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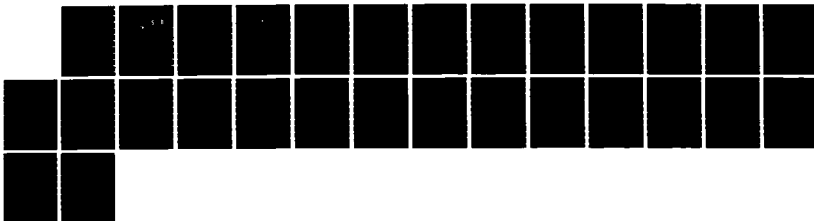
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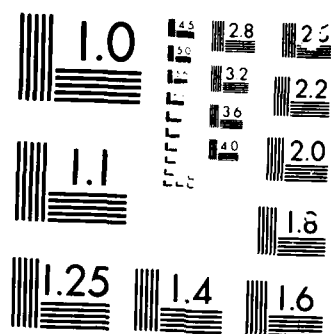
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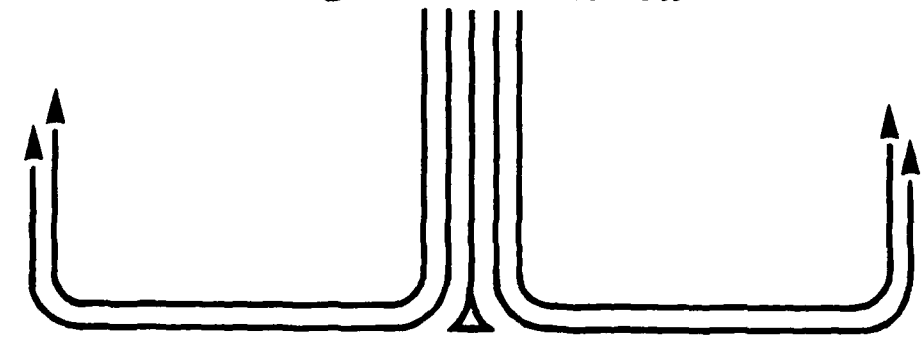
STUDENT REPORT

MORAL AND MORALE BENEFITS OF THE
STRATEGIC DEFENSE INITIATIVE

CHAPLAIN (MAJ) JOHN R. POSTON
86-2035

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REPORT NUMBER 86-2035

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AUTHOR(S) Chaplain Major John R. Poston, USAFR

FACULTY ADVISOR Chaplain Major Robert R. Gilman, ACSC/HC

SPONSOR Chaplain Major David Park, LMDC/HCX

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PREFACE

The world cries "Peace, Peace!" (Jer. 6:14), yet presently there is no immutable peace. Some suggest that a modicum of peace has been preserved by America's policy of nuclear deterrence and its grim companion, the ultimate option, Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD). While MAD has worked thus far, more and more are questioning its morality, and moral ambiguity erodes morale. In the absence of a direct "Thus saith the Lord" concerning this predicament, are there any hopeful indications of a more moral path toward peacekeeping?

This writer says there is--take the path toward strategic defense. This article presents some moral and morale benefits in the Strategic Defense Initiative. The time and the technological environment are right to pursue a strategic shift to strategic defense, even if it takes years to make the stable transition.

Subject to clearance, this manuscript will be submitted to Air University Review for consideration. Therefore, writing style will follow Strunk and White's The Elements of Style, and footnotes will conform to The Chicago Manual of Style. As an article for publication, there will be neither bibliography nor ACSC "roadmap" in the article. The roadmap will be supplied here. The article moves from one military member's solution to his moral concern regarding nuclear deterrence on to some other arguments

CONTINUED

Christians have used in support of nuclear deterrence. These arguments are not universally held regarding moral justification for America's present policy or the use of nuclear weapons. That policy is presented along with some of the moral concerns it causes, especially regarding some of the Christian just war principles. The moral advance of a strategic defense is presented as well as some objections to the SDI with some suggested answers. The concluding remarks are that the SDI may provide a more moral strategy and an attendant aid to national and military morale.

