

2008

## Pacifism and war: what are the ethical and theological limitations on the use of violence?

John Tracy Thames

*Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_theses](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses)



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Thames, John Tracy, "Pacifism and war: what are the ethical and theological limitations on the use of violence?" (2008). *LSU Master's Theses*. 3655.

[https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_theses/3655](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses/3655)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Master's Theses by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [gradetd@lsu.edu](mailto:gradetd@lsu.edu).

PACIFISM AND WAR:  
WHAT ARE THE ETHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL  
LIMITATIONS ON THE USE OF VIOLENCE?

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
In partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

in

The Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

by  
John T. Thames, Jr.  
B.A. Louisiana State University, 2004  
August 2008

## PREFACE

The use of violence, insofar as it is a concept detached from any real-world significance, is generally (and rightly) cast in a role of universal condemnation. Violence is never to be desired or the use of it rewarded. But though violence is never a *good*, the complex and intriguing question is, when presented with material situations in which the use of violence may be necessary for preservation or defense, can it be *justified*? In the context of making moral judgments of this nature, most of us seem to have overwhelmingly accepted the justifiability of violence; indeed we prepare ourselves for it. We send our children to martial arts lessons. We teach adults classes in self-defense. We educate single, young women in the use of mild weapons such as pepper spray. We prepare ourselves to be the victor in a self-defensive fight against an unjust attacker.

Common moral reasoning seems to support our decision to use violence under specified circumstances. If a person is attacked without provocation, why should he not have the inalienable right to defend his livelihood and security through violent means? Likewise, if a third party passes and witnesses the attack, he seems to face certain obligations: minimally, a responsibility to call the police, who in turn may use force to subdue the perpetrator, or maximally the right (or responsibility) to personally intervene. In either case, these are commonly seen as clearly reasonable circumstances in which violence can be employed.

When violence of the state is brought into question, our moral reasoning becomes more precarious. It is usually uncontroversial that a state can defend its homeland security, but to what measure? Can it preemptively strike in the threat of danger? Can the state use violence to invade upon another state for the sake of humanitarian concerns? By and large, violence is accepted as a necessary function of the state, but (as we can see as clearly now as ever in relation

to the ongoing war in Iraq) the specific questions of its use are ones that result in deep divisions among members of the state.

Adding yet another layer to the question of violence for those who identify themselves as Christians, the general interpretation of the New Testament appears to call for a total eschewal of violence in all its forms. Confusingly, though, most denominations of Christian churches support the idea that violence can be necessary in certain personal and political situations.

This is where the present project begins. I seek to find an ethic concerning violence that can be adopted as normative for the Christian social life, with respect to the traditional Christian texts (i.e. directives of Jesus), ethical reasoning, and theological reflection. I shall attempt to strike the various chords of each and find out if there is a harmony to be heard between them that will translate into a concrete, useful position for the Christian of the current age.

The first chapter begins with an exposition of the applicable New Testament texts. The goal is to seek out the precise point of Jesus' message that concerns the use of violence and pinpoint a version that can be considered authoritative. The bulk of the remaining chapter will engage various arguments for interpreting the text, and understanding its proposed ethical message.

The second chapter approaches the problem of violence from a non-religious aspect. It begins with a fleshing out of the nonviolent position as it exists in modern, ethical pacifism, therein placing the religious arguments of nonviolence into a larger picture. After a critical assessment of pacifism, its greatest enemy, the just war theory, shall be subjected to the same critical examination. The chapter seeks to weigh out theories of war and peace, ultimately deciding on the most morally agreeable position.

The final chapter will, in some way, serve as a synthesis between the first two. At this point we will have a set of religious directives, as well as an ethical rejoinder concerning

violence. The task of relating the two in a manner that is applicable to social life of the individual Christian and the church will be a theological endeavor. Here, we shall find representatives of three theological positions that largely correspond to the major secular positions on war: Realism, Pacifism, and Just Warism. We hope to see if the secular arguments for war or peace have a different outcome when formulated as part of a religious system.

So our primary topic shall be war, and how the Christian ought to position himself in relation to it. We enter this discussion of war through the secondary issue of violence in any form. Through the course of the project, I hope to provide clarity to the questions and circumstances mentioned above. If our common moral reasoning is correct, we need to know why it is so, and affirm its applicability to the Christian moral system. If there is a greater cause to be served by adjusting our moral perceptions, we shall certainly be open to it.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	vi
CHAPTER 1. THE NEW TESTAMENT ON VIOLENCE.....	1
1.1 New Testament Texts on Violence.....	1
1.2 Interpreting the Texts.....	5
1.2.1 Nonviolence and Nonresistance.....	5
1.2.2 Resistance through Nonviolence.....	7
1.2.3 The Legal Setting.....	11
1.2.4 The Local Setting.....	14
1.2.5 The Vocation of Israel.....	16
1.3 Assessment.....	18
1.4 End Notes.....	19
CHAPTER 2. SECULAR PACIFISM AND THE JUST WAR THEORY.....	22
2.1 The Pacifist Position.....	23
2.1.1 Distinctions within Pacifism.....	24
2.1.2 Pacifism in the Major Ethical Traditions.....	26
2.1.3 The Moral Status of Persons.....	29
2.2 The Theory of Justified War.....	34
2.2.1 Minimal Requirements for Justification.....	35
2.2.2 Limited Just War—Michael Walzer.....	36
2.2.3 Cosmopolitanism—Human Rights .....	43
2.3 Assessment.....	46
2.4 End Notes.....	47
CHAPTER 3. THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON WAR AND PACIFISM.....	50
3.1 Reinhold Niebuhr—Christian Realism.....	51
3.2 Stanley Hauerwas—Pacifism of the Messianic Community.....	57
3.3 Social Ethics of Christian Love.....	65
3.3.1 Christian Love.....	66
3.3.2 The Sermon on the Mount.....	72
3.4 End Notes.....	76
REFERENCES.....	79
VITA.....	82

## **ABSTRACT**

This project seeks to develop an understanding of the ethically permissible and theologically justifiable use of violence, especially as it manifests itself in war. The issue is approached through exegesis of the New Testament texts concerning violence in order to discern a biblical, ethical position. After secularizing the resulting position, it is set against two modern, secular versions of the just war theory; the prevailing contemporary conception of morality in war. Due to disparities that arise between the normative New Testament position and the best moral theorizing about war, the task shows itself to be a theoretical, theological endeavor to harmonize the pacifism of traditional New Testament interpretation with the just war recommendations of ethical reflection. The goal of the thesis is to demonstrate how biblical principles derived from the teachings of Jesus can prescribe a moderate cosmopolitan conception of justifiable war.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **THE NEW TESTAMENT ON VIOLENCE**

Our point of origin for a discussion of Christian ethics of violence and war must necessarily be the witness of the New Testament. The issue of violence is one of the more prevalent topics throughout the canonical New Testament, thus handily lending itself to our project. Nonetheless, we shall be selective about what texts we choose to represent the body of the New Testament message. The Pauline letters, for example, will not here be cited, not because they are inferior in their witness, but simply because they are derived from a more primary source that is readily available to us. The words of Jesus, documented in the Synoptic gospels, provide a clear enough picture of the Christian stance on violence to suffice without reference to later elaborations or applications of the principles.

Of course, we shall not be so naive to think that the accounts of Jesus' teaching in the gospels have not undergone revisions and/or editorial adjustments. There will be cases in which historical reconstruction will be appropriate and necessary. However, in circumstances of confusion, we shall favor a normative reading of the New Testament as it currently exists to elaborate, imaginative theoretical excavation.

We also seek to overcome historically established interpretations that have become deeply ingrained in our common thought about the Bible. There will be a place in this project for the theological interpretations of the New Testament that are prevalent in the church, but presently we aim to understand the gospel as it exists in bare form, without assistance from theological reasoning.

#### **1.1. New Testament Texts on Violence**

Upon a surface reading of the New Testament, one will find that the entirety of the canon is in striking agreement regarding the use of violence; more so, perhaps, than on any other issue that it approaches. As Richard Hays notes, "[t]he evangelists are unanimous in portraying Jesus



as a Messiah who subverts all prior expectations by assuming the vocation of suffering rather than conquering Israel's enemies. Despite his stinging criticism of those in positions of authority, he never attempts to exert force as a way of gaining social or political power."<sup>1</sup>

Though examples of nonviolence can be found strewn about the New Testament in various forms, the most authoritative and direct treatment of the issue of violence is contained within the Sermon on the Mount. This chapter will focus on the Sermon on the Mount as the key to Jesus' teachings on violence and enmity.

We begin with a restatement of the applicable texts, and a brief offering of basic literary analysis for a closer acquaintance with the texts in question.

#### Matt 5:38-48

You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, Do not resist and evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you. You have heard that it was said "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.<sup>2</sup>

This passage from the Sermon on the Mount serves as the primary text of focus for the issue of violence. The evangelist is, of course, not writing an original sermon, but rather collecting sayings that were preserved in other, earlier documents. This becomes clear when we find that a somewhat parallel version of the sermon is found in Luke.

#### Luke 6:29-36

But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat, do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would

have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

The two versions of the sermon essentially offer parallel accounts of the same event. As no such sermon exists in Mark, the apparent source for the writings of most of Matthew and Luke, the sermon must have originally been a Q document.<sup>3</sup> Though some differences in the ordering of materials are noticeable, they seem to amount to no more than each evangelist's organizational preferences.

The Matthean version has typically been preferred because of its distinctive elements, as well as Matthew's reputation of adhering closely to the details of Jesus' ministry. Matthew seems to be writing with some knowledge or source that was unavailable to Luke as Matthew's account appears more detailed and expansive. In short, all the points made in Luke have a direct correspondent in Matthew. Many of Matthew's points, however, go beyond what is written in Luke. For these reasons, Matthew's version will serve as the focal text in the current examination.

The "love your enemies" portion of the text is represented by the fifth and sixth antitheses in a series of admonitions delivered by Jesus to the end of teaching righteousness to his followers. These two antitheses represent absolute commands that prohibit certain actions (as opposed to other antitheses which offer enforceable legal rulings). The commandment is issued at the outset of the fifth antithesis: "Do not resist an evildoer." It is then followed by a series of imperatives that seem to define the negative commandment. "Turn the other cheek," "give your cloak as well," "go the second mile," and "give to everyone," and "do not refuse." Each of these

imperatives represents specific cultural events that would have been significant to the first century Jew. The nature of these events will be detailed in section *II.b* below.

The sixth antithesis starts with an unusual premise. The previous five antitheses have had a definite referent in the Hebrew Bible or Israelite law. But there is no such commandment that directs hatred towards one's enemies. There are several possible explanations for this oddity.

The first requires note that the antithetical structure of Matthew's version of the sermon is nowhere present in Luke. While it is possible that Q housed the antitheses and Luke dropped them, it seems more likely that Luke and Q both lack such structure. Matthew appears to have drawn out the sayings and laced them into the antitheses.<sup>4</sup> If this is the case, we may discover that the first half of the premise, "love your neighbor," is derived from the love commandment found in Leviticus 19:18<sup>5</sup>. Matthew may have simply adapted this commandment into the antithetical format using its natural opposite: "hate your enemies."<sup>6</sup>

In contrast, many believe that the premise is, in fact, a reflection of a contemporary view held by some Jews. The isolationistic Essenes are called to mind because of their tendency to draw people into categories: those loved by God and those hated by God. Considering the vernacular usage of the word "neighbor" as strictly defined by one who shares cultural and religious status (i.e. a fellow Israelite), the neighbor would be other Jews (those loved by God), and the enemies would be foreigners of various religious traditions.<sup>7</sup> What is unclear about this explanation is why the Essenic idea would have any relevance to the audience of Jesus. The Essenes were secluded from the rest of society, and surely would not be among the hearers. Likewise, members of the crowd wouldn't have held Essenic views, because if they did, they would most likely be among the Essenes. If this explanation is correct, then Jesus would have been, as it were, "preaching to the choir."

