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## Response to Comments

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## Response to Comments

T. VAIL PALMER, JR.

These penetrating comments from three divergent viewpoints should keep lively the discussion of the issues involved in the peace testimony and its Christian basis. I shall comment on the points and issues on which my argument is most directly questioned.

My summary of Cullmann's argument was highly compressed, leaving out many nuances and details. I indicated that the Greek word *exousiai*, in Romans 13:1, refers to the "powers" or "authorities" of the Roman government; that the same word, "when used in the plural elsewhere in the New Testament," refers to invisible, angelic or demonic authorities or powers; and that Cullmann argues that the word has both meanings, simultaneously, in Romans 13:1. Cullmann's more detailed development of this argument is more precise; he indicates, for instance: "For Paul, in any case, the plural *exousiai* and the plurally-used singular *pasa exousia* mean in every other instance [besides Romans 13] only 'invisible powers'." This 'plurally-used singular' covers the three passages which Stephen Ross lists as "singular usages which have Cullmann's plural." The presence of both singular and plural forms in Romans 13:1-3 would seem to buttress Cullmann's argument that the word is being used in a double sense in this context.

But the main thing to say about Stephen Ross' questions is, of course, that in my argument I was not trying to start from a "definitive" interpretation of the New Testament, but rather from one that, if controversial, is also rich in suggestive implications in terms of a possible basis for a distinctively Christian form of social analysis. Recognition, for example, of the 'spiritual powers' lying behind even the 'secular' state can help us

1. Cullmann, *The State in the New Testament*, p. 100 (Greek letters transliterated here but not in Cullmann).

more fully to understand and appreciate the 'demonic' force of contemporary nationalism, against which we have to contend.

Eric Tucker and Stephen Cary both raise questions about the sharpness of my division between liberal and radical pacifism. In order to construct such a typology, I think it is more instructive to define the difference between the types as sharply as possible. The strength of typological analysis is that it can provide fresh ways of understanding historical and social 'facts'; its weakness is the richness of human variety, which refuses to be confined in tight, exclusive pigeonholes. The main point I wanted to make with these types was that there is more than one way in which Friends look at the nature of society and how social change can be effected. I have no access to anything that Agatha Harrison may have written. A survey of Carl Heath's writings indicates that in social analysis and theory of social change, at any rate, he is pretty clearly a liberal pacifist. Clarence Pickett, an American Friend who seems at home in both liberal and radical camps, deals hardly at all in his writings with questions of the structure of society and the nature of social change; it is therefore not clear *why* he believes both types of action to be relevant.

Stephen Cary rightly emphasizes a point that I tend sometimes to take too much for granted. Of course a radically renewed Church will be deeply involved with the ugly problems and the pathetic needs of the world! Perhaps one reason that I did not stress this point is that I doubt that Quakerism has any fresh and distinctive contribution in this area to offer to the rest of the Church today. We did, certainly, in the 'thirties, with our pioneering in work camps, Penn Craft, and the rest. But today? Even so exciting a Quaker project as the Friends Neighborhood Group in Harlem has its counterpart in an East Harlem Protestant Parish; and I suspect that the latter makes the more penetrating witness, in terms of suggesting how Christian congregations can best get involved with the tremendous problems of our cities.

Stephen Cary wonders whether "the specifically Christian commitment makes *the* difference." In one sense, the issue is not whether Christian commitment is what makes the difference; the

question is: has *God* made the difference, through one supreme, unique act of triumph in Christ? Certainly, as Stephen Cary implies, God will "use other instruments" besides Jesus "to achieve his mighty purposes," as he has used St. Francis, Bonhoeffer, Gandhi, and many others. But was Jesus simply an instrument of God's purpose; or did God himself enter human history 'in person', in the flesh, in Christ? There is, I agree, a mystery here, which our finite minds cannot resolve; but the question will not let us alone; in the end we have to make our 'leap of faith,' one way or the other.

In another sense, Christian commitment *can* make an important difference, by providing a distinctive understanding of the nature of the forces at work in society and in history. In this regard, Stephen Cary feels that I failed to spell out clearly a "comprehensive theory of change." Perhaps so. What I wrote about the triumph of God and the *exousiai* was intended as the beginning of such a theory; an article of moderate length could hardly do more. In relating the mighty acts of God more clearly and fully to the nature of social change through a renewed Church, the next step would be to spell out what it means to be a "people of God" and what is involved in the covenant relationship. Walther Eichrodt's *Theology of the Old Testament* would be an excellent resource for such a task.

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