant in the case of armed resistance.

The most plausible case for the legitimacy of rebellion is as a Grenzfall to restore just order. Many would agree that this was the case with the Third Reich under Hitler, where violence and the killing of innocent people had become the new law; where there were no prospects whatsoever of peaceful change towards a more just dispensation; where the ethical purposes of state-power had become thoroughly perverted; where the ruling authorities showed no signs at all of changing their violent intentions and course of action.

Under these circumstances it is reasonable to argue that armed resistance becomes a kind of police action to restore the normal rule of law.

Bonhoeffer's involvement in resistance is probably best understood politically as part of a civil police action to oust rule by a mob of criminals.²³¹

Barth, referring to the Hitler régime, asks this compelling question:

May not someone from the lower ranks of the political hierarchy, or even from outside it, take up the obviously abandoned cause of the state for the salvation of the whole and, since all other ways are barred, proceed at risk of his own life?²³²

In such a situation the costly option, to undertake armed resistance in the face of prolonged and violent oppression, should not be understood as a violation of the call of every Christian to a ministry of reconciliation. It would be superficial to presume so. A police action ".... to oust rule by a mob of criminals" may well be what is required for the

restoration of a reconciled community. When Matthew records Jesus as saying that he has not come to bring peace but the sword (Matthew 10:34), what is being referred to is the potentially divisive nature of his ministry; the purpose and goal of which is nonetheless a lasting reconciliation.

It can be safely assumed that this was Bonhoeffer's ultimate intention when he reluctantly opted to try and oust the "... rule by a mob of criminals".²³³ This is what Moltmann is concerned with when he speaks of the goal of a legitimate revolution:

As master and slave neither is a true man if the denial of the master were total, the slave's revolt would bring nothing new into the world but would only exchange the roles of inhumanity.²³⁴

The ultimate goal of a legitimate rebellion must be reconciliation. Only in this way can it fulfil the jus ad bellum and jus in bello criteria of just-war theory.²³⁵

CONCLUSION

In this chapter an attempt has been made to present and assess a framework for a theological ethics, in terms of which it is possible not only to argue for an ethical use of force, but also to develop such an ethic to establish the legitimacy of forceful resistance to prolonged and violent oppression. It was argued that this was only possible on the basis of a rigorous application of the just-war criteria as a Grenzfall, to restore just order. The normative presumption against violence has been upheld throughout this discussion. There is no question of arguing for any easy justification of the use of force. There is, nevertheless, a very wide consensus concerning the acceptance of an ethical use of force in the circumstances of a fallen world.

The doctrine of just rebellion to protect and uphold democratic values is upheld in the American Declaration of Independence:

Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such forms as shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.²³⁶

Commenting on this, Michael Ramsay says that it

.... brings the just rebellion within democracy's lawful pursuits, for how else do you alter or abolish a régime which is destructive of man's proper ends?²³⁷

In other words, rebellion is legitimate in those circumstances where it is reasonable to argue that armed resistance has become a necessary 'police action' to restore the normal rule of law. There are many Christians who believe that such a situation applied in Germany under the Third Reich.²³⁸

In the concluding chapter, it remains to consider the extent to which the theological conclusions arrived at in this chapter can be applied in the South African context. Finally, some indications will be given as to the implications of this for the Church as she seeks to witness in the situation, and minister to Christians caught up in the conflict.

CHAPTER 6 - REFERENCES

1. John H Yoder. The Politics of Jesus. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1972, p 212.
2. John H Yoder, The Original Revolution, Herald Press, Scottdale, Pennsylvania, 1971, p 72.
3. Ibid, p 9.
4. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 134.
 "Servanthood replaces dominion, forgiveness absorbs hostility. Thus - and only thus - are we bound by New Testament thought to 'be like Jesus'".
 See References 2 and 3 above for Yoder's view of the pacifist implications of servanthood.
5. In this context, the word 'political' is used as a term to describe those dimensions of human existence which relate to the ordering and functioning of the human community.
6. Jürgen Moltmann, The Theology of Hope, S C M Press, London, 1967, p 21.
7. Ibid, p 22.
8. Ibid, p 330.
9. Ibid, p 328.
10. José Míguez Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Age, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1975, p 114.
11. Jürgen Moltmann, The Crucified God, S C M Press, London, 1974, p 320.
12. Míguez Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Age, Op Cit, p 149.
 There are other levels to this debate in which Moltmann and Míguez Bonino differ in their political theology.
13. Ibid, p 149.
14. J G Davies, Christian Politics & Violent Revolution, S C M Press, London, 1976, p 115.
 Quoting John C Bennett: "Christians serve the Kingdom whenever they seek 'justice, truth, humanity and freedom' in any social order".