Of course the premise could simply serve as a manifestation of general folk knowledge. Surely one does not have to be taught that enemies are to be hated; it seems to be inextricably tied to the concept of enmity. Perhaps, then, Jesus was referring to the overall attitude of the people, rather than a particular source of wisdom or law. This seems somewhat unlikely, however, in light of the high degree of specificity and correlation to ancient law that the previous five antitheses achieve.

As reaching a comfortable agreement concerning the origin of the sayings is not a priority for the discussion of the content of the sayings, I am satisfied to leave the issue without drawing definite conclusions. What is important to take away from the literary discussion of the sermon is a familiarity with the context that underlies its authorship in Matthew.

## 1.2. Interpreting the Texts

### 1.2.1. Nonviolence and Nonresistance

The Sermon on the Mount serves as the basis for the traditional interpretation that Jesus calls for Christians to embrace total non-retaliation and always eschew the use of violence. Hays is a prominent supporter of this position, which seems to be the common sense reading of the gospel. He describes the narrative of Matthew as being very concerned to convey Jesus' teachings as fulfillment, rather than negation, of the Torah. In fact, three of the six antitheses are not truly antithetical in form. Rather they provide a way to *surpass* the expectations of law. Jesus extends the demands of the Law in order to create a new kind of community that goes above and beyond what is legally required. For example,

You have heard...	eye for eye, tooth for tooth.
But I say...	do not resist an evildoer.
You have heard...	love your neighbor, hate your enemy.
But I say...	love your enemy, pray for your persecutors.

Hays argues that the imperatives that follow the statements of traditional wisdom are minimally connected ideas that merely serve as focal instances to support the extension. What

does nonresistance mean? It means turning the other cheek, going the extra mile, giving your cloak as well, etc. The imperatives simply set up a pattern that may be mimicked in whatever situation a person finds himself.

Moreover, this interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount seems to align with the overarching vision of Matthew's gospel. Most obviously, the teachings of nonresistance complement the praiseworthy qualities listed in the Beatitudes: suffering for the sake of righteousness, humility, readiness to make peace, et. al. Moreover, the life that Jesus led, as recounted by Matthew, embodies the message of the Sermon in its traditional, personal interpretation. For example, when Jesus is captured, he does not raise a finger in resistance. He also chides the man who attempts to defend him with a weapon<sup>8</sup>. Even the death of Jesus occurs in a most undignified manner, in a state of submission to his captors.

But why should such an ethic of nonviolence and nonresistance be desirable, at all? Hays believes that such tactics, though rightly adopted for no other reason but service to Christ's demands, are not without their benefits.

The actions positively prescribed here are parabolic gestures of renunciation and service. By doing more than what the oppressor requires, the disciples bear witness to another reality (the kingdom of God), a reality in which peacefulness, service, and generosity are valued above self-defense and personal rights. Thus, the prophetic nonresistance of the community may not only confound the enemy but also pose an opportunity for the enemy to be converted to the truth of God's kingdom.<sup>9</sup>

But how does such a proposal align with the unity of the vision of Matthew's gospel that Hays suggested above? After all, Jesus' nonresistance did not "confound" the Romans. His capture and death illustrate the exact opposite: the practice of Jesus' nonviolence will most likely result in undesirable consequences. Jesus, however, chose to accept these as part of his duty to God, rather than rely on his tactics to stop the evil from occurring.

Moreover, such confounder might only be realized when nonresistance is the exception, not the rule. Naturally, if the position was to gain wide enough popularity to be expected by the enemy, any utility for confounding evil and winning converts would be lost. It must be stressed that Hays does not argue for this supposedly useful aspect of nonviolence as a necessary reason for adopting it. However, as its utility seems to be incidental and extremely limited, he would do better to leave it out of the discussion altogether. Aside from this small aspect of confusion, Hays argues that his interpretation of the gospel message is normative for the Christian life without appeal to further justification than that it is the demand of Christ.

#### 1.2.2. Resistance through Nonviolence

It may not be altogether clear, however, that Jesus intended his renunciation of violence to result in submission. Perhaps the Sermon may be read as a call to a kind of civil disobedience. In this case, the “love your enemies” passages might be a guide to nonviolent resistance. Walter Wink is one who reads this portion of the sermon as just such a revolutionary summons. In Wink’s vision, Jesus does not teach the masses to passively accept their social degradation. Nor does Jesus endorse any sort of violent revolution. Rather, he calls for a “third way:” “active nonviolent resistance.”<sup>10</sup> Through this lens, Wink attempts to show how each of the examples following the antithesis call for the people to actively revolt against their oppressive circumstances.

Turn the other cheek. The saying specifically refers to a blow that is dealt on the right cheek. For Wink, the placement of the strike is significant. According to him, a strike on the right cheek means that the blow must have been delivered with the back of the right hand (i.e. a backhand slap).

We are dealing here with insult, not a fistfight. The intention is clearly not to injure but to humiliate, to put someone in his or her “place.” One normally did not strike a peer thus, and if one did, the fine was exorbitant...A backhand slap was the usual way of admonishing inferiors. Masters backhanded slaves;

husbands, wives; parents, children; men, women; Romans, Jews. *We have here a set of unequal relations, in each of which retaliation would be suicidal.* The only normal response would be cowering submission.<sup>11</sup>

But in the face of the normal response, Jesus provides a revolutionary reaction: provide the other cheek to be struck, also. For Wink, this represents an act of defiance; telling the so-called superior “your action cannot bring me down.” It is an indignant response that detracts from the intended humiliation. Furthermore, it presents a problem for the striker: how does he go about dealing another blow? A left-handed strike, even if physically feasible, was socially unacceptable as the left hand was reserved for “unclean tasks.” Other usage of the left hand may have even been met with civil penalties.<sup>12</sup> Striking with the fisted right hand is out of the question since this would acknowledge the victim as an equal. Consequently, the offender is left stunned, having had the humiliation turned around upon him.

But Wink’s “turn the other cheek” argument rests on one very weak assumption: that the strike is, indeed, a backhand slap. Though he toils to show through imaginative recreation that any other strike is impossible, Wink certainly has proven nothing. Could the striker not be standing perpendicular to the victim’s right? Or could the saying simply be indifferent about the location of the blow, specifying the right cheek arbitrarily? As the reader will have noted above, and as Wink, himself, notes, the Lukan version of the saying (generally regarded as older than the Matthean) does *not* specify one cheek or the other. For Wink, Luke has simply failed to understand the saying, much the same as have modern interpreters. Wink writes that Luke “mistakes the striking as armed robbery and the response as submission: offer the other cheek to be pummeled. Consequently, he drops Matthew’s ‘right’ cheek, apparently not recognizing that ‘right’ specifies the type of blow and that it is intended, not as attack or injury, but as humiliation.”<sup>13</sup> In my assessment, Wink is much too bold in his assumption that he understands Jesus’ teaching more clearly than one of the gospel evangelists. That Luke simply preserves a

more basic, if not more original, version of the saying is an equally viable interpretation of the discrepancy.

Give your cloak. Wink notes that this second example occurs in the setting of a court of law, and that the person being sued must be a very poor, low-class citizen as he has only his coat to be sued for.<sup>14</sup> Wink suggests that Jesus advises that this poor man who is being sued for his outer garment should, in the spirit of defiance, take off his undergarment and offer it along with the coat as if to say “Go ahead, take all I’ve got.” Doing so, Wink argues, would leave the poor man naked in the middle of the town.<sup>15</sup> This action would make a statement against the social problem of indebtedness, and leave the creditors to rethink their greedy pursuits.

After calling Luke’s understanding of the sermon into question above, Wink has apparently rooted his interpretation of the “give your cloak” example entirely in Luke’s version. After all, Matthew’s account recalls the saying in the inverse of what is recounted above: if a man sues you for your tunic (undergarment), Matthew says, give your cloak (outer-garment) as well. But, for Wink’s account, Matthew must be mistaken. Wink connects this instance with the first-century Israelite practice of giving the cloak to a creditor as a pledge for a loan. He deduces that it is only in reference to this practice that the saying would make sense; hence Luke’s version harbors the correct order.

But Wink’s interpretation does not get off the ground solely on the basis of Luke’s version of the saying. Though Luke got this one right, argues Wink, he still fails to retain the point that Jesus was making. Luke views the command as an act of altruism<sup>16</sup>, but we must look to Matthew to glean the idea that it actually refers to legal proceedings<sup>17</sup>. Thus Wink proceeds to “blend” elements of Matthew and Luke, arguing that each respective author simply is mistaken about the elements that do not support the civil disobedience interpretation.



Jean Weaver offers some much needed clarity on the matter. She notes simply that Jewish law prohibited the seizure of the outer garment for debt. If this is correct, then Wink has no grounds from which to start, since the sort of lawsuit that he imagines would never have been able to materialize. Instead, she asserts, the person who would try to circumvent the restriction by suing not for the outer-garment, but the undergarment (Matthew's version), represents the aforementioned "one who is evil." This evil, she argues, should be met with Jesus' altruistic love.

Go the second mile. Clearly this example refers to the Roman military practice known as *angareia*. *Angareia*, or forced labor, was the soldiers' right to commandeer a citizen and force him to carry the soldier's pack for some distance. After usage of this privilege became frequently abused, the Romans passed a law that limited the distance a soldier could force a citizen to go to one mile. With this in mind, Wink sees yet another opportunity for civil disobedience. What happens when the mile is up, and the Jew refuses to return the pack, but insists on going farther? This would put the soldier in violation of the law, and possibly subject to rebuke. Not to mention, the suspicion, confusion, and embarrassment that would vex the soldier. Again, however, these proposed reactions are circumstantial assumptions born out of a creative mind that may or may not have arisen from the action.

The over-arching problem with Wink's social defiance interpretation is its inability to fit with the larger teachings of Jesus, and the course of Jesus' own life. As mentioned in the above discussion of Hays, Jesus' beatitudes value meekness and the making of peace. Certainly the indignant, sometimes arrogant actions envisioned by Wink are neither meek, nor intended to make peace. Quite the opposite, Wink wants these actions to stir about rebellion through radicalism. Furthermore, nothing in Jesus' ministry purports to solve political problems. In fact,

Jesus demands that Caesar be given his due. Jesus prefers that the focus remain giving God *His* due.

One who sympathizes with the civil disobedience interpretation may find a more agreeable version in Weaver, who is in some harmony with Wink's foundations, but does not attempt to reach quite so far with her conclusions. Through literary analysis, Weaver decides that the negatively formed commandment of the antithesis "do not resist" should be viewed as "paradoxically positive" in light of the imperatives that follow. Four of the five imperatives are formulated positively (i.e. "turn," "give," etc). Therefore, in spite of the command to not resist, Jesus is teaching how to not resist in terms of action.

[T]he illustrative imperatives...also demonstrate that this command is one that *empowers* the community of disciples, even while it appears to enjoin a stance of *powerlessness*. The fact that Jesus does not merely invalidate the principle of *hon tropon* and the corresponding *lex talionis* but also illustrates a new mode of response to "the one who is evil" means that *for the first time ever initiative has been placed in the hands of the community*.

Thus Weaver largely accords with the Winkan idea that empowerment of the weak is the key interpretative element of the passage. While her ideas are quite less disturbing, her insistence on focusing on empowerment obligates her to a share of the above criticism of Wink. Her argument is not wrong, but in order for this teaching to accord with the life of the teacher, there should be a declination in the emphasis of power.