This writer is grateful for the assistance received in the preparation of this article. Special thanks go to my Chaplain advisor, Chaplain Robert Gilman, and my "Writing for Publication" professor, Dr. Matthew Hall. Much credit goes to them--any shortcoming is mine.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chaplain Poston served as a Reserve Chaplain and local church Pastor prior to his assignment to the Air Command and Staff College. He is working on a doctoral degree through Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois. He has a Master of Theology degree with a concentration in Ethics from the Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan. The thesis from that program, "Some Concerns About the Support And Possible Application of Norman L. Geisler's Ethical Hierarchicalism," may be obtained from University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

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MORAL AND MORALE BENEFITS OF THE SDI

Some American military members have suffered mental confusion and ambiguous feelings of moral concern in recent years partially because of increased worldwide attention concerning U.S. nuclear weaponry and policy. A statement made by Captain Charles H. Nicholls in the Air University Review is illustrative of similar comments heard from other military members:

Christian churches are taking stronger stands on the ethics of nuclear deterrence. Such statements as the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter on War and Peace are important to me, since I am both a Christian and a professional military officer serving in America's nuclear deterrence force. Many Christian churches have made ethical judgements about nuclear deterrence that strand me in an intolerable moral paradox. ¹

Nicholls solved his moral concern in a way which supports America's defense. He believes the greater good of minimizing further Soviet aggression and world domination justifies the lesser evil of nuclear retaliation.² Other Christians have offered arguments to justify America's nuclear deterrence policy and its grim companion, nuclear retaliation. Some examples follow.

A Protestant theologian and philosopher, Francis Schaeffer wrote:

Unilateral disarmament in this fallen world, especially in the face of aggressive Soviet materialism with its anti-God basis, would be altogether utopian and romantic. It would lead, as utopianism always does in this fallen world, to disaster. It may sound reasonable to talk of a freeze at the present level, or to say, "We won't ever use atomic weapons first." But if we think it through, either of these equals practical unilateral disarmament. To remove the nuclear deterrent in any

effective sense would leave Europe at the mercy of the overwhelmingly superior Soviet forces in Europe...³

With the possibility of leaving the world in general and Europe in particular hostage to Soviet aggression, Schaeffer quoted the Supreme Allied Commander of the NATO forces in Europe, General Bernard Rogers:

To have nuclear weapons in order to deter their use from the other side, to protect your people, that is moral, but I think it is immoral for a nation that is charged with that responsibility not to have the capacity to deter that kind of war.⁴

While some may call the views of Schaeffer and General Rogers a lesser evil argument, preferably such may be termed an argument of moral necessity.

An argument of moral necessity basically assumes that America's nuclear deterrent is a necessity to prevent a Soviet use of nuclear weapons. The argument is that it is moral because it prevents Soviet use. Moreover, Schaeffer is not alone. Two other prominent theologians use such argumentation: Protestant Kenneth S. Kantzer⁵, a former editor of Christianity Today, and Michael Novak, a lay Catholic theologian.⁶ This writer supposes this kind of argument of moral necessity is what allows the American Catholic Bishops to tolerate America's present nuclear deterrence policy as a conditional, and interim measure while working for a better situation. However, such moral arguments for nuclear deterrence are not held universally.

The entire spectrum of American society has demonstrated concern over the U.S. nuclear deterrence policy. In recent years, one might easily have heard insinuations that only peaceniks or

liberals are concerned. Indeed, political and theological liberals have voiced concerns regarding the morality of nuclear deterrence, but it is incorrect to merely write such opinions off as bleeding-heart liberalism. Others could have been led to think this is merely a Roman Catholic issue. However, moral concern about nuclear deterrence transverses the spectrum of politics and theology. Presently more of those usually considered to be pro-military, pro-American, conservative, evangelical theologians are expressing feelings of moral concern over America's nuclear deterrence policy.⁷ Others, while not positively in opposition, may be confused about America's deterrent policy. These moral concerns, along with a possibility of a lessened morale because of the moral confusion, may have actually influenced President Reagan's pursuit of strategic defense and a change in America's nuclear deterrent policy.⁸ At this point it may be helpful to clarify America's present policy concerning nuclear weapons.

The Present American Policy on the Use of Nuclear Weapons

The doctrine on the use of nuclear weapons is basically defensively designed to deter war with the threat of a survivable nuclear force sufficient to respond with a massive or selective retaliation even after suffering a first strike.⁹ A first strike is best explained as a launch of strategic "...nuclear weapons at an opponent with such effect that the opponent cannot inflict unacceptable damage in return."¹⁰ This policy disclaims seeking a strategic first strike capacity or any "nuclear warfighting"

posture, as "all of our exercises and doctrine are defensive in nature."¹¹ Nevertheless, there are efforts for flexible and various responses to conventional or nuclear attacks which may include a tactical first use of nuclear weapons not considered to be a devastating strategic first strike on the enemy's homeland.