15. Míguez Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Age, Op Cit, p 142.
See also Moltmann, Crucified God, Op Cit, p 23.
".... structures which make people unhappy can be broken down, but no guarantee is attached that men will be happy".
16. Jürgen Moltmann, The Future of Creation, S C M Press, London, 1979, p 16.
17. Ibid, p 17.
18. Moltmann, Theology of Hope, Op Cit, p 288.
19. See Chapter 4 of this thesis, "The questioning of assumptions about the effectiveness of power".
20. Yoder, Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 235.
21. John H Yoder, "The Biblical Mandate", Post American, April 1974, p 25.
22. Richard Mouw, Politics & The Biblical Drama, William B Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1976, p 108.
23. Míguez Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Age, Op Cit, p 166.
24. Moltmann, Future of Creation, Op Cit, p 17.
25. Jürgen Moltmann, "Towards a Political Hermeneutics of the Gospel", in New Theology No. 6, eds Martin Marty and Dean Peerman. Macmillan, London, 1969, p 81.
26. Míguez Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Age, Op Cit, p 148.
27. Jon Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, S C M, London, 1978, p XVIII.
28. Rubem Alves, A Theology of Human Hope, World Publishing Company, New York, 1969, p 87.
Quoting Paul Lehmann: ".... the achievement of humanization comes by the reality and power of a deliverance which occurs in history from beyond history and refuses to abandon history".

29. Miguez Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Age, Op Cit, p 152.
30. J Philip Wogaman, A Christian Method of Moral Judgement, S C M, London, 1976, especially Chapter II, "The Concept of Methodological Presumption", for a full explanation of the concept of moral presumption.
31. Roland Bainton, Christian Attitudes Towards War & Peace, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1960, p 239.
32. G H C MacGregor, The New Testament Basis of Pacifism, Fellowship Publications, New York, 1954, p 31.
33. Ibid, p 63.
34. John H Yoder, The Christian Witness to the State, Faith & Life Press, Newton, Kans, 1964, p 5.
35. Ibid, p 31.
36. Yoder, The Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 59-60.
37. Yoder, The Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 36.
38. Chapter 3 of this thesis, Section entitled "The Role of the Church and of Christians in the World".
39. Yoder, The Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 59.
40. James Childress, "Just War Criteria", in War or Peace, editor T A Shannon, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1980, p 40.
41. Ibid, p 53.
42. James Childress, "Just-War Theories : The Bases, Interrelations, Priorities & Functions of Their Criteria", Theological Studies, September 1978, Vol 39, No. 3, p 433.
43. Ibid, p 435 and p 430.

44. Charles Villa-Vicencio, "Southern Africa Today - A Spiral of Violence", in Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, March 1983, No. 42, p 61.
A lengthy quotation from a statement by the Conference of Protestant Church Leaders of the Federation of Protestant Churches in the German Democratic Republic reveals their wrestling with this problem of the ethics of the use of force. Their articulation of the problem is more paradoxical than that of Childress. While Childress would say that the use of force is not normally justifiable, East German Protestant Church Leaders say that it is never justified. Yet, they concede that "... in this world we may stumble into border-line situations in which we see no other possibility than the use of violence". Perhaps they may have avoided quite such a paradoxical statement of the dilemma if they had, like Childress, employed the model of prima facie duties and norms.
45. Childress, "Just-War Theories", Op Cit, p 431.
46. Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1961, Vol. III, 4, p 342.
47. Ibid, p 343.
48. Ibid, p 401.
49. W Molinski, "Situation Ethics", in Encyclopaedia of Theology The Concise Sacramentum Mundi, editor Karl Rahner, Seabury Press, New York, 1975, p 1593.
"... the concrete ethical decision can never be simply deduced from general principles or objectivated findings which would be evident and hence infallibly correct". The Roman Catholic view expressed here is similarly wary of an ethics based on absolutes. See also Chapter 5 of this Study, particularly "The Methodological Problem".
50. Childress, "Just War Theories", Op Cit, p 431.
51. Mouw, Politics & The Biblical Drama, Op Cit, p 109.
Mouw draws attention to the important "...distinction between engaging in actions that will have the effect of coercing other human beings and acting out of a desire to coerce and dominate others".
52. Yoder, The Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 59.
53. Wogaman, A Christian Method of Moral Judgement, Op Cit, p 121.