### 1.2.3. The Legal Setting

Perhaps the strongest opposition to the traditional interpretation (as represented by Hays) is rooted in disagreement about the translation of the sayings. Robert Guelich is a key proponent of this theory. He seeks to resolve textual ambiguities with reference to the context of the passage. Guelich argues that it is clear that the passage intends to call the Jewish *lex talionis* (literally: "law of retaliation") to mind. This sort of law has roots as far back as the Code of Hammurabi, and is specifically referred to in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and

Deuteronomy.<sup>18</sup> The *lex talionis* is not the law of revenge, as it is popularly viewed. Rather, it is a law that governs the extent to which a victim may retaliate against a perpetrator. In this way vengeance shall not exceed the initial crime. (If someone steals your mule, you may not kidnap his daughter in return, as this is not equal retaliation for the crime.) Thus, the *lex talionis* does not *call for* violence or retaliation, but rather *limits* it. The important point of consideration is that the *lex talionis* deals with legal justice. This sort of law intends to deter personal justice by placing the distribution of punishment in the hands of a court. In later Mishnaic writings, it can be seen that in some cases, financial restitution could satisfy the *lex talionis*<sup>19</sup>, much like cash damage awards may be the result of lawsuits in a modern courtroom proceeding.

After identifying the root of Matt. 5:38-42 in the *lex talionis*, Robert Guelich offers a translation that challenges the very root of the apparent meaning of the sermon. He notes that the verbs ἀντιστηναι (to oppose) and τῷ πονηρῷ (evil) in 5:39 are ambiguous. Taken on the surface, they certainly support a translation of general non-opposition to evil, as cited above. However, Guelich believes that the context in which the verbs occur necessitates a more specific rendering. Considering that the *lex talionis* lies beneath the passage, he argues, the reader must view *to oppose* with a strictly legal connotation<sup>20</sup> (i.e. “seek legal vindication”).

Moreover, there is a grammatical difficulty with the word *evil*. The problem lies in the term’s referent. *Evil* “is variously construed as a masculine form with a human referent (‘the one who is evil’), as a masculine form with reference to Satan (‘the Evil One’), as a neuter form (‘that which is evil’), and as a fundamentally ambiguous term carry both personal and impersonal force.”<sup>21</sup> The only key to deciphering the term is to consult the verb of which it is the direct object: *to oppose*. But, as we have seen, this term is no less controversial. Guelich, ever convinced that the legal context pervades the translation, opts to render the phrase: “You shall

not seek legal vindication against an evil person in court,” or paraphrased, “You shall not oppose an evil person in court.”<sup>22</sup>

If this is correct the if-then imperatives that follow will be viewed in the setting of a court of law. For example, the strike on the right cheek will refer to a severe act of degradation when administered to an equal, thereby opening the possibility of legal retribution. Jesus’ saying encourages the victim to forego this legal right, and signal as much to the offender by offering them the other cheek.

Hays offers several criticisms of the legal interpretation. Firstly, the Deuteronomic text which Matt. 5:38-42 purportedly refers to does not thematically line up. The legal proceeding in Deut. 19 illustrates a case of false witness. But, the example of a backhand slap is a crime of insult, and not connected with false accusation.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, as noted above in criticism of Wink, the idea that the strike connotes a backhand slap at all is nothing more than an assumption. If this assumption is incorrect, Guelich is left with no way to fit the ‘turn the other cheek’ example into legal context.

Most importantly, the remaining three imperatives of 5:41-42, do not fit the legal mold quite as smoothly. Guelich argues that all three represent obligations, both legal and religious, and place the focus on supporting the interests of the other party. But, after having placed such great emphasis on the context of the goings-on in a court of law, the reader is left feeling that Guelich has attempted to sweep these examples under the rug. Guelich, in fact, acknowledges this disconnection, and attributes it to “Matthew’s faithful use of tradition even when only tangentially related to his primary redactional intention.”<sup>24</sup> In the company of Hays, I stand unmoved by the idea that the legal interpretation should be upheld on the basis of grammatical connection to purely legal texts in spite of the fact that three out of the four provided examples fail to support the thesis.

#### 1.2.4. The Local Setting

Yet another interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount finds a face with Richard Horsley, who has written extensively on the explosively violent situation in which Jesus lived. Horsley believes that the kind of inquiry that this chapter is pursuing (namely, what does the New Testament have to say about the issue of violence) is entirely misguided.

At the outset we must abandon an approach that asks “What does Jesus (or the Gospel) say about violence or nonviolence?” An examination of the theme of “love” or of “peace” in the gospel tradition might seem to offer an appropriate approach to Jesus’ “teaching” with regard to violence. But neither of these themes is all that important in the gospel tradition. Although “love” is a prominent theme in John’s Gospel, I John, and Paul’s letters, the term occurs relatively infrequently in the synoptic tradition.<sup>25</sup>

Horsley builds his theory around the idea that Jesus’ “teachings” and actions cannot be viewed apart from the political movement of which he was a part. Horsley argues that distinctions such as “religious,” “political,” or “economic” are post-Enlightenment innovations born out of ideas that amount to separation between church and state. Modern western society is so inculcated with the idea that the “religious” and “political” are separate spheres of life that we tend to impose like distinctions on societies and time periods where, in fact, no such distinctions existed. “There is no reason to believe, no evidence that Jesus and his followers or the gospel tradition were only or even primarily ‘religious’ in their concerns.” Instead, says Horsley, “Jesus was concerned with the whole of life, in all its dimensions.”<sup>26</sup>

While the details of Horsley’s theory regarding the holistic nature of Jesus’ mission are largely inconsequential to the present inquiry, they serve to set the stage for what may be identified as Horsley’s own interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount (though he does not exposit it, as such). Horsley largely accepts the view represented by Hays, but takes issue with the identity of the enemy.

The group of sayings headed by “love you enemies” in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew) and the Sermon on the Plain (Luke), of course, have been extensively used in connection with the issue of violence/nonviolence, as well as in connection with the historical question of the Jews’ response to Roman rule. *But there is no indication in the Gospels that loving one’s enemies had any reference to the Romans or that turning the other cheek pertained to nonresistance to foreign political domination.*<sup>27</sup>

For Horsley, the sermon represents council given to Jews in reference to group unity amid their imperial situation. He argues that the social sciences have revealed an increase in civil hostilities in societies that have come under the rule of a foreign empire. Such a situation results in distress for the citizens of the occupied territory, leading to distrust and anxiety. Exactly this kind of situation was present in Judea, embodied by the conflict between the Jews and Samaritans. In-fighting of the sort that was occurring only brought the iron fist of the empire down harder and faster. Thus, Jesus taught alleviation of communal squabbling in order to loosen the grip of the occupation and unify the villagers for a common cause of resisting foreign domination. With these claims, we can construct a Horslean position in our own terms: Jesus taught an ethic of nonviolence that was intended for personal use between members of the Israelite community. The ethic is not applicable to state policy, nor is it even personally applicable between a Jew and a Gentile. The sole purpose of the Sermon is to create unity among the Jewish population to deter violent action by the empire.

Horsley will, of course, have a difficult time defending a position of such limited scope. It takes little more than reference to our familiar comparison to the life that Jesus lived to debunk the claim that there is no Gospel indication that nonresistance applied to Romans. After all, it was the Romans who arrested Jesus at Gethsemane; whom Jesus instructed his disciple to spare from attack; and with whom Jesus willingly went into custody.

Furthermore, while Horsley’s interpretation is certainly possible, it lacks evidence. The sayings are written in a completely generic fashion. There is no indication, lexicographic or

contextual, that the word “enemies” refers to any one classification or group of enemies. It would be difficult to justify limiting the field of applicability of a seemingly universal ethical principle to an extremely localized setting on the basis of what is essentially an educated guess.

Finally, Hays notes that Horsley’s proposal is not consistent with the normative witness of the New Testament. That is, however correct Horsley’s historical reconstruction of the circumstances surrounding the origin of the sayings may be, the resulting interpretation takes him too far afield from what is recounted in the canon. In an inquiry regarding a New Testament ethic, Hays argues, the data that actually exists in the New Testament is more important than extrapolations of it.<sup>28</sup> With all evidence to the contrary, it will take a bit more convincing to establish that the directives of the Sermon are not to be understood exactly as they read: directive and universal.

#### 1.2.5. The Vocation of Israel

On closer evaluation, just such convincing may be entirely possible. Though a Horslean interpretation of the Sermon may not be acceptable, his historical reconstruction illustrates the groundwork of a theory that may be more successfully developed. The final position recounted here, as constructed by N.T. Wright, is one that is foundationally related to Horsley’s. Wright’s conception (contra Hays) is not satisfied to accept the witness of the New Testament as necessarily applicable to contemporary, diverse readers. He believes, with Horsley, that the Sermon is rightly interpreted in its first-century Jewish context, without insisting that it is normative for all Christians.<sup>29</sup>

First and foremost, we must understand the realistic and immediate goals of Jesus’ ministry. Throughout the gospel, his concern is to usher in the “Kingdom of God.” This kingdom, however, in first-century Jewish terms, was not any heavenly, divine, or other-worldly kingdom as it has so often been interpreted. Rather, Wright argues, the first-century Jew would

have known that “[i]t refers to the rule of heaven, that is, of God, being brought to bear in the present world. Thy kingdom come, said Jesus, thy will be done, *on earth as in heaven*. Jesus’ contemporaries knew that the creator God intended to bring justice and peace to his world here and now.”<sup>30</sup>

So the kingdom that was central to Jesus’ message was a political one, though not ruled by any earthly politics. It would take a climactic event in world history to bring about such a kingdom that was ruled with divine justice. As it happens, Israel, as the chosen people of God, was to be the vessel with which God would execute this world-changing event, and overcome worldly injustice. As Wright puts it,

First, [Jesus] believed that the creator God had purposed from the beginning to address and deal with the problems within his creation *through Israel*. Israel was not just to be an “example” of a nation under God; Israel was to be the means through which the world would be saved. Second, Jesus believed, as did many though not all of his contemporaries, that this vocation would be accomplished through Israel’s history reaching a great moment of climax, in which Israel herself would be saved from her enemies and through which the creator god, the covenant God, would at last bring his love and justice, his mercy and truth, to bear upon the whole world, bringing renewal and healing to all creation.<sup>31</sup>

This understanding of the purpose of history and Israel’s role in its events, coupled with the notion that this exact climactic event is to occur presently (first century) paints a radically revolutionary picture of Jesus. In fact, it places Jesus alongside a number of his contemporaries who also sought to bring about this divine revolution. But Jesus’ differed from the rest with his fresh and unique ideas about how to execute the will of God.

The Sermon is a challenge, in particular, to find a way of being Israel other than the normal revolutionary way. “Do not resist evil”; “turn the other cheek”; “go the second mile”; these are not invitations to be a doormat for Jesus but constitute a warning not to get involved in the ever-present resistance movement. Instead, Jesus’ hearers are to discover the true vocation of Israel—to be the light of the world, the salt of the earth.<sup>32</sup>

Jesus challenged the Jews, as the chosen people, to live by a different rule in order to bring about justice and just peace.



On this view, the content of the Sermon applies heartily to both the individual and the state. But it “is not a mere miscellany of ethical instruction. It cannot be generalized into a set of suggestions, or even commands, on how to be ‘good’.”<sup>33</sup> The antitheses are aimed at precipitating a very specific set of consequences. “They emphasize...the way in which the renewal which Jesus sought to engender would produce a radically different way of being Israel in real-life Palestinian situations.”<sup>34</sup> The call of the Sermon is for Israel to fulfill its duty as the chosen people. The crux of Wright’s argument is the understanding that the behaviors demanded by this duty are unique to Israel, and are in no way expected nor even suggested to be applicable to non-Jewish social and political spheres; neither in the first century, nor at present. This argument, then, is extremely attractive as it avoids issues of the radical impracticality of the Sermon by its recognition that it is an extreme social ethic directed at one particular community in time with an eye to bringing about a divinely intended cause.

### 1.3. Assessment

For the most part we have sorted out the interpretive arguments singularly and revealed their weaknesses as they have shown themselves. Needing no further elaboration, we are left with two interpreters who remain largely unchallenged: Hays and Wright. The arguments of these two have shown themselves to be particularly desirable, not least because of their ability to provide an interpretation of the Sermon devoid of elaborate, imaginative theorizing.