Flexible response has not ruled out a tactical first use of nuclear weapons. This is proposed to offset the possibility of an overwhelming conventional attack, especially on Western Europe, as well as provide a flexible response to terminate a conflict, reduce the potential destruction, and resume a deterrent posture. In fact, in such a scenario, one could sense an escalation to tactical first use.

Scientist Edward Teller, father of the H-bomb, made some interesting comments regarding first use of nuclear weapons. While excluding the first use of nuclear weapons on enemy territory, or for purely offensive purposes, he suggests possible "necessary" uses of American nuclear weapons. He sees a possible use for low intensity nuclear weapons, such as current tactical nuclear weapons or a neutron bomb, to counter an overwhelming conventional attack upon Western Europe.¹² With such "necessary" uses of nuclear weapons, perhaps we have found a way to start a nuclear war and a nuclear holocaust! This is an example of what causes the moral concern with the American nuclear deterrence policy.

A primary Christian moral concern is the preservation of human life. In the case of warfare, the preservation of

noncombatants is a moral priority. Christian just war theorists claim that a war waged justly should never intentionally kill noncombatants.¹³ Nonetheless, the history of warfare is littered with unfortunate noncombatant casualties. However, if noncombatants were killed, it should be because of their own fault, culpability, or complicity; e.g., inhabiting a known military installation¹⁴ or directly supporting the enemy. It is difficult in certain situations to preserve noncombatants even in a conventional war--how much more so in a nuclear war? How can they be immune to the blast or fallout? We can visualize and/or feel this area where the Christian just war theorists have moral concerns regarding nuclear warfare.

The horrors of nuclear war and the inevitability of noncombatant casualties are expressed by Jonathan Schell. His classic, The Fate of the Earth, surmised "...when the first wave of missiles arrived, the vast majority of the people in the regions first targeted would be irradiated, crushed or burned to death....Tens of millions of people would go up in smoke."¹⁵ Nuclear war would inevitably cause the slaughter of noncombatants.

While such horrors concerning warfare are being more rigorously debated in our day, the argument for a strategic defense rather than a strategic nuclear offense is becoming more compelling. This argument suggests the superior morality of deterring an attack, or preventing total destruction from a nuclear attack, by using a defensive system rather than simply assuring nuclear retaliatory destruction. This questions the

morality at the very heart of the American nuclear deterrence policy and suggests a morally preferable option.

The Moral Advance of Strategic Defense

Strategic defense appears to avoid some of the moral problems plaguing the nuclear deterrence policy, which retains the ultimate option often called Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD). Daniel O. Graham, a retired United States Army lieutenant general, former Deputy Director of the CIA, and advocate of the "High Frontier," a conservative educational-lobbying group that began to promote a space-based defense before President Reagan, states the SDI has a moral and ethical dimension. He suggests that those

...who wrestled through the 60's and 70's with the problems of trying to make MAD work were forced to adopt an amoral attitude. None of us liked MAD as a doctrine, and sometimes tried to deny its existence. But we knew down deep that we were assuring a terrible vengeance, not defending our country.¹⁴

One moral advance strategic defense has over MAD is that the design of strategic defense is to destroy offensive weapons and not human beings. Such a policy can adhere to the Christian just war criteria of noncombatant immunity.

Noncombatant immunity, often termed discrimination, is one of the Christian just war criteria covering what may be considered morally permissible conduct in fighting a war.¹⁵ In this just war principle, since war should only be an official act of legitimate government, only those considered to be official agents of government may fight, and individuals not actively contributing to the conflict (including POW's, casualties, and civilian

nonparticipants) should be immune from attack.¹⁶ This principle is one which the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter called ius in bello.¹⁷ This principle means "justice in war" and is based on a fundamental moral stance of Christianity, the sanctity of human life.

All human life should be protected and preserved. Human beings are all creatures of God (Gen. 6:26). Human kind is the very crown of God's creation bearing the very image of God (Gen. 1:27). Especially repulsive to God is the shedding of innocent blood (Exod. 23:7; Deut. 19:10, 13; 21:8,9). The words of the Lord Jesus Christ remind us of this prohibition (Matt. 19:17,18). A defensive system can protect and preserve God's created children rather than merely retaliating because of an attack and destruction.