54. Bainton, Christian Attitudes Towards War & Peace, Op Cit, p 84. Concern here is with the theological beginnings of the just-war theory, rather than with its roots in Greek philosophy.
55. Ibid, p 89.
56. Yoder, The Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 72-3.
57. Bainton, Christian Attitudes Towards War & Peace, Op Cit, p 96. Augustine of Hippo, The City of God, editor Marcus Dods, Vol. II, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1934, Book XIX, Chapter 12, p 316. "Peace is the end sought for by war."
58. Bainton, Christian Attitudes Towards War & Peace, Op Cit, p 98.
59. Thomas Aquinas, The Summa Theologica, Burns & Oates & Washbourne Ltd, London, 1927, Vol. 9, p 501f. A fuller account of the development of just-war theory would, of course, include the contribution of the Spanish scholastics, Vitoria (d 1546) and Suarez (d 1617).
60. William O'Brien, The Conduct of Just & Limited War, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1981, p 14.
61. Ibid, p 20.
62. Childress, "Just War Theories", Op Cit, p 436. For example, one does not go to war over a stolen bicycle.
63. Childress, "Just-War Criteria", in War or Peace, Op Cit, p 46.
64. O'Brien, The Conduct of Just & Limited War, Op Cit, p 20.
65. Aquinas, The Summa Theologica, Op Cit, p 502.
66. O'Brien, The Conduct of Just & Limited War, Op Cit, p 34.
67. Ibid, p 27.
68. See Reference Number 62.
69. Aquinas, The Summa Theologica, Op Cit, p 501.

70. Augustine, The City of God, Op Cit, p 331.
"Where, therefore, there is no true justice there can be no right there is no republic where there is no justice".
71. Aquinas, The Summa Theologica, Op Cit, p 518.
"A tyrannical government is not just Consequently there is no sedition in disturbing a government of this kind It is the tyrant rather that is guilty of sedition."
72. John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, editor J T McNeill, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1960, p 1520.
"Obedience to man must not become disobedience to God."
See also reference 108 of this chapter of this thesis.
73. O'Brien, The Conduct of Just & Limited War, Op Cit, p 18.
74. Ibid, p 18.
75. Ibid, p 18.
76. Ibid, p 37.
77. Ibid, p 37.
78. Ibid, p 37.
79. Ibid, p 37.
80. Ibid, Part II.
Also James T Johnson, Just War Tradition & The Restraint of War : A Moral & Historical Inquiry, Chapter 7, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1981.
81. Johnson, Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War, Op Cit, p 224.
82. O'Brien, The Conduct of Just & Limited War, Op Cit, p 38.
83. Johnson, Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War, Op Cit, p XXI.
84. Ibid, p 82.
85. Ibid, p 174.
86. Ibid, p XXII.
87. Ibid, p 10.

88. O'Brien, The Conduct of Just & Limited War, Op Cit, p 5.
89. Johnson, Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War, Op Cit, p XXI.
90. Richard McCormick, "The Teaching Office as a Guarantor of Unity in Morality", in Concilium, No. 151, 1981, p 77.
McCormick speaks of the importance of distinguishing between the substance and the formulation of a doctrine.
91. Childress, "Just War Criteria", in War or Peace, Op Cit, p 53.
92. Bainton, Christian Attitudes Towards War & Peace, Op Cit, p 239f.
93. Johnson, Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War, Op Cit, p XXVf.
94. Ibid, p XXVI.
95. Ibid, p XXVII.
96. Larry Rasmussen, Dietrich Bonhoeffer : Reality & Resistance, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1972, p 96.
97. Ibid, p 107.
98. Ibid, p 107-8.
99. O'Brien, The Conduct of Just & Limited War, Op Cit, p 38.
100. Yoder finds a place for the performance of the police function in his Christian ethics for the state. In his view it is in order for non-Christians to take on this task. See references numbers 34-37 of this chapter.
101. Bainton, Christian Attitudes Towards War & Peace, Op Cit, p 240.
102. O'Brien, The Conduct of Just & Limited War, Op Cit, p 16.
103. Ibid, p 14.
"Permissible war would be more accurate than just war."
104. Ibid, p 5.