The interpretive view represented in each account is, not surprisingly, one of straightforward, simplistic clarity. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus preaches a message of radical pacifism: nonviolence *and* nonresistance. Jesus intends the words to be heeded by his hearers in both their personal interactions, as well as in their dealings as a national community. The examples that elaborate upon each of the antitheses are focal examples rooted in relevant, first-century affairs that illustrate how, specifically, to follow the principles that Jesus proposes.

Though Hays and Wright represent positions that differ radically in their suggestions for normative Christian ethics, there is a kind of minimal agreement between them: Jesus meant what he said—do not use or resist violence. Herein, a picture of Jesus that is consonant with the rest of the canon is maintained, and some clarity is given to the character of the Sermon. This agreement may be enough to answer the interpretive question of the bare-boned meaning of the Sermon on the Mount. As obtaining a clear, well-informed understanding of the best interpretation of the Sermon is the goal of the current chapter, I shall consider the objective met. This, of course, is a very unsatisfying answer to the question since our primary interpreters find themselves greatly at odds when it comes to the question of appropriate application of Jesus' message in place and time. As these pragmatic issues of pacifism and society begin to materialize, I expect that we shall be compelled to revisit the issue of the Sermon's intended audience, as it seems to be the key to theologically applying the Sermon to our age.

#### 1.4. End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Hays, Richard. 1996. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 329.

<sup>2</sup> All biblical citations are from the New Revised Standard Version.

<sup>3</sup> Q is short for the German word *Quelle*, meaning "source." The proposed Q document is a now-non-existent text that may have served, in tandem with Mark, as the source for the books of Matthew and Luke. This proposition thrives because of instances exactly like the one at hand: Matthew and Luke agree about events that are nowhere documented in Mark in the same way that they agree about events that *are* directly traceable to Mark. These "outside" agreements, then, should be similarly traceable to another source. For a thorough discussion of the Q proposition, see Horsley, Richard 1991. "Q. and Jesus: assumptions, approaches, and analyses." *Semeia* vol. 55 pp. 175-209.

<sup>4</sup> See discussion in Guelich, Robert. 1982. *The Sermon on the Mount*, Waco: Word Books, 220-222.

<sup>5</sup> "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself..." Note the specificity of the commandment as applicable only within the community: *your* people; *your* neighbor. It is not hard to see how conventional wisdom could extrapolate from this that people who are not "yours" are *not* to be loved.

<sup>6</sup> Guelich defends this explanation in his notes on 5:43.

<sup>7</sup> This position is taken up by Schubert, Davies, and Braun, among others.

<sup>8</sup> Matt 26:51-52, Luke 22:49-51.

<sup>9</sup> Hays, Richard. 1996. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 326.

<sup>10</sup> Wink, Walter. 1988. "Neither Passivity nor Violence: Jesus' Third Way", *SBL Seminar Papers*, pp. 210-224. Rpt. in *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament*, ed. Swartley, Willard, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 103.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>12</sup> See Ibid., 104-105 for a brief discussion of this point.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>14</sup> See Wink's review of Israelite law from Ex. and Deut. Ibid., 106.

<sup>15</sup> Nudity in the ancient Jewish world, Wink claims, was not considered an embarrassment to the person who was in the nude. Rather, it was sinful and embarrassing for the person who *looked upon* the nudity of another.

<sup>16</sup> Luke 6:29. Luke's statement of the command is general in nature: give your tunic and cloak to anyone who asks, for any reason.

<sup>17</sup> Matt 5:40. Matthew's language implies legal action, referencing the requisition of the cloak as a lawsuit.

<sup>18</sup> Ex. 21:22-25; Lev. 24:19-20; Deut. 19:15-21. See Guelich, Robert. 1982. *The Sermon on the Mount*, Waco: Word Books, 219, and Weaver, Dorothy Jean. "Transforming Nonresistance: From *Lex Talionis* to 'Do Not Resist the Evil One'", *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament*, ed. Swartley, Willard, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 36.

<sup>19</sup> Guelich, Robert. 1982. *The Sermon on the Mount*, Waco: Word Books, 219.

<sup>20</sup> For a thorough discussion of the link between the Matthean passage and Deuteronomic text in defense of a strictly legal interpretation, see Weaver, 37-47.

<sup>21</sup> Weaver, Dorothy Jean. "Transforming Nonresistance: From *Lex Talionis* to 'Do Not Resist the Evil One'", *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament*, ed. Swartley, Willard, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 34.

<sup>22</sup> Guelich, Robert. 1982. *The Sermon on the Mount*, Waco: Word Books, 219-220.

<sup>23</sup> Admittedly, Hays seems to miss the forest for the trees on this point. Guelich (and Weaver) references Deut. 19 because it provides an example of usage of the Greek terms ἀντιστηναι and τῷ πονηρῷ in a clearly legal setting that illustrates their ability to be used as technical legal terms. Whether or not the passages are describing the same crime holds no bearing on the grammatical usage of the words.

<sup>24</sup> Guelich, Robert. 1982. *The Sermon on the Mount*, Waco: Word Books, 223.

<sup>25</sup> Horsley, Richard. 1993. *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 150.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 150. Emphasis mine.

<sup>28</sup> For Hays's complete critique of Horsley, see Hays, Richard. 1996. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 327-328. While Hays's ability to accept the New Testament in its present canonical

form as necessarily normative (without consideration of revisions and later additions) is somewhat beyond my own comprehension, the point is nonetheless considerable.

<sup>29</sup> Wright does not deny that it is possible to apply the Sermon to normative Christian ethics. He holds open the possibility that it may even be desirable for some to do so. However, he wishes to determine that this was not the manner in which the message was originally intended.

<sup>30</sup> Wright, N. Thomas. 1999. *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 36-37.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>33</sup> Wright, N. Thomas. 1996. *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 288.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 290.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **SECULAR PACIFISM AND THE JUST WAR THEORY**

The content of the foregoing chapter represents a series of religious arguments that leads the reader to an ethical position of absolute pacifism. Having established this brand of pacifism as one that endorses a maxim of non-violence and non-resistance, we must now turn our attention to the application and critique of these principles in the broader ethical community. It is clear enough how nonviolence may be chosen for an individual, but the morally significant questions come into view when such principles are applied to the state. Hence, the current chapter seeks to explore the pacifist position and examine its primary interlocutor and most formidable critic, the just war theory.

The idea that war may, at least sometimes, be justifiable is a position that enjoys a great deal of philosophical and theological consensus, and has since its inception in the fourth century C.E. What is especially interesting about the just war theory is its historical genesis in Christian theology. The shift in theological thinking about war, beginning with Augustine, reflects a reorganization in the structure of value, granting justice greater primacy than peace. This is due in part to the development of the idea that punishment for the sake of justice and moral growth (even in the realm of states) can be an act of love. If this is true, then military action may not always be proscribed.

Furthermore, there is a moral caveat that must be identified with respect to pacifism: peace is not always a virtue in itself. Peace may occur as a result of the threat of a brutal governing body (i.e. *pax Romana*), or as an armed peace (i.e. the Cold War), or as the result of any mechanism of fear, slavery, or forced submission. All of these may represent peace that is conditioned with some type of injustice. With this recognition, moral intuitions begin to shift toward an ethic that will prohibit such scenarios from budding.

The task, then, shall be to rehearse the classical tenants of the just war theory and attempt to determine just how much war can be justified under a morally responsible understanding of the position. However, we are saddled with one more charge before continuing. Despite its historical roots in religious thinking, the just war theory, as it exists in its modern forms, is a completely *a*-religious argument. Likewise, the varieties of pacifism that it locates as its opponents are generally secular. For the purpose of gaining a full and clear understanding of the disparities and arguments that occur between just war and pacifism, we will need to first flesh out the relevant secular ideas of pacifism. Thus, the first portion of the chapter will pursue secular moral pacifism as a bridge to just war. In this treatment pacifism, I hope to also give some color to the religious argument for pacifism that we have already seen, and place it within the larger picture of the pacifist ethic.

## 2.1. The Pacifist Position

Although we are proceeding to study pacifism in a form that is unconnected with the religious textual tradition in which we took it up, it is important to note that it seems that pacifism, insofar as it represents a systematic and organized rejection of war, was founded, in the West, at least, with Christianity. Many individuals and groups had previously subscribed to a decidedly pacifist belief, but it seems to have been a by-product of their over-arching rejection of violence in all forms. Thus, Jains or Buddhists who do not eat meat because of a sweeping opposition to all killing, for example, do not embody pacifism in the form that we presently seek.

Prior to the Christianization of the Roman Empire, the rejection of war among Christians on the basis of the New Testament had begun to achieve some commonality. Some early Christian sects required a man to leave his military position after conversion. Prominent thinkers vexed over how to defend the state without the participation of so many Christians. More than one saint was canonized in the third and fourth centuries for his bold refusal to participate in

war<sup>1</sup>. To put it shortly, it appears that to the early Christians, at least, Jesus' teachings clearly demanded an all-encompassing rejection of violence.

Over time there have been a number of other Christian groups who have endorsed a pacifist view; most of whom have been labeled heretical by the Church. But it was not until the early twentieth century that the term "pacifism" was actually coined and used without relation to its religious roots. Let pacifism in this sense mean "anti-war-ism."<sup>2</sup> Specifically, "take *pacifism* to be the name of a set of theories or beliefs which have as a common feature opposition to war..."<sup>3</sup> Further, pacifism qua anti-war-ism must not be understood as an aversion to violence in all contexts and capacities. Such an aversion, says Jan Narveson, "is a view that any person with any pretension of morality doubtless holds: Nobody thinks that we have the right to inflict pain wantonly on other people."<sup>4</sup> Rather, infliction of pain (i.e. violence) is generally regarded as occasionally being a necessary evil. The pacifist does not object to this, in the setting of domestic law enforcement, or child rearing, etc. The objection uniquely applies to violence in the militaristic and inter-state realms. As a still further qualification, the pacifism that we seek here does not eschew war for any pragmatic purposes; its intentions are strictly moral (though often assessed from varying moral platforms). The foregoing should lay to rest Narveson's characterization that the pacifist's "belief is not only that violence is evil but that it is morally wrong to resist, punish, or prevent violence."<sup>5</sup> Undoubtedly there are peace advocates to whom this description applies, but for the purposes of this discussion, secular pacifism will be examined not as a "radical moral doctrine" but specifically as a moral theory of war.

#### 2.1.1. Distinctions within Pacifism

Before discussing the moral arguments for pacifism, we should take a brief inventory of some of the varieties of pacifism, noting their distinguishing features. This list will be far from

exhaustive, but should supply the reader with the necessary vocabulary to continue probing the position.

- Absolute vs. Contingent: absolute pacifism is a resolute and all-encompassing rejection of violence that knows no exceptions. Absolutism is usually a duty-based requirement based either on a system of ethics or religion. Contingent pacifism does not make generalizations about the morality of warfare, but rejects each war through assessment of its own implications.
- Maximal vs. Minimal: though not a terribly important distinction, it is worth noting that there is not always agreement in pacifistic theories of war on what constitutes war. There is little question here for the absolutist; he generally extends his pacifism beyond inter-state conflict, anyway, so war is war for him even if it is coined ‘humanitarian intervention’ or the like. Minimalism is a position which might accrue to contingent pacifism, though even here there is seldom reason to question if an armed conflict is or is not war.
- Universal vs. Particular: this is the question of who is required to be a pacifist. Is it a moral duty for everyone, or just those who choose it? Narveson scoffs at this distinction. She remarks that endorsing particular pacifism “implies that there is really no reason for [being a pacifist] at all.” The only way to avoid making pacifism an arbitrary choice is to prescribe it as a universal moral duty.<sup>6</sup>
- Other Religious Forms: aside from strict textual approaches, one may encounter: (a) eschatological pacifism, or the idea that the heavenly war that will be the end of human history is close at hand. Until the dawn of this war, people should refrain from participation in any human wars. (b) vocational pacifism, or prohibition due to a profession, usually of the priests or monastics.



- Pragmatism: if a state vehemently refuses to fight, and others begin to adopt the same policy, eventually the problem of war will be solved. This includes goal-directed pacifism, the use of non-violent techniques to bring about certain (often political) conditions.