It is clear to this writer's analysis that the truth about the sanctity of human life undergirds the Christian just war criteria. A defensive system will uphold the rule of the noncombatant immunity. It can protect enemy noncombatants from retaliation and our own noncombatants from an attack or even an accident. It would better protect noncombatants worldwide from radiation and a possible nuclear winter. A defensive system could prevent sacrificing untold millions. Current News reported on Daniel Graham debating a Democratic congressman from California, George E. Brown, Jr. The issue of morality was posed in a scenario where the Soviet Union launched six ICBMs against America, either by accident or by a Strangelovian Soviet general.

"...the President has the options of unleashing the U.S. retaliatory nuclear force against the Soviet Union or of 'eating those missiles' and 'sacrificing untold millions'...."²⁰

Graham argued that the protection of people rather than revenge is a morally compelling support of the SDI. "Of course, the most important protection of people provided by SDI is the vast improvement in our capability to deter nuclear war from ever happening."²¹ He argues that critics denying the deterrent value of the SDI must presume Soviet lunacy:

It is the presumption of such Soviet lunacy that leads critics to insist that the U.S.S.R. will "simply" add huge numbers of offensive missiles to overcome any defensive systems. If a rather "leaky" defense system---one that is say, 95 percent effective---is deployed, the Soviets would have to add 20 new weapons to get one more through the defensive system---and they wouldn't be sure which one of the 20 new weapons would get through. Despite vague Soviet threats that they would try this futile buildup, we can be sure they will not attempt it. The Soviets are ruthless, but they are not stupid.²²

Protection seems to be a better moral approach than what may appear as mere retaliation. The Apostle Paul reminds us, "...avenge not yourselves...vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:19). Is not some protection for our citizens and country morally preferable to vengeance?

Nevertheless, some have argued that strategic defense would need to be near perfect to be good at all.²³ Scientist Edward Teller, the so-called father of the H-bomb, counters that argument:

Defense has a twofold purpose. The first is to deter an attack. The second is to offer protection against war damage should an attack occur. It's

important to recognize that any means that produces a question about the unqualified success of an attack is a deterrent. Thus, even a moderately efficient defensive system will have a strong deterrent effect if combined with some retaliatory ability. A strong deterrent is the best guarantee that the second aspect of defense will not be needed.

As for the latter, the most irreparable war damage is loss of life. Without a good defensive system, a billion people might die in a large-scale war. Defense might reduce that number to "only" 100 million. This statement is grotesque and appalling, but the point is that 900 million lives could be saved. Without such defense, the survival of the U.S. and of the freedom around the globe is unlikely.

No single program, no set of planned defenses, regardless of how coherent, can give us the assurance that we so much want. The best hope the immediate future offers is to convert the current balance of terror to one where there's less terror and more balance. In other words, we may be able to secure more time in which to work toward a resolution of differences.²⁴

So, the system need not be perfect--just good enough to put doubt into the enemy's considerations; i.e., deter, then provide some defense should deterrence fail or an accident occur.

With all the possible positive benefits in strategic defense, why the negativity and criticism from some? Not all of the opposing arguments will be presented as many are mainly a resurrection of the previous anti-ballistic missile (ABM) debate. But things have changed since the ABM debate of the 1970s. Dr. Hans Mark, former Secretary of the Air Force, addressed the Air War College and Air Command and Staff College students and cited some changes from the past debate.

Three important changes are present. First, the technical possibilities have improved. Second, the strength of the anti-nuclear movements has increased to the point where Congress may

someday be forced to freeze [or possibly promote a unilateral build-down]. Finally, many more individuals and religious groups question the morality of nuclear deterrence; e.g., the American Catholic Bishops' Letter²⁶, and the fact that Protestant just war theorists also question the moral points of proportionality and the lack of noncombatant immunity. With these things in mind, some of the more morally relevant criticisms will be offered.

Objections to the SDI and Suggested Answers

Scientist Carl Sagan argues that the cost would be too much, and funds would be better used elsewhere. He wrote: "...we could dramatically reduce hunger, disease, poverty, and illiteracy, making large segments of the world's population self-sufficient."²⁴ In other words, to spend all that money on strategic defense would be immoral. While it would be a blessing to spend money to help people in this way, past history suggests that Sagan's position will not prevail. While wanting the great good that Sagan suggests, it appears to this writer that Sagan may have an overly optimistic view of humanity and the use of funds. However, regarding cost, scientist Robert Jastrow, author of How to Make Nuclear Weapons Obsolete,²⁷ Graham²⁸, and others have lower calculations concerning the expense. A "two-layer" or "double-screen defense" system was estimated at \$60 billion.²⁹ On balance, some military members are also concerned about the expense.