105. Ibid, p 14.
106. Augustine, City of God, Vol I, Book IV 4, Op Cit, p 139.
"Justice being taken away, then what are kingdoms but great robberies."
107. Bainton, Christian Attitudes Towards War & Peace, Op Cit, p 142.
It is true that when the Lutheran Church acquired legal recognition, this theology was dropped.
108. Ibid, p 146f.
See John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol 2, ed John McNeill, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1973, p 1517.
"For sometimes he (God) raises up open avengers from among his servants and arms them with his command to punish the wicked government and deliver his people, oppressed in unjust ways, from miserable calamity".
109. Davies, Christian Politics & Violent Revolution, Op Cit, p 51.
110. Paul Deats, "Protestant Social Ethics & Pacifism", in War or Peace, Op Cit, p 85.
111. John H Yoder, Christian Attitudes to War/Peace/Revolution, Written Lecture XXVIII, Unpublished, 1973, p 3 and p 7.
See also Yoder, The Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 84.
112. Johnson, Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War Op Cit, p XXVf.
113. Ibid, p XXV and XXVI.
114. John H Yoder, Karl Barth & The Problem of War, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1970, p 89.
115. Rasmussen, Dietrich Bonhoeffer : Reality & Resistance, Op Cit, p 143.
116. Mfquez Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, Op Cit, p 124.
117. See reference 110 above.
118. Catholic Bishops of the United States, "The Challenge of Peace", in The Tablet, Vol. 237, No. 7456, 4 June 1983, London.

119. Helder Camara, Spiral of Violence, Sheed & Ward, London, 1971.
120. Ibid, p 30.
121. Míguez Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, Op Cit, p 127.
122. José Comblin, The Church and the National Security State, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1979, p 178.
123. Davies; Christian Politics & Violent Revolution, Op Cit, p 112.
124. Herbert McCabe, "The Class Struggle and Christian Love", in Agenda for Prophets, editor R Ambler & D Haslam, Bowerdean Press, London, 1980, p 156.
125. Moltmann, Crucified God, Op Cit, p 330.
See also David McLellan, Marx, Fontana, Glasgow, 1975, p 62.
"Marx was always scathing about those he referred to as 'the alchemists of revolution' who tried to provoke revolt whatever the socio-economic circumstances."
126. Titus Guenter, "Dom Hélder Camara", South African Outlook, Vol 112, No. 1333, July 1982, p 104.
127. Míguez Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, Op Cit, p 126.
128. James Finn, "Pacifism & Justifiable War", in War or Peace, editor T A Shannon, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1980, p 12.
129. T A Shannon, editor, War or Peace, The Search for New Answers, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1980, p IX.
130. Walter Abbott, editor, "Gaudium et Spes, The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World", in Documents of Vatican II, Geoffrey Chapman, London-Dublin, 1966, p 293.
131. Catholic Bishops' Conference of the USA, "The Challenge of Peace", Op Cit, p 526.
132. Ibid, p 527.
133. Ibid, p 528.

134. Royal Society for International Affairs, Chatham House Lecture quoted in Church Times, 28 January 1983.
135. Catholic Bishops' Conference of the USA, "The Challenge of Peace", Op Cit, p 528.
136. Ibid, p 528.
137. Jürgen Moltmann, "Racism and the Right to Resist", Study Encounter, Vol. VIII, No. 1, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1972, p 1.
138. Johnson, Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War Op Cit, p 151.
139. Ibid, p 151.
140. Ibid, p 151.
141. Ibid, p 151.
142. Childress, "Just-War Theories", Op Cit, p 441.
143. Ibid, p 441.
144. O'Brien, Conduct of Just & Limited War, Op Cit, p 36.
145. Ibid, p 36.
146. Childress, "Just-War Theories", Op Cit, p 444.
147. O'Brien, Conduct of Just & Limited War, Op Cit, p 174.
148. Johnson, Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War, Op Cit, p 347.
149. Yoder, Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 49.
150. Yoder, The Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 131-2.
151. Childress, "Just-War Criteria", Op Cit, p 54.
It is not suggested that the use of force is the only means of controlling the misuse of power. It can never be a matter of either/or. For example, non-violent trade unions can also play a vital role in checking the abuse of power.

152. Johnson, Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War, Op Cit, p xxvii.
See also Childress, "Just-War Criteria", Op Cit, p 53-4.
153. Catholic Bishops' Conference of the USA, Op Cit, p 527.
The Bishops recognise the pacifist option as a legitimate calling.
154. See this thesis, Chapter 4, "The Reality of Ambiguous Moral Situations - contradictions in love".
155. Childress, "Just-War Theories", Op Cit, p 430.
156. O'Brien, Conduct of Just & Limited War, Op Cit, p 16.
157. E H Robertson, Christians Against Hitler, S C M Press, London, 1962, p 51.
158. Abbott, "Gaudium et Spes", Op Cit, p 284.
159. Comblin, The Church and the National Security State, Op Cit, p 68.
160. Ibid, p 78.
161. South African Council of Churches, Response to the Evaluation of the Activities of the SACC Division of Justice and Reconciliation in the Memorandum of the South African Police : Submitted to the Eloff Commission, Unpublished paper, 1983, p 23-8.
162. Dennis Nineham, The Gospel of Mark, Penguin Books, London, 1963, p 314.
163. Ibid, p 314.
164. Ibid, p 315.
165. C F D Moule, The Gospel According to Mark, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1965, p 96.
166. Ibid, p 97.
167. I Howard Marshall, The Gospel of Luke, Paternoster Press, Exeter, 1978, p 736.