It is difficult to draw clear distinctions between all varieties of pacifism. Reasons for adopting it often overlap and surely all pacifism could be said to contain some goal-orientation and pragmatism. Hence, let us proceed with the awareness that, due to its characterization as a “collection of ideas” with a “common feature,” it may well be part and parcel of pacifism that it is difficult to isolate any particular idea without invoking much of the rest.

#### 2.1.2. Pacifism in the Major Ethical Traditions

It is somewhat difficult to draw out a positive account of moral pacifism because it generally manifests itself in negation. That is, it exists as a critique of war; a position of being unconvinced that war-ism can be defended. We may fare best by investigating pacifism as it is founded in Kantian ethics and utilitarianism. Robert Holmes touches on a description of each in his book *On War and Morality*.

Those who affirm the paramountcy of consequences in the making of moral judgments usually stress that what is important is the value produced by those consequences, either in itself or relative to the disvalue that is realized. They typically assert that acts are right if and only if they realize as great a balance of value over disvalue as any alternative action, and obligatory if they realize a greater balance. Those who deny the paramountcy of consequences hold either that the value actually produced by actions is irrelevant, as Kant believed, or, more often, that it is relevant but not decisive, and that other kinds of considerations, such as whether one is violating a moral rule, acting unjustly, or infringing moral rights, must also be considered.<sup>7</sup>

So a consequentialist approach to pacifism relies on two premises:

- P1*: War can be justified iff the goods achieved are greater than the goods expended as means.
- P2*: The goods achieved by war are *in fact never* great enough to outweigh the goods expended to achieve them.
- C1*: War is never justified.

The argument seems to rely greatly on what notion one has of “the goods achieved.” Let us assume that the goods expended refer to the violent loss of human life. Then, if we identify the goods achieved with political objectives, territorial expansion, or ideological growth the argument works splendidly. It is a perfectly tenable moral position to place a higher value on human life than upon seemingly superficial concerns.

But imagine an aggressor who will invade a state and indiscriminately kill a great number of the population, regardless of its decision not to take up arms. Better yet, simply recall the events of World War II in which staggering numbers of people, both military and civilian, were indiscriminately slain. In such a case, the goods achieved by going to war (assuming victory) refer to the preservation of human life. The first premise would then read “war can be justified if the human life preserved outweighs the human life lost to preserve it.” This reading puts the second premise in a bind; “the human life preserved can in fact never outweigh the human life lost to preserve it.” Certainly it can. If not by a matter of strictly numbers (where  $y > x$ ,  $x$  number of troops die at war in effort to preserve  $y$  number of lives from systematic extermination), then by a moral weight of the innocence of the lives one seeks to preserve as opposed to the guilt that lies with the lives represented by the aggressor. As Brian Orend notes,

It is at least conceivable that a quick and decisive resort to war could prevent even greater killing and devastation in the future. Historians speculate, e.g., that an earlier confrontation with Hitler would’ve prevented World War II from ending up being so widespread and destructive...[Consequentialist Pacifism] is open to counter-examples which question whether consequentialism would reject killing and war at all under certain conditions. Consequentialism might even, in a particular case, go so far as to *recommend* war under certain conditions.<sup>8</sup>

So it seems that consequentialism, alone, does not embody a sufficient reason to endorse anti-war-ism.

Let us, then, turn to deontological pacifism—that which maintains that one should refrain from engaging in war as a result of some duty  $x$  which making war would violate. Presumably,

this duty is the prohibition against killing another human being. But, as Orend points out, the existence of such a duty is controversial, to say the least. First, there is the (proposed) right of self-defense<sup>9</sup>. It is not clear why an individual who is being life-threateningly attacked should not have the moral right to use lethal force if it is necessary to defend himself. Surely the attacker has accepted responsibility for his own mortality at the moment he decided to use an act of lethal aggression against an innocent party. In the language of Holmes, the attacker's own death was a *mediated consequence* precipitated by this decision. A mediated consequence, Holmes suggests, is one that appertains to a particular choice or action<sup>10</sup>. Holmes is deliberately unclear regarding the assignment of moral responsibility for mediated consequences. I am confident, however, that most of our moral intuitions are correct to absolve the aggressed upon party of responsibility for the death of the aggressor.

However, suppose that the paramount duty represented by deontological pacifism was not strictly a prohibition against killing, but (as with Holmes) a prohibition against killing innocent people. In this case, the argument looks like this:

P1: We have a duty to never kill innocent persons.

P2: The death of innocent persons is an unavoidable consequence of modern war.

C: We have a duty to never make war.

Here, the pacifist is attempting to combine deontology with consequentialism. The right to self defense is, in theory, preserved (the killing of the attacker in the example above is morally permissible), but the pacifist maintains that wars, even if they are undertaken in self defense, inevitably result in innocent casualties on the side of both the aggressor and the aggressed upon.<sup>11</sup>

But in the process of sidestepping the issue of the morality of self-defense, this argument has acquired a fatal error: if it can, in any way, be shown that modern warfare *can* be conducted without taking the lives of innocents, the argument loses its weight as a pacifist defense.

Indeed, the conclusion is not the only one that could be drawn from the premises. While innocent casualties may be unavoidable in *modern* warfare, one could also conclude that the proper course of action is to call for a return to an earlier ideal of *conventional* warfare in which only military personnel were put in harm's way. It is not clear why all war should be rejected on the basis of a quality of *modern* war. International disarmament of weapons of mass destruction is at least as likely as the far-reaching global social and political changes that Holmes calls for in effort to convert humanity to pacifism.<sup>12</sup> At the very least, this sort of pacifist must confront the ambiguity in reaching a sound conclusion and argue for the pacifist conclusion based on some prioritization or practical possibility of one option over the other.

Holmes, however, has left himself in a poor position regarding this problem. He has not recognized the possibility of a military down-scale solution, and has stated strongly throughout his book that "Less of what we have been doing wrong is not good enough. We must stop doing it." But such a claim is in no way supported, given the nature of his argument, as stated above. Holmes continues, "In leaving the war system intact, we in effect are saying that we want to continue playing the game without having to accept the consequences."<sup>13</sup> One could respond that this is precisely the idea. It seems perfectly reasonable to preserve the war-system, which allows a state to defend itself, in a form that will not *precipitate* the consequences of innocent death (as opposed to Holmes's claim that it wishes not to *accept* such consequences). So this duty/consequence combination pacifism does not succeed in clearly prohibiting war in all cases, and, for a formulation such as that of Holmes, fails altogether.

### 2.1.3. The Moral Status of Persons

Others have proposed a line of argument for pacifism that takes a stance much like that of Holmes. Soran Reader defends a theory of deontological pacifism that shares several principled convictions with Holmes, but argues against war by formal logic, rather than justifiable content.

Reader's formulation may, again, be identified as a combination of duty-based and consequentialist approaches. Like a utilitarian, she believes that all people matter equally, and like a deontologist, she believes that there are some things that simply may not be done to a person because each person is an end in himself. Due to this deontological feature of the account, she asserts (contra utilitarianism) that no person can be traded for any set of more desirable consequences.

She begins with an intuition that she calls the moral status of persons (MSP): that persons possess a certain moral status that exists as a feature of their personhood, regardless of their nationality, political commitments, etc. On no grounds does any person or persons morally matter more or less than any other. Reader believes that ordinary people share this conviction and generally defend it above all conflicting claims. It is only because war-ism is so deeply ingrained in our politics that we have become passive to its violation of MSP. By bringing MSP to our attention, Reader hopes to make pacifism a more attractive position.

The next intuition that Reader argues from is that "our commitment to MSP involves something like the thought that as persons, we bear inalienable *responsibility* for our moral agency."<sup>14</sup> Considering these two intuitions, any violation of MSP must be directly justifiable by the morally responsible party. In the case of war, according to Reader, such justification is not possible.

Though Reader does not offer any arguments for these intuitions, Thomas Nagel provides some further illumination to the position. Nagel conditions the character of war as essentially a set of interactions between persons. Consequently, the idea of justifying any action on the basis of its 'overall effect' rather than its effect on the directly involved persons is ruled out. The principle of justification behind harming another person should be something like this: "whatever one does to another person intentionally must be aimed at him as a subject, with the intention

that he receive it as a subject. It should manifest an attitude to *him* rather than to the situation, and he should be able to recognize it and identify himself as the object.”<sup>15</sup>

The formal requirement for any justification for harming a person must follow the schematic of a justification sentence (JS).

JS: It will be justifiable to harm  $x$ , iff it is true of  $x$  that  $\{p \vee q \vee r \vee \dots\}$

Of course  $p$ ,  $q$ , and  $r$  must be morally relevant qualities or activities of  $x$ ; most likely guilt of some transgression that vindicates violent defense or punishment. How these conditions are filled out constitute the content requirements of justification. Much of the controversy within just war accounts center around specifying the nature of such transgressions to complete the JS, and most deontological pacifists simply reject that any  $p$ ,  $q$ , or  $r$  can ever amount to a complete JS.

Reader, however, seeks to avoid the controversial content requirements altogether, and show that war can be rejected based solely on the formal requirements for justification. First, indiscriminate violence (i.e. bombings) create a situation in which no reasonable  $p$ ,  $q$ , or  $r$  can be generated. That is, no morally relevant facts about any of the persons killed (regardless if they are military or civilian) could possibly be known by the moral agent who caused the harm.

[W]e need *moral* answers to the question, ‘Why was *she* harmed?’ ...in bombing cases, no *moral* answer to that question is available. The utilitarian answer at best provides us with an explanation of her death—she died because she was in the wrong place at the wrong time. It does not, and *cannot*, tell us how and why it was *right* to harm *her*.<sup>16</sup>

To express the idea in Nagel’s terms: the inability of hostile action to take its context from the wider state of war creates a void where justification to the harmed subject should be found.

Secondly, with regard to discriminate violence (that which occurs in direct combat between clearly identified soldiers) the JS can only be completed in terms of self-defense or defense of a third party.

JS: It is justifiable to harm  $x$  because it is true of  $x$  that  $\{x$  has harmed or intends to harm other persons $\}$

While this justifies the specific incident of violence in that moment, Reader argues that it falls short of justifying the violence as part of a larger conflict between states. In other words, the justification was only realized because the state put *those* soldiers into *that* situation for the explicit purpose of bringing about just such a circumstance. There is still no justification given for their being there, in the first place. Hence, the JS, though formally feasible for the individual, is not formally equipped to “justify the violent act as a part of the political process of a particular war.”<sup>17</sup>

Further, Reader asserts that the question that the pacifist is asked to answer is typically loaded in favor of war-ism, thus making pacifism appear extremely weak. The question is some variation of ‘Hitler is coming! Should we use our war-machine?’ Of course the pacifist understands how unattractive a negative answer is in this context. But, Reader suggests broadly that a commitment to MSP would prevent the necessity of asking this question. MSP transcends state borders and communities. Where communities often see the problems of other states as ‘their problems,’ Reader asserts that “we have a moral duty grounded in MSP to take political and legal steps to deal with the (international) problem of injustice as soon as it arises, wherever it arises and whoever it affects.”<sup>18</sup> Through early and sustained nonviolent intervention, Reader believes that the need for war will simply not arise.

I find this aspect of the theory particularly unrealistic for two reasons. First, and most obviously, intervention at any stage certainly does not preclude the possibility of a situation’s deterioration into war. Most versions of just war theory, in fact, would support intervention in some nonviolent capacity to avoid the engagement of war. As we shall see below, one of the classical pillars of the just war is that it is instituted as an effort of last resort.