The military concern about expense differs from concerns such as Sagan's. The concern this writer hears most frequently is that

the military can not afford to cut back on strategic offense and force modernization because of the expense of the SDI. Indeed, that may be a truism in our present world situation. Also, in defense budget cuts needed to balance the budget or follow Gramm-Rudman legislation, some fear SDI may take too much of the pie. Any drain on conventional readiness would be dangerous and immoral, say those with this view. There are other related arguments that also encounter cost in the analysis, though not stated in explicitly cost-related arguments.

One such criticism suggests SDI will escalate the nuclear arms race. However, Lieutenant General James A. Abrahamson, director of the Defense Department's SDI research program, said, "The President's ultimate objective is to make nuclear missiles obsolete. We can begin by removing them from an important status in any military equation and make them very much less valuable."³⁰ Implicit in that statement is a suggestion that building more intercontinental ballistic missiles would not be useful, and actually a stage may be set for reduction. The Soviets' offer to reduce their nuclear weapons has actually come after the American effort at seriously researching defensive possibilities.

We could possibly be on the road to accomplishing a "defense-protected build-down" (DPB).³¹ "The basic notion behind DPB is to combine the President's advocacy for offensive reductions (e.g., the START proposals) with a phased introduction of strategic defenses."³² Such a build-down moderates some of the criticism against the SDI.

Two criticisms moderated would be high cost and nuclear build-up to overwhelm defense. Economically, a build-down would create some reductions in spending for offensive weapons which could be devoted to defense. The defensive system would also have less possibility of being overwhelmed if offensive forces were being reduced.³³

Yet, some say the SDI would still be an immoral escalation of the arms race in general and the space weapons race in particular.³⁴ The Soviets are researching space weapons³⁵ and presently have an operational anti-satellite weapon in space.³⁶ If the U.S. were to develop and deploy defensive weapons in space, the argument states that weapons to counter the defensive systems could then necessitate other weapons to protect the system, redundancy and the like.³⁷ Such a scenario also suggests very sophisticated technology along with a supposed (unethical) abrogation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972.

In response, many Department of Defense spokespersons have assured that development, testing, and deployment of any new strategic defense system would have to be negotiated with the Soviets and U.S. allies.³⁸ Yet, according to multiple sources, the present research is not outside the treaty limits. Actually, the Treaty on ABMs allows renegotiation or even withdrawal.³⁹ Also, the treaty was supposed to be accompanied with nuclear arms reductions which the U.S. made. Secretary of Defense Weinberger's report stated, "We now have 25 percent fewer nuclear warheads and 75 percent less nuclear explosive power (measured in megatonnage)

than we had in the 1960s."⁴⁰ Former U.S. Secretary of Defense, Harold Brown, correctly assessed the situation. "We build, they build; we don't build, they build."⁴¹ Nevertheless, some suggest any work on strategic defense is destabilizing, striking at the core of the stability of the strategic balance.⁴²

Some suggest the world will become a more perilous place if one country develops and deploys a strategic defense before the other one. An Episcopal Church report has publicized this argument.⁴³ However, Lieutenant General Abrahamson has made it clear that the U.S. seeks a stable transition from offense to defense and thus will negotiate deployment to give the Soviets a chance to deploy a comparable system.⁴⁴ Furthermore, President Reagan publicly offered to give this technology to the Soviets repeatedly so that it is common knowledge. Such a position should avoid any confrontation with the Soviets and prevent any Soviet desire for a preemptive strike because of their paranoia. Such a move toward "mutual assured survival" is a moral advance over the still present ultimate option of "mutual assured destruction."⁴⁵ That should be a stabilizing influence rather than a destabilizing factor as suggested by opponents of strategic defense.

The reality of the case may be that the U.S. needs to catch up with the Soviets. The Department of Defense has produced a publication indicating the Soviets' strategic defense program may be 10 years ahead of ours.⁴⁶ Kerby Anderson, a columnist with "Probe Ministries," a Christian think tank in Dallas, suggests that in view of Soviet anti-satellite weapons, modernization of

the Moscow-radar, and the construction of a missile defense radar facility known as the Krasnoyarsk Radar which may break the ABM Treaty stipulations, it would be foolish to negotiate away our SDI program.⁴⁷ Most Christians (pacifists excluded) state that defense and discernment or vigilance are moral imperatives.⁴⁸ So why leave the Soviets with swords and shields when we would be left with swords only?⁴⁹

Conclusion

Thus, even with all the objections and despite the criticism, it makes sense and appears morally preferable to move toward a system that removes the Soviet first strike capacity (the capacity to cripple the opponent's ability to respond with unacceptable damage)⁵⁰ and defend lives. The moral superiority of such a defensive system seems clear and compelling. The alternative of continuing an exclusively nuclear deterrence with no defense from a launched attack or accident is unacceptable and morally suspect.