168. Ibid, p 737.
Note also Acts 5:29.
169. Yoder, The Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 212.
170. Ibid, p 192.
There are also certain difficulties which arise from Yoder's attempt to make a distinction between disobeying an unjust law and not resisting injustice. For example, if a Christian believes he is called to disobey a racist law which requires a permit to visit a friend of another colour in his home, would he not be both disobeying and resisting by going to the place without a permit? Can lines really be drawn between disobedience, defiance and resistance? Or is what constitutes immoral resistance, for Yoder, the point at which force is used? This would seem to be what Yoder is saying in his lecture, indicating positive support for non-violent direct action (NVDA) in his lecture, "The Church and Change : Violence and Its Alternatives", delivered to the Annual Conference of the South African Council of Churches, unpublished, 24 July 1979.
It is difficult to see how non-violent direct action is, strictly speaking, a form of non-resistance. It is better understood as a form of non-violent resistance. It would be difficult to justify a non-violent slave revolt, for example, on the basis of Yoder's doctrine of revolutionary subordination. There appears to be some confusion here. Yoder's distinction between disobeying the state while, nevertheless, being subject to it, is not convincing - particularly when he speaks positively in support of non-violent direct action.
171. Eduard Schweizer, The Letter to the Colossians, Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1982, p 229.
172. Ibid, p 217.
173. Yoder, The Politics of Jesus, Op Cit, p 211.
174. Church of the Province of Southern Africa, Episcopal Synod, Romans 13, The Implications, Church of the Province of South Africa, Johannesburg, 1983, p 7.
175. Davies, Christians, Politics and Violent Revolution, Op Cit, p 48.
176. Charles Villa-Vicencio, "An All-pervading Heresy", in Apartheid is a Heresy, editors John de Gruchy and Charles Villa-Vicencio, David Philip Publisher, Cape Town, 1983, p 73.
177. Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol II, 1, Op Cit, p 444.

178. Alan Paton, Apartheid and The Archbishop, David Philip Publisher, Cape Town, 1973, p 279-80.
179. Yoder, The Original Revolution, Op Cit, p 72.
180. James Gustafson, Theology & Ethics, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1981, p 75.
Also Mouw, Politics and the Biblical Drama, Op Cit, p 116.
181. Paul Ramsey, War and the Christian Conscience, Duke University Press, Durham, N C, 1961, p 114.
182. Aquinas, The Summa Theologica, Op Cit, Vol. 9, p 518.
183. Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, Mambo Press, Gwelo, 1967, p 14.
184. O'Brien, The Conduct of Just and Limited War, Op Cit, p 18.
185. Yoder, The Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 50.
186. Ramsey, War and the Christian Conscience, Op Cit, p 116.
187. Ibid, p 118.
188. Bainton, Christian Attitudes Towards War and Peace, Op Cit, p 142.
189. John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Op Cit, p 1518.
190. Theodore Beza, Concerning the Rights of Rulers Over Their Subjects and The Duty of Subjects Towards Their Ruler, HAUM, Cape Town, 1956, p 29.
191. Ibid, p 29-30.
192. Ibid, p 32.
193. Ibid, p 34.
194. Ibid, p 77.
195. Ibid, p 74-5.

196. Davies, Christians, Politics & Violent Revolution, Op Cit, p 55f.
197. Augustine of Hippo, The City of God, Vol I, Book IV, 4, Op Cit, p 139.
198. John Rawls, Theory of Justice, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1972, p 391.
199. O'Brien, Conduct of Just and Limited War, Op Cit, p 166.
200. Rawls, Theory of Justice, Op Cit, p 382.
201. Yoder, Christian Witness to the State, Op Cit, p 43.
 There is a further factor which weakens the claim by governments to assume the mantle of legitimate authority. In civil conflicts it is precisely the question as to who, or what, constitutes the legitimate government which is so often at issue. As Yoder points out, it is often the case that
 we are called to be subjects not to one ruler but to two, a fact which many theological discussions of the authority of the state fail to note, prince versus emperor revolutionary underground versus colonial occupation.
202. Johnson, Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War, Op Cit, p 151.
203. Ibid, p 170.
204. Ibid, p 50 and p 53.
205. Ibid, p 68.
206. Michael Walzer, Just and Unjust Wars, Basic Books, New York, 1977, p 66-7.
207. Ibid, p 98.
 Also O'Brien, Conduct of Just and Limited War, Op Cit, p 334.
 O'Brien argues for the recognition of the regime's competent authority "... unless the régime was so clearly tyrannical and lacking in popular support or acceptance as to forfeit its rights". He cites Idi Amin's régime as a case in point.
208. Ramsey, War and the Christian Conscience, Op Cit, p 123.
209. Ibid, p 126.