Second, a call for united global intervention in a state's affairs rests on an unfounded presumption of a global homogeneity of political ideals. Reader calls for an unspecified degree of intervention into international affairs at the first sign of injustice. But the looming practical question is 'by what standard are we (as outsiders) to judge the internal affairs of states?' Where in this theory is there room allotted for cultural variation and differences in the prioritization of values? If a leader is chosen by appropriate means and is bolstered by the support of his nation, on what objective grounds may he be deposed by a foreign state, and what guarantee is there that the rest of the global community would consent? In the absence of some Hobbesian authority who would act decisively and unquestioned in rearranging foreign affairs, it is unlikely that there will be any cross-cultural agreement on if and when to intervene in the political organization of another state. In the language of the just war theory, Reader leaves no room for the right of political self-determination. As history has proven, violation of this right will only increase, rather than lessen, the likelihood of violent conflict.

Concerning the function of Reader's formal rejection of war, the argument appears to be sound. However, there is a serious deficiency at the very outset of the theory that Reader, herself, briefly acknowledges. Due to her agreement with Nagel on the characterization of war as interactions between individual persons, she "neither exploit[s] nor directly criticize[s] those strategies in the ethics of war which claim an analogy between individual violent action and collective violent action."<sup>19</sup> But as we saw only a moment ago, the "reality of individual persons" was rejected as a sufficient basis for the violence of war. Reader's argument is entirely avoided if one argues for the possession of moral rights by states just as individuals possess moral rights. As we will see with Walzer, below, states derive moral rights from the collective rights of the individuals that comprise the state. Following this line of reason, if a state can be viewed with the moral standing of an individual, then the state must have the right to organize



itself in such a way that is analogous to an individual. So moral responsibility for harm committed may well *not* rest solely with the soldier (who is the “hands” of the state) and may be the responsibility of the government (as the “head”) who has full knowledge of the morally relevant facts about the enemy state. So the analogy of states as individuals, it seems, renders MSP pacifism inapplicable.

## 2.2. The Theory of Justified War

The just war theory is widely believed to have originated with St. Augustine around the time of the Christianization of the Roman Empire. Much of Augustine’s philosophical thinking about war remains significant in Church theology, but his reasons for taking up the cause of justifying war appear to have been entirely political. Constantine’s adoption of Christianity as the state religion presented a unique problem to Christians who had never before controlled a polity. Their beliefs, which had been confined to small congregations and underground sects, now had to adapt to support the maintenance of a political state. Augustine, then, sought to consider war and peace in a new way. He began to think about war outside of the traditional mandates, and place it within a scheme of virtue. “Augustine extols *justice*, not *peace* as the highest value, the most noble good...Just war must be understood within a larger frame of justice.”<sup>20</sup>

The origins and development of the theory is, itself, a fascinating topic of discussion, though not of any real relevance here. Therefore, we shall only briefly look over its historical cornerstones. What is important for our purposes is to achieve a foundational understanding of the classical pillars of the just war, and find out what modern formulation best expresses our ethical commitments.

### 2.2.1. Minimal Requirements for Justification

(1) Classical Benchmarks. The writings of Thomas Aquinas are most frequently cited as the standard work on the justice of war as a calculated position. Taking a cue from James Turner Johnson, however, we shall give equal nod to Gratian, from whom Thomas likely received his understanding of just war.<sup>21</sup> The first set of principles largely applies to *jus ad bellum*, the justice concerning the declaration of war. These are the requirements that insist war must be declared through (a) the proper authority who (b) acts upon a just cause and (c) does so with the right intention.

Let us briefly study the way in which these principles should be interpreted. Proper authority was first identified by Thomas as one who acted on behalf of God for the sake of His vengeance. But since ministers and monastics were forbidden from engagement in war, it became necessary to rethink who the authority should be. “[B]y the end of the Middle Ages, proper authority had come largely to mean the authority of the secular sovereign prince, which was understood as deriving from the community he represents.”<sup>22</sup>

Gratian believes that a just cause is an attempt to regain something that has been stolen or a defense against an enemy. Thomas adds that punishment for a wrongs committed is also acceptable. Both men explicitly leave room for “holy wars” and punishment for heresy. Thus, just cause became “bifurcated into the religious and the political, with the latter category...increasing greatly in importance.”<sup>23</sup>

The “spirit of the peacemaker” exemplifies right intention. Though war is accepted as a necessary evil, one must declare it with the aim of bringing it to an end. In the contemporary sense, right intention may extend to prohibiting the use of war as a façade for ulterior motives (territorial expansion, economic gain, or ethnic ideologies, to name a few).

(2) Secular Additions. (d) Proportionality adds a consequentialist touch to *jus ad bellum*.

It calls for an assessment of the universal goods to be claimed as a result of the war action. If this set of goods is not important in as great a proportion as the lives that will be lost to achieve it, then the war must not be engaged. Proportionality also has a *jus in bello* (conduct of war) implication. Franciscus de Victoria understands that a war could be ostensibly just on both sides. To be sure, only one side is right, and the other is ignorant. But acting from ignorance may be a more excusable offense, and thus the war of punishment should be proportionally scaled down in its execution.

(e) Last resort and (f) probability of success are somewhat later additions and also somewhat less defined. Last resort insists simply that all practical measures of diplomacy must be taken before war is declared. The lack of systematic rules surrounding this principle leave it open for interpretation. One may find that the “last” does not apply to a temporal sequence, but imply the “only” available option.

Probability of success is the most debatable of the tenants, and perhaps the least important. In fact, it has been stricken from the theory as it is manifested in international law on the books of the United Nations. The U.N. sees it as biased against states with small territories and populations. Indeed, it is unlikely that the moral right to justice should be affected by probability, which is directly related to size. Fortunately, its inclusion (or exclusion) does little for the moral standing of the theory as a whole.

#### 2.2.2. Limited Just War—Michael Walzer

By and large, Michael Walzer is regarded as the authority on Just War in our age. His theory of war is actually extremely limiting, and for this reason, finds a great deal in common with pacifism. This section will unpack his version of the just war theory, mostly as it is

presented in *Just and Unjust Wars*, and defended and elaborated upon in “The Moral Standing of States.”

*Inter arma silent leges*. This phrase, or its modern cousin “all’s fair in love and war,” is Walzer’s launch pad into his theory concerning the rules of war. He rejects the notion that war is lawless in both its declaration and conduct. Our desire to free it from moral judgment is, perhaps, out of cowardice or fear of being confronted with the reality of our own actions, rather than a true belief that war has its own standing outside of morality. “[W]e often lack the courage of our judgments, and especially so in the case of military conflict. The moral posture of mankind is not well represented by that popular proverb about love and war.”<sup>24</sup> Walzer labors to reason through rules that can be applied to war, with hopes that they can be understood and internalized in a time of peace, so that they may be drawn upon later in the heat and rashness of wartime. Though the majority of Walzer’s attention centers on *jus in bello*, we will be focusing on formulation of *jus ad bellum*.

To put it baldly, Walzer’s theory is that wars of aggression are always wrong, and defensive wars are the only kind that may be justified. In a review of *Just and Unjust Wars*, Douglas Lackey compounds Walzer’s views into four major contentions: (1) States, as well as individuals, possess moral and basic rights. These rights will be forfeited by violating the corresponding rights of others. (2) Aggression against another state is always wrong, unless the state being aggressed upon has already forfeited its rights. (3) Basic rights are forfeited by: aggression upon the rights of another state, threat and preparation to infringe upon the rights of another state, loss of ability to effectively govern its people due to secessionist movement within the state, or large-scale violations of basic, personal rights. (4) Persons who take up or produce arms in war forfeit all basic rights.<sup>25</sup>

By far the most intriguing of these claims is the first. Do states, in fact, possess moral rights as do individuals? At first blush, Walzer's conception of state rights seems to depend upon a Westphalian view of statehood that arbitrarily draws borders and affords them a great deal of political and moral significance. For this reason, Walzer has often been dubbed a statist: one who overlooks the *actual* moral rights of individuals and gives undue priority to the *supposed* rights of a government.<sup>26</sup>

But Walzer believes that the moral rights of the state are derived directly from those of the individual citizens who comprise the state. It is not as though the state is a being which is capable of having rights, in and of itself. Rather, the state relies on the consent of its members, and likewise, its rights are reflective of those of its members.

When states are attacked, it is their members who are challenged, not only in their lives, but also in the sum of things they value most, including the political association they have made...Individual rights (to life and liberty) underlie the most important judgments that we make about war...State's rights are simply their collective form.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, Walzer argues, it is not the place of one state to judge the legitimacy of another; each is a well-worked out form of government that is supported by its people. "The moral understanding on which the community is founded takes shape over a long period of time. But the idea of communal integrity derives its moral and political force from the rights of contemporary men and women to live as members of a historic community and to express their inherited culture through political forms worked out among themselves..."<sup>28</sup> Later, Walzer elaborates,

Foreigners are in no position to deny the reality of [the union of people and government]...They don't know enough about its history, and they have no direct experience, and can form no concrete judgments, of the conflicts and harmonies, the historical choices and cultural affinities, the loyalties and resentments, that underlie it.<sup>29</sup>

Peoples have a right to (collectively and historically) choose a government that suits it, or at least reflects its values. Affording the state rights is an extension of the people's right to maintain a suitable government. To be sure, people have the right to rebel against their government if they do not feel that it suits them. Their continuance to live peacefully under a particular regime thus constitutes agreement or acceptance of the fit of the government to the people.

Walzer does provide an addendum to the theory to further satisfy the humanitarian sentiment: the principles of disregard. These are the strictly controlled circumstances in which a state can engage in war without having been aggressed upon. The first comes about when a state is multinational. When one of the communities that comprise the state engages in revolt, foreign states are allowed to intervene on that community's behalf. This is permissible because the rebellion is indicative of a lack of fit between the community and the government, and must be free to find a form of government that it deems suitable. The key element to this principle is that the state absolutely must contain more than one national identity within its political borders. Otherwise, the rebellion may be viewed simply as another formative event in the state's political history.

Secondly, if a state is engaged in civil war due to a non-national community's rebellion, and a foreign state has already intervened on one side's behalf, another foreign state is allowed to intervene on behalf of the other side. Such intervention may or may not be the right thing, or wise thing to do, but Walzer believes that "counter-interventions of this sort can be defended without reference to the moral character of the parties."<sup>30</sup> He also asserts that intervention should function as a balancing factor against a previous intervention. The ensuing war should reflect the relative strengths of the initial foes, not the capabilities of the intervening states.

Here, we must pause to question the first two principles. Such an addendum is curious, indeed, and seems to be un-fit for the rest of the theory. Some clarification is needed here to understand why intervention should be desirable in civil war, and why its function should be to only balance.

The first principle implies that any secession from a state, provided that it is done by a national or ethnic community that is not that of the state, is legitimate and should be allowed and assisted by the global community. This principle, against Walzer's earlier stance on states as historical communities, appears to sympathize with the idea that boundaries are non-moral distinctions and nations are haphazardly caught within one state or another. Far from upholding "territorial integrity and political sovereignty," this provision opens the door for numerous secessions, thereby leaving the original state in a gravely diminished capacity and threatening the livelihood of *its* national community. This idea implies a radically changed global political community in which all desiring peoples are granted their own states at the detriment of the historical governing body and its people. On the basis of its inability to coalesce with the bulk of Walzer's theory, this principle cannot be accepted.

The second principle of disregard seems to only be invoked in the case of violation of the first principle. Since, presumably, the first principle only justifies intervention on behalf of the secessionist movement, a state must only intervene in a balancing capacity if the first intervening state intervened on the wrong side. No problem here, but the question comes in regards to the limitation of balance. It seems right; the aid that the state has (unjustly) received is put into check by the aid to the secessionists. Now the war is back to its original proportion. But it can be assumed that the proportion before intervention was already stacked against the secessionists, as they held no political or state military power. And, according to Walzer's first principle of disregard, the secessionist is to be here favored. Why, then, should the aim be to balance the

scenario, when the first principle clearly provides allowance to *un*-balance an already balanced equation in the case of secession? This will only prolong the conflict and put at risk its outcome. As we have already seen, the goal of a just war should be to bring the war to an end as quickly and favorably as possible with respect to the moral obligations of the conduct of war.