The SDI may produce a system that can save sacred human lives--not merely avenge deaths and possibly shed innocent blood.

Under the all-offense approach to deterrence, a first strike is deterred by Soviet uncertainty concerning United States resolve to carry out the nuclear suicide pact known as Mutual Assured Destruction, or MAD. Under the SDI, or Mutual Assured Security approach of the president, a first strike is deterred by a Soviet certainty that the military objective of such a strike is unattainable. The president wishes to deter by making a first strike ineffective rather than forever pouring our national treasure into efforts to make our second strike effective.⁵¹

President Reagan said, "If such a defense could be found, wouldn't

it be far more humanitarian to say now we can defend against nuclear war by destroying missiles instead of slaughtering millions of people?"⁸² Such a system could consequently boost national and military morale.

The morale boost seems implicit to the writer throughout this article. Moral confusion based on mixed feelings of moral ambiguity has a negative influence upon national and military morale. This possible negative influence upon morale then could obviously detract from successful military employment, as happened in Viet Nam when confusion concerning "right" influenced our application of might. America is a country where many claim moral right is necessary. Many of those also point to a moral heritage all the way back to the founding of this nation. With popular concerns for moral right, it is no surprise that the moral compulsion of a defensive policy, such as that being researched in the SDI over an exclusively nuclear deterrence, illicitly inherent popular support⁸³ thus being a boost to national and military morale. Various polls have indicated Americans support President Reagan's SDI.⁸⁴ There can be hope of escape from the moral problem of MAD as the ultimate option with its attendant erosion of morale because of moral confusion.

Similarly, Lieutenant General Abrahamson has dubbed the SDI a "strategy of hope."

The military services of the United States are here to prevent war, and if we never have to fight because we're strong, that's good.

But, if we can prevent war and at the same time remove these terribly threatening weapons that could be

the end of civilization, that is a strategy of hope.²²

Therefore, this writer recommends support for the President's plan to research, develop, and employ a strategic defense. Many have problems with the moral concerns regarding the nuclear deterrence policy and its grim companion, the ultimate option of nuclear retaliation. This consciously, or even subconsciously, erodes the morale, readiness, and willingness to respond in accord to the defensive demands of military preparedness. Just as Captain Nicholls was able to resolve his moral conflict in a way that also benefited America's defense, the SDI may offer many more a similar option. Let us continue the SDI as not only a solution to some of the moral concerns regarding nuclear deterrence, but also as a morale building defense with moral compulsion and popular support.

FOOTNOTES

1. Charles H. Nicholls, "Christian Morality and Nuclear Deterrence," Air University Review, July-August 1985, p. 37.
2. Ibid., p. 39.
3. Francis Schaffer, Vladimir Bukovsky, and James Hitchcock, Who Is For Peace? (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983), p. 26.
4. Ibid., pp. 24, 25.
5. Kenneth S. Kantzer, "What Shall We Do About the Nuclear Problem?" Christianity Today, January 21, 1983, pp. 10, 11.
6. Robert L. Spaeth, No Easy Answers: Christians Debate Nuclear Arms (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1983), pp. 70, 71.
7. Dean C. Curry, ed., Evangelicals and the Bishops' Pastoral Letter (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), pp. 19, 20.
8. Hans Mark, Lecture at Polifka Auditorium to students and faculty of Air Command and Staff College and Air War College, Maxwell AFB, AL, 26 Nov. 1985. Permission for quotation received in writing from Dr. Mark, former Secretary of the Air Force.
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10. Douglas P. Lackey, Moral Principles and Nuclear Weapons, (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Allanheld Publishers, 1984), p. xiv.
11. Casper W. Weinberger, Report of the Secretary of Defense Casper W. Weinberger to the Congress... (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985), p. 45.
12. Edward Teller, "Pro:" Discover, September 1985, p. 73.
13. Greg Storey, "War: A Christian Perspective," paper presented to Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI, 21 December 1983, p. 39.
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