210. Ibid, p 123.
211. Ibid, p 126.
See also Johnson, Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War,
Op Cit, p 49.
Johnson makes a most interesting observation concerning the way
this changing understanding of legitimate authority became
recognised in an actual war situation, for the first time. In the
American Civil War, Confederate forces were treated as if they were
the army of a legitimate belligerent. He refers to the General
Orders No 100 of 1863. This, he says, is the first time that just
war tradition has ".... been applied to the case of rebellion".
212. Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, Op Cit, p 16.
213. Church of the Province of South Africa, Episcopal Synod, Romans 13,
The Implications, Op Cit, p 7.
214. Rawls, Theory of Justice, Op Cit, p 391.
215. Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol III, 4, Op Cit, p 461.
216. Eberhard Busch, Karl Barth, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1976,
p 303.
217. Walzer, Just and Unjust Wars, Op Cit, p 205.
218. Childress, "Just-War Theories", Op Cit, p 436.
219. Abbott, ed, "Gaudium et Spes", Op Cit, p 284-5.
220. Ibid, p 285.
221. Ramsey, War and the Christian Conscience, Op Cit, p 124.
222. Ibid, p 124.
223. Childress, "Just-War Theories", Op Cit, p 430.
224. Walzer, Just and Unjust Wars, Op Cit, p 205.
225. Davies, Christians Politics and Violent Revolution, Op Cit, p 161.

226. McCormick, "Current Theology", Op Cit, p 103.
 It is appropriate to refer here to the debate surrounding the notion of 'intrinsic evil'. McCormick in fact finds the notion fraught with problems. It "has such a variety of understandings that it is all but useless in contemporary discourse". If the term is, nevertheless, insisted upon then it becomes necessary to distinguish this notion from what is 'not a positive good'. This distinction is implicit in Barth's ethics when he warns against turning any value, e.g. 'respect for life', into an absolute. The converse of this is that it cannot be said that the 'taking of life' is an intrinsic evil in some absolute sense.

In support of this point, it might be observed that the record of Scripture reveals a God who both 'takes life' and gives life. God cannot do what is 'intrinsically evil'. Nevertheless when man feels called to take life because this seems to be the most loving thing possible under the circumstances, this cannot be called a 'positive good'.

In holding in awareness the paradox of love, and admitting to situations which involve contradictions of love, it can be said that there is an essential, even if mysteriously subtle, distinction between saying that the taking of life in certain circumstances is not intrinsically evil, and admitting that neither is it a positive good. Hence the appropriateness of Bonhoeffer's guilt.

If one refuses to allow for this subtle ethical distinction, one will find oneself driven by an unconvincing logic, to say that Jesus, in helping Peter to catch fish, was involved in the intrinsic evil of killing! One would have to say that if it is true that God 'takes life', he is guilty of an intrinsically evil action - a hardly tenable position!

It is for these reasons that McCormick's point is well taken, namely, that the use of the notion of intrinsic evil is not helpful in contemporary ethical discourse.

227. Childress, "Just-War Theories", Op Cit, p 431.
228. Ibid, p 433.
229. Moltmann, "Racism and the Right to Resist", Op Cit, p 7.
230. Ibid, p 7.
231. Rasmussen, Dietrich Bonhoeffer : Reality and Resistance, Op Cit, p 64.
232. Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol III, 4, Op Cit, p 448-9.
233. Rasmussen, Dietrich Bonhoeffer : Reality and Resistance, Op Cit, p 64.

234. Moltmann, "God in Revolution", in A Reader in Political Theology, ed Alistair Kee, SCM Press, London, 1974, p 56.
235. Davies, Christian Politics and Violent Revolution, Op Cit, p 158.
236. Michael Ramsey, "Violence in Christian Perspective", Pro Veritate, 15 December 1972, p 16-7.
237. Ibid, p 17.
238. O'Brien, Conduct of Just and Limited War, Op Cit, p 334.
O'Brien expressed the view that Idi Amin's régime in Uganda was another case in point, where the theory of just rebellion was manifestly applicable.

CHAPTER 7

AN UNCONCLUDING POSTSCRIPT

INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2 on "Theology and Context", it was made clear that the ethical and theological questions with which this study has been concerned have arisen in the actual context of the present South African conflict. The reality of the conflict has obliged people to grapple with certain ethical and theological issues. Involvement in this reality has been the motivation for undertaking this study project. It would, therefore, have been appropriate to end this thesis with an attempt to apply the theoretical theological conclusions to the actual conflict, as it manifests itself in South Africa today.

It is precisely at this point, however, that a serious methodological problem arises; an adequate contextual application of the theoretical conclusions of this study would involve a comprehensive analysis of the South African situation. This is obviously not possible in this thesis, but would require another major study of its own. For this reason, all that will be attempted is to give certain indications as to the kind of questions which would need to be asked on the basis of a full-scale analysis.

APPLICATION OF JUST-WAR CRITERIA

The value and purpose of attempting to use the just-war criteria as an ethical tool for the analysis of situations of armed conflict, is well summed up by Enda McDonagh in his useful study, The Demands of Simple Justice. Just-war theory is applied:

.... in order to humanise the war, allow people to make serious judgements about it and so reduce some of its worst features as well as providing a stimulus and perhaps criteria for a finally just settlement it would be

abdication of their responsibility for Christians and moralists not to tackle these problems.¹

In applying just-war criteria, it is necessary to be clear about the belligerents involved. With regard to the South African conflict, this is a far from simple issue. The South African Defence Force, together with the South African Police, are involved on a number of fronts, with different liberation groupings; for example, the South West African People's Organisation, African National Congress and Pan African Congress. A thorough application of just-war criteria would have to take this complex reality into account.

In applying the jus ad bellum criterion of 'just cause' in this context, apologists for the South African régime would argue that the country is facing a 'total onslaught' from within and without. In so far as the South African Defence Force is engaged in a war situation, it is essentially involved in defending the society from 'communist aggression'. It can, therefore, be reasonably claimed that their cause is just. A full-scale analysis would have to weigh up the validity of the 'total onslaught' perspective.

In so far as it is true to say, on the other hand, that the primary purpose of the South African régime is to continue to implement and consolidate the policies and structures of the apartheid system, it can hardly claim just cause. A fuller development of this point of view would emphasise, among other factors: land distribution, the policy of uprooting and relocating thousands of families, and stripping people of their South African citizenship. Attention would be drawn to the fact that apartheid has been declared by significant Christian groupings within South Africa and in the world at large, to be heretical. Within the Christian perspec-

tive, this would cast further doubt upon the claim to be fighting for a just cause. Concerning the claim by the liberation movements themselves to be fighting in a just cause, it would be argued that the majority of people in South Africa seek freedom from decades of exploitation and oppression by an undemocratic minority régime. As Mr Pakendorf, editor of Die Vaderland, put it:

We fought for our freedom, now they are fighting for their freedom We have become the oppressors.²

Concerning the criterion of 'proportionality of means and ends', which includes the question of the chances of success, the issues here are particularly complex. Political contextual analysis at this point is inherently speculative and the debate is keenly contested. Many point to the very long-term survival possibilities of minority governments in the conditions of modern industrial societies. The recent Nkomati Accord between the governments of South Africa and Mozambique make it far less likely that any liberation movement will be able to achieve liberation by armed force in the near future. If a good end cannot be achieved, then the means which might override the presumption against violence are hardly proportional.

Others might argue that it is impossible for the South African régime to hold out for ever against increasingly militant opposition supported by a vast majority of the population. The "adapt or die" message of the present State President (then Prime Minister) would seem to lend credence to the view that, unless there are radical changes, there is a likelihood of a serious threat to the régime.³ In other words, it cannot be assumed that a liberation movement has no chance of success at some stage in the future.

With regard to the criterion of 'last resort', there are those who argue that the possibilities of achieving justice by peaceful means have not yet been exhausted.⁴ Others would point to the failure of peaceful strategies over several decades. Some of these are outlined in Chapter 2 of this thesis. To quote again from Chief Luthuli speaking in 1952:

Who will deny that thirty years of my life have been spent knocking in vain, patiently, moderately and modestly at a closed and barred door? The past thirty years have seen the greatest number of laws restricting our rights and progress, until today we have reached the stage where we have almost no rights at all.⁵

The view of the 1982 Provincial Synod of the Church of the Province of South Africa is relevant here, namely, that:

.... in South Africa fundamental democratic procedures which might allow for peaceful evolution towards a more humane and just society are lacking, and there is no adequate evidence of sufficient will to establish such procedures.⁶

Whether or not the recent changes to the constitution will cause a reassessment of this view will be an ongoing matter for debate. It is perhaps significant, however, that one as publically committed to the strategy of peaceful change as Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, has described the new constitutional structures as a "prescription for war".⁷

Finally, with regard to the criterion of 'legitimate authority', as with the other criteria, this is a matter of keen debate. The evolving discussion over the concept of legitimate authority reveals a very wide diversity of views. By certain criteria, it can be said that the South African government is obviously legitimate since it is recognised as such by most nations in the world. On the other hand, the concept of legitimacy is increasingly being related to the question of justice and

'internal accountability'. Theologically speaking, it can be argued that it is dubious to claim authentic legitimacy for a régime which is grossly unjust. A minority government, imposed by conquest, and continuing in power against the will of the overwhelming majority, can be regarded as lacking in legitimacy.

Furthermore, if Walzer's understanding of the basis of the legitimacy of guerilla forces is taken seriously,⁸ together with Ramsey's work showing how the concept of legitimate authority became democratised,⁹ then the claim by some liberation movements to legitimate authority cannot be dismissed out of hand. The debate on this matter continues, as will the debate over the 'jus in bello' criteria.¹⁰

Enough has been said, for the purposes of this unconcluding postscript, to indicate the nature of the issues which arise when the attempt is made to apply just-war theory to the South African situation. It is important that the whole range of ethical possibilities be considered and rigorously tested. The mainstream of the Christian tradition has place for a careful recognition of the concept of legitimate rebellion

.... where there is a manifest, long-standing tyranny which would do great damage to fundamental personal rights and dangerous harm to the common good of the country.¹¹

It also has place for the idea of a just defence. Whether one perceives the South African reality as being "a manifest and long-standing tyranny", will depend on one's analysis of the situation. Inevitably, too, it will depend upon one's experience of it. From the point of view of the poor and oppressed majority, it is likely that the words quoted above would ring true to their experience.

SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHURCH'S TEACHING MINISTRY

It remains, finally, to suggest certain implications of this study for the teaching and pastoral ministry of the Church:

1. The prior presumption against violence, which constitutes one of the fundamental assumptions of just-war theory, means that all Christians should refuse to take up arms unless there are very weighty ethical reasons indicating the contrary. The refusal to fight in armed conflict should be proclaimed as the Christian norm. Christians need to be reminded that to override prima facie moral presumptions requires weighty ethical and theological reasons.
2. Vocational pacifism has an important contribution to make at this point, not only in recalling people to the primary presumption against violence, but also in helping them to examine over-easy justifications and assumptions about the positive role of armed force. This was acknowledged as one of the particular strengths of Yoder's position. Serious weaknesses were found, however, with his insistence that all Christians were "called to absolute nonresistance in discipleship".¹² As an individual vocation, on the other hand, pacifism can make a positive contribution in situations of conflict. It opens the way for a creative witness to the Gospel, whilst avoiding the pitfalls which have been discovered in the Christian pacifism of Yoder.
3. If the broad lines of analysis of South African society, presented in Chapter 2 of this thesis, were to be accepted as a fair description of the South African reality, then it would seem to indicate that the attempt to justify participation in the military structures

of the South African Defence Force is, ethically speaking, questionable. As pointed out above, however, the acceptability of this analysis will depend very much on one's perceptions and experience. Concerning the ethics of enlisting as a volunteer in a 'liberation movement', it should be admitted that, according to just-war theory, such an option must be taken seriously. All the criteria of the theory would have to be rigorously applied, in the ways indicated above. The Church has a moral obligation to make the implications of the various options clear to her members.

4. The Church must always be seeking to witness to "God's presence in the midst of revolution",¹³ and asserting God's longing for the liberation of both oppressor and oppressed, because "as master and slave, neither is a true man".¹⁴ Christians have a profound contribution to make in such situations of conflict.

World-transforming love is sustained by world-surpassing hope. I think that in this way Christian faith can free man from the convulsions of anxiety and vengeance.¹⁵

Christians can work bravely, sacrificially and with hope for God's peace and justice, because they believe that he is the Lord of life and history.

Reference was made to the offering of certain indications as to how just-war theory might be applied in the South African context. It needs to be emphasised that:

.... neither extension nor refinement of study could bring us to the conclusive result that would enable us to say: 'This is the Christian answer'.¹⁶

"For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophesy is imperfect," (1 Corinthians 13:9). The tentative conclusions arrived at in this study are offered in a spirit of mutual challenge on the path of costly discipleship.

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