In light of these criticisms it appears that Walzer's logical consistency would fare better by abolishing these two principles of disregard and banning intervention in civil wars, regardless of the circumstances. This will result in a yet more stringent approach to just war, and, to be sure, more limiting than we may be ready to accept. Short of this, however, we must question how Walzer might coherently maintain his account of intervention.

Finally, we advance to Walzer's last principle of disregard, which, fortunately, is a good deal more straight-forward. In cases of large-scale genocide, enslavement or expulsion of a state's own people, intervention is permissible. Aside from the obvious issues here of human rights, such activity is yet another indicator that the government is not a fit for the people.

Against the enslavement or massacre of political opponents, national minorities, and religious sects, there may well be no help unless help comes from outside. And when a government turns savagely upon its own people, we must doubt the very existence of a political community to which the idea of self-determination might apply.<sup>31</sup>

Aside from the oddities apparent in the first two principles of intervention, Walzer's account seems suspect in several ways. One is his conviction that foreign states are totally unable to judge the domestic goings-on of other states. Though he has written numerous remarks to this point, none of them have explicitly defended the idea in the capacity of providing a reason to agree. It is evidently uncontroversial that such extremities as genocide and enslavement can be subject to the judgment of the global community. Why, then, are other oppressive actions that might be executed by an illiberal regime placed out of the reach of foreign judgment? It seems



plausible that foreigners are in as good a place as any to recognize the systematic abuse of human rights, whatever form they take.

Further, if our standard for humanitarian intervention is reserved for radical situations, we may be forced to overlook corresponding violations that occur on a smaller scale. Oppression may occur on an individual basis, over a long period of time that, had it occurred in a singular, radical event, would have justified intervention. Moreover, could a clever tyrant not arrange his political muscle in such a way to quell opposition movements swiftly and individually before they could form a cause worthy of intervention? Such action is no less devious or oppressive than large scale enslavement, but, as if by a loophole, Walzer requires that foreigners do not intervene.

A more troubling problem, still, haunts the entirety of the theory's dependence on the "fit" between a people and its government. Walzer seems to take the notion of fitness as corresponding to the right of political self-determination. But it is not so clear that the existence of fit necessarily means that the government has the support of its people. It is, at least, possible to imagine a state in which governmental institutions reflect the culture and heritage of the people, even their convicted political ideals, but nonetheless is met with dissatisfaction from the governed community. Perhaps the people take issue with specific policies, or specific officers, or for whatever reasons desire a change in the executors of the state. If this situation occurs in a totalitarian state, the desired substitutions will not take place, and thus the right to political self-determination will not be satisfied. It seems that fit may not be the most appropriate way to judge a state's need for intervention (or right to not be intervened upon).<sup>32</sup>

Presently, we are left with a skeleton of a theory. The idea that wars of defense against unjust aggression are the only sort of just wars still stands, though without any coherent thoughts about intervention, we are left wanting of an approach that demonstrates a greater respect for and

obligation to moral, human rights. We shall advance to such a theory via further commentary of Walzer's apparently Westphalian take on state sovereignty.

### 2.2.3. Cosmopolitanism—Human Rights

In the preceding discussion of Walzer, we came across the suspicion that he affords undue rights to states at the expense of the moral rights of individuals. What is essentially being called into question is the moral appropriateness of sovereignty. That is, on what basis do political borders demand the protection of non-aggression and the reduction of moral responsibility to individuals?

David Luban asks these questions, motivated by dissatisfaction with the U.N.'s (and Walzer's) definition of a just war, and seeks to broaden the principles to allow indemnification against moral abuse. That only wars of self-defense against aggression can supposedly be just evidently depends upon a doctrine of state sovereignty. "Each state, according to international law, has a duty of non-intervention into the affairs of other states: indeed, this includes not just military intervention, but...any 'dictatorial interference in the sense of action amounting to the denial of the independence of the State.'"<sup>33</sup> But, criticizes Luban, such a doctrine is not morally binding, because the fact that states have sovereign power does not mean that they should, or in other words, that they have it legitimately. The claim is that only legitimate states should be afforded the moral duty of non-intervention. "Thus, a doctrine of *jus ad bellum* formulated in terms of human rights may turn out not to consider aggression the sole crime of war."<sup>34</sup>

Just what makes a state legitimate? To answer this, we must draw out a basic feature of social contract theory. Political communities are formed by the consent of its members. It is from this agreement that the political community, or a nation, derives its moral rights. The type of social contract that forms a political community is a horizontal one, reminiscent of Walzer's idea of the historical formation of a community.

But this process does not afford rights to a *state*. States receive rights through a vertical contract between the nation (political community) and a governing body. To put it simply, a legitimate state is one that enjoys the favor and approval of the nation that it governs. Only then do the moral rights of the individual, and likewise of the nation, migrate to the state. Otherwise, the state is not protected by any duty of non-intervention. Now we see the problem with the theory of Walzer and the law of the U.N.: their mistaken understanding of the social contract “systematically and fallaciously confuses a nation and its state, granting illegitimate states a right to which they are not entitled”<sup>35</sup> (namely, the right to conduct political affairs as the government sees fit without being intervened upon). Illegitimate states should not be preserved and protected by non-intervention, and should, indeed be aggressed upon for the sake of the individuals who are subject to their unjust rule. The state will earn back its sovereignty only when it rearranges itself in such a way that the governed people will consent.

Thus Luban argues for an expanded conception of just war in which aggression against illegitimate states is not only permissible, but morally compelling. The foregoing has been a negative assessment of predominant ideas about foreign policy. Luban continues by positively discussing his just war theory in terms of the defense of socially basic human rights.<sup>36</sup> In the instances that we have explored already, this conception will allow the global community to aggress upon states that ignore the socially basic human rights of their people. But Luban’s account goes beyond justifying aggression in defense of a third party through intervention. To be sure, states can “defend” their own socially basic human rights through aggression. These human rights will include foundational rights of subsistence such as having food. So if a society suffers from famine, and receives no foreign aid, in order to preserve itself, the state will be justified to attack a neighboring country to procure rations.

To recapitulate the point, Luban's theory allows (indeed requires) the occurrence of a great deal more war. It is the responsibility of legitimate states to intervene on behalf of the nation of an illegitimate state for the sake of human rights. Wars of aggression that are not defensive in any manner may be just if they seek to ensure the socially basic human rights of a nation. All things considered, Luban's theory might be seen as a mirror image of Reader's (above). Both call for an abolition of the idea that political boundaries diminish moral responsibility to the persons of a nation. Oddly enough, where Reader sees this as an opportunity to achieve peace, Luban believes that it requires a great deal more war.

But now we have a new concern. Our desire to provide an account of just war that allows the defense of moral, human rights seems to have gotten us, so to speak, more than we bargained for. An account such as Luban's calls for such a great deal of violence that one cannot help feeling uncomfortable lending it the stamp of approval. As much as we want to be upholders of socially basic human rights, something about the picture of aggression upon a neutral state (for food, say) seems quite wrong. Even when defending human rights in foreign states, we might worry that such defense is unwanted by the national community and/or violates their political commitments (self-determination). We must be satisfied, then, to take a middle path between the limiting restrictions of Walzer and the uncomfortably aggressive cosmopolitans. I believe we can say with confidence that aggressive wars which masquerade as defense of rights must be impermissible. Violence must only be justified in response to real, tangible oppressive violence. As for humanitarian intervention, it may be beneficial to rethink the practicality of legitimacy. Following the lead of A. John Simmons, it is conceivable that no states are actually legitimate since in reality the (supposed) consent of the people is only tacit. In the void of any expressed voluntary consent, the importance of legitimacy might give way to the notion of moral justifiability<sup>37</sup>. That is, states could be lent support (i.e. sovereignty) based on the moral good

works that they do. We shall not attempt to develop the account further, but end our discussion with the understanding that a theory of moderate (less aggressive) cosmopolitanism is entirely achievable.<sup>38</sup>

### 2.3. Assessment

We are left with the task of deciding if a theory of pacifism or just war, in whatever capacity, is desirable. We have already seen that, from a consequentialist perspective, war might be a prudent alternative to inaction if lives are to be preserved. And though war will always involve killing, a just war seeks discrimination regarding when and how to do so. It is a natural right of an individual to value his own life over that of an unjust attacker, and because (legitimate) states derive their moral rights from the corresponding rights of its constituents, states, too, have a right of self-defense. And as we have seen, it may be a moral obligation to act upon the right of defense for the benefit of a third party. Following from the discussion of this chapter, and, to a degree, the self-evidence of some claims of defense and human rights, I find pacifism to be an insufficient position in light of ethical examination.

There is also a pragmatic reason to question pacifism that manifests itself as a goal-directed enterprise.

nonviolence de-escalates the conflict and diminishes its criminality. By adopting the methods of disobedience, non-cooperation, boycott, and general strike, the citizens of the invaded country transform aggressive war into a political struggle. They treat the aggressor in effect as a domestic tyrant or usurper, and they turn his soldiers into policemen.<sup>39</sup>

Essentially, non-violent resistance is no resistance at all. Through a policy of non-violence, a state simply surrenders itself to any unjust aggressor and places itself at the aggressor's mercy. This is a wildly morally irresponsible action, as there can be no guarantee that the aggressor will observe any sort of moral code or restraint of violence at all. Thus, it is the responsibility of the state to prevent its citizens from coming under the rule of an indiscriminate usurper.

The theory of just war that I shall herein endorse is, as suggested above, one of defensive justification with respect to fundamental human rights. It is not a concern of this chapter to expound a detailed, creative version of just war as much as it is the charge to establish just war as a favorable position and narrow down the general character of its desirable justification. In light of our discussion of Luban, it will suffice to conclude that some form of moderate cosmopolitan conception of limited just war will be the superior ethical position.

The moral issue that remains a plague to war of any sort is the death of innocents. While nothing can detract from the tragedy of losing the life of a non-participant, we may find that it is, in fact, morally tolerable. To see this, we turn to the well-known assertion of Thomas Aquinas called the doctrine of double effect. As stated by Jonathan Glover, the doctrine maintains “an absolute prohibition on intentionally killing an innocent person, but it also allows some actions which have the foreseen but unintended consequence that innocent people die. The good has to be sufficient to outweigh the harm.”<sup>40</sup> So even though we know that entering a war, albeit justified, will entail the death of people who had no part of the goings-on, the war is still morally preferable to surrendering the state to the will of the aggressor.

Though the Just War Theory has turned out to be a considerably more viable (and at the very least, more defensible) option to pacifism, we should not overlook the venerable ideals of peace. Wars must always be fought with a clear sight towards achieving and maintaining peace. As Thomas said, “war is waged in order that peace may be obtained. Therefore, cherish the spirit of the peacemaker, that, by conquering those whom you attack, you may lead them back to the advantages of peace...”<sup>41</sup>

#### 2.4. End Notes

<sup>1</sup> See the “Origins of Pacifism” in Teichman, Jenny. 1986. *Pacifism and the Just War*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell..

<sup>2</sup> The Stanford Encyclopedia cites Jenny Teichman for this succinct definition, who in turn cites the 1982 Supplement to the Complete Oxford Dictionary. Here, the first recorded use of the term pacifism was by a “Frenchman attending an international peace conference” who equated the term immediately to “anti-war-ism.”

<sup>3</sup> Teichman, Jenny. 1986. *Pacifism and the Just War*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Narveson, Jan. 1965. “Pacifism: A Philosophical Analysis”, *Ethics*, vol. 75, no. 4, 259.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>7</sup> Holmes, Robert. 1989. *On War and Morality*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 23.

<sup>8</sup> Orend, Brian. 2005. “War.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/war>, 18.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19.

<sup>10</sup> Holmes’s full discussion of mediated and unmediated consequences in the context of wartime casualties can be found in Holmes, Robert. 1989. *On War and Morality*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 205-208. Promising as this discussion is, Holmes takes an unfortunate “situational” stance regarding the responsibility of mediated consequences, rendering the discussion largely un-useful in the development of a theory.

<sup>11</sup> There is some debate over who qualifies as an “innocent;” the outcome of which can make a significant difference for the pacifist who makes this claim. Holmes discusses the issue on 184-189. For our purposes, let the “innocent” be defined as a non-contributing, non-aggressor.

<sup>12</sup> See “The Alternative to War,” *Ibid.*, 260-295.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 11, 10.

<sup>14</sup> Reader, Soran. 2000. “Making Pacifism Plausible”, *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, vol. 17, 173.

<sup>15</sup> Nagel, Thomas. 1972. “War and Massacre”, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 1, no. 2, 136.

<sup>16</sup> Reader, Soran. 2000. “Making Pacifism Plausible”, *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, vol. 17, 176.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>20</sup> Elshtain, Jean B. 1992. *Just War Theory*, New York: New York University Press, 4.

<sup>21</sup> See “War for Church and for Prince,” 26-80 in Johnson 1975. *Ideology, Reason, and the Limitation of War*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 76. Total rejection of war for the sake of religion will be seen with Victoria in the sixteenth century as a result of his attempt to ground war as a feature of nature.

<sup>24</sup> Walzer, Michael. 1977. *Just and Unjust Wars*, New York: Basic Books, 3.

- <sup>25</sup> Lackey, Douglas. 1982. "Review: A Modern Theory of Just War." *Ethics*, Vol. 92, No. 3, Special Issue: Symposium on Moral Development, 533-544.
- <sup>26</sup> Walzer, Michael. 1980. "The Moral Standing of States: A Response to Four Critics", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 209.
- <sup>27</sup> Walzer, Michael. 1977. *Just and Unjust Wars*, New York: Basic Books, 53-54.
- <sup>28</sup> Walzer, Michael. 1980. "The Moral Standing of States: A Response to Four Critics", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 211.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.
- <sup>31</sup> Walzer, Michael. 1980. "The Moral Standing of States: A Response to Four Critics", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 101.
- <sup>32</sup> I owe much of the critical discussion of Walzer to Song, Edward. 2008. "Cosmopolitan Sovereignty and the Morality of Intervention." (forthcoming)
- <sup>33</sup> Luban, David. 1980a. "Just War and Human Rights", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 9, no. 2, 164. Imbedded quote is from Hersch, Lauterpacht, *International Law and Human Rights* (London: Stevens, 1950), p. 167.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.
- <sup>36</sup> Luban defines these as rights "whose satisfaction is necessary to the enjoyment of any other rights. Such rights deserve to be called 'basic' because, while they are neither intrinsically more valuable nor more enjoyable than other human rights, they are means to the satisfaction of all rights, and thus they must be satisfied even at the expense of socially non-basic human rights, if that is necessary." *Ibid.*, 175
- <sup>37</sup> See Simmons, A. John. 1999. "Justification and Legitimacy." *Ethics*, vol.109., no. 4., pp. 739-771 for a detailed exposition of justifiability and the shortcomings of legitimacy.
- <sup>38</sup> For a defense of just such a moderate cosmopolitanism, see Song, Edward. 2008. "Cosmopolitan Sovereignty and the Morality of Intervention." (forthcoming)
- <sup>39</sup> Walzer, Michael. 1980. "The Moral Standing of States: A Response to Four Critics", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 332.
- <sup>40</sup> Glover, Jonathan. 2000. *Humanity: A Moral History of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 84.
- <sup>41</sup> Thomas Aquinas. Reprinted in Johnson, James Turner. 1975. *Ideology, Reason, and the Limitation of War*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 40-41.



### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON WAR AND PACIFISM**

We have now arrived at an interesting place in our project. We have seen that the Sermon on the Mount prescribes pacifism in its absolutist form. However, our exploration of the ethics of war and peace has led us to the understanding that morality demands a limited conception of justifiable violence in self-defense and defense of human rights. Considering the stark contradiction in these conclusions, it must be our charge to reconcile them (or show them to be justifiably irreconcilable) and find solid religious and ethical ground on which to stand.

As it stands, pacifism is at a disadvantaged position due to its inability to clearly defend itself against the just war arguments previously recounted. Since our ethical examination has cast a shadow upon pacifism, the current chapter will proceed by wading back through the religious arguments for pacifism and seeking to find a broader theological underpinning that might come to its rescue. A similar theological base will need to be discovered for war theory, owing to its need to find a sound means by which it can relate to the New Testament text. Hence we begin a theo-ethical endeavor to provide a theoretic framework to the moral justifications of war and pacifism that we have seen. I take the question to be essentially one of the church's relationship to public policy. Therefore, in each case, the discussion shall begin with a probe into the social responsibility of collective Christianity.

The historical truth that most denominations of Christianity are in fact not pacifistic identifies another interesting layer in our discussion. At the very least, this fact reveals that the church (in most of its varieties) has given preference to the moral considerations of the second chapter above the textual considerations of the first. Since that which we presently seek is a justification for exactly such a choice, it shall be prudent to ask where the church finds it. It is here that we encounter the work of an important modern source of social theology that has been formative of the church for several generations. Indeed, Reinhold Niebuhr's thought has become

so deeply ingrained in (especially Protestant) church social policy that, at present, much of what we take to be common sense Protestant theology is actually Niebuhr's theory<sup>1</sup>. Naturally Niebuhr is a supporter of war, but not of the necessity of justifying and limiting war. We shall first examine his impassioned (if not radical) defense of the church's stance in relation to war, and then use it to spring into the bulk of the section where we will recount a theoretical position that is its polar opposite. Finally, we will conclude with a look at a Christian ethicist who promises to find a middle axiom that will accommodate the text of the New Testament as well as curtail the potential violence of Niebuhr.

### 3.1. Reinhold Niebuhr—Christian Realism

'Realism' is generally identified as a third alternative in the ethics of war. Just war theory and pacifism share an understanding of war as an ethical enterprise which must be subjected to scrutiny before it is engaged. Naturally, they part company on the issue of whether such scrutiny can ever, in fact, lend its approval to war. But realism has no such common ground with the other theories of war as it rejects the idea that war can be ethically examined, at all. Rather than competing with the other two theories, realism tends to dismiss them as ideology. The realist charges that war is a complex out-working of political agendas, and cannot be separated from its actual roots in economic gain or personal and/or political advancement. The realist is not, by design, an advocate of all war at all times. He simply believes that moralizing about war is futile, and so he has a tendency to be silent on matters of the rightness or wrongness of any particular conflict. What we wish to discover is, from the realist perspective, how a society or individual citizen should respond to war.

For the purpose of this discussion, as we are concerned not only with society but with Christians as they function in society, we will examine realism with respect to its application specifically to the Christian life. In broad strokes, Christian Realism, as advanced by Reinhold

Niebuhr, is a theological position that accepts the reality that the imperatives put forth by Christ are not achievable in a human world of sin. Certainly, the principles of Jesus are glimpses of the perfect kingdom of heaven to come, but in the natural world the Christian is forced to compromise his desire to perpetuate the heavenly kingdom on earth for the sake of upholding natural justice and rights. This has elsewhere been dubbed the theory of “impossible ideals;” Jesus instructs us in perfection, though he knows that in the absence of the coming divine world, we are not yet able to actualize it.<sup>2</sup>

Not surprisingly, the Christian realist stance on war follows directly from these notions. First of all, Niebuhr is careful to note that he does not wish to play with the interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount or to in any way seek to show that Jesus, in fact, would allow violence.

It is very foolish to deny that the ethic of Jesus is an absolute and uncompromising ethic. It is, in the phrase of Ernst Troeltsch, an ethic of ‘love universalism and love perfectionism...’ Nothing is more futile and pathetic than the effort of some Christian theologians who find it is necessary to become involved in the relativities of politics, in resistance to tyranny or in social conflict, to justify themselves by seeking to prove that Christ was also involved in some of these relativities...<sup>3</sup>

It is not the perfectionism of Christ that he takes issue with. Rather, it is the idea that we as humans are expected to embody such perfection, as well. “This thesis is that modern Christian and secular perfectionism, which places a premium upon non-participation in conflict, is a very sentimentalized version of the Christian faith and is at variance with the profoundest insights of the Christian religion.”<sup>4</sup> By clinging to these supposed moral absolutes of nonviolence, Niebuhr argues, the other virtues become distorted.

Christian perfectionism is relatively new, according to Niebuhr. He identifies it as an out-growth of the Renaissance rethinking of humanity. This new model places a great amount of (undue, for Niebuhr) optimism on the nature of man. It believes that man is inherently good, if only at times misguided. This stands deeply in tension with classical church doctrine which

asserts that all humans are born with original sin and need the grace of God and leadership of the church to become worthy to do the work of God's kingdom. Perfectionists of this sort "have really absorbed the Renaissance faith in the goodness of man, have rejected the Christian doctrine of original sin as an outmoded bit of pessimism, have reinterpreted the cross so that it is made to stand for the absurd idea that perfect love is guaranteed a simple victory over the world..."<sup>5</sup> Niebuhr hotly rejects this Renaissance interpretation of the gospel; that humans alone could possibly live up to the example of Christ and moreover that it would be socially and morally responsible to do so in a flawed and sinful world.

It is sometimes objected at this point that if Christ's teachings would be followed with finitude then the problems of social and moral justice will either work themselves out or be worked out by God. This contention calls for a radical faith dependency in attempt to allay fears of moral irresponsibility resulting from the law of God. Niebuhr characterizes this objection as the 'if only.' 'If only we all followed the words of Christ more exactly, then there would be no war.' 'If only we would stop fighting tyranny, it would destroy itself.' If "Britain had only been fortunate enough to have produced 30 per cent instead of 2 per cent of conscientious objectors to military service, Hitler's heart would have been softened and he would not have dared to attack Poland..."<sup>6</sup>

In the first place, Niebuhr, along with most readers, finds these objections to be somewhat naive. Not only is there no historical precedent for any such unexpected changing of fates, but it is also contrary to common reasoning that any change of this kind should ever take place. The dependence upon faith here is misplaced. Though it ostensibly calls for faith in God, Niebuhr argues that this idea actually places its faith in man. A substitution of this sort is nothing short of heresy<sup>7</sup>.

Niebuhr also dismisses the ‘if only’ objections for their faulty understanding of the responsibility of the gospel. For statements such as the ones listed above all look for the benefits of pacifism in some sort of goal-orientation. That is, they emphasize the desirable social gains of the position over and above the fact that they are stated to be divine command. This implies an ulterior motive for following Christ, which is unacceptable for Niebuhr.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, ‘if only’ statements generally identify themselves with nonviolence insofar as nonviolence allows nonviolent resistance. As we have already seen, and Niebuhr points out, “Nothing could be plainer than that the ethic [of the New Testament] uncompromisingly enjoins *non-resistance* and not non-violent resistance.”<sup>9</sup> Thus the critic who makes this argument has obviously missed the point of Jesus’ nonviolent ethic, and so cannot be expected to support Niebuhr’s position, which requires a right understanding of the gospel.

The fact of the matter is that Jesus’ ethic is one that cannot and should not be followed in the socio-political arena until the completion of God’s eschatological plan. It is simply not possible to eliminate the sinful element from politics because politics are conducted by flawed and sinful beings who, in turn, are seeking to distill justice from a collective group of equally sinful beings.

What the moralists, intellectual and religious, fail to understand, though it is written on every page of past and contemporary history, is that politics is an area in which the rational and the brutal, the moral and the predatory, the human and the subhuman are compounded in perplexing and infinite variety. That combination is present, in a measure, in all human activity. Even the religious group is inherently imperialistic and merges its life with other groups only under the threat of a common foe, secularism, Catholicism, or what not.

Political strategy, therefore, always involves a combination of coercive and persuasive factors. Sentimental moralism which underestimates the necessity of coercion, and cynical realism which is oblivious to the possibilities of moral suasion are equally dangerous to the welfare of mankind. The former spends its energies in vain efforts to achieve a purely voluntary reorganization of society; the latter resorts to violent conflict and makes confusion worse confounded. The welfare of society demands that enough social intelligence and moral idealism be created to prevent social antagonism from issuing in pure conflict and that enough social pressure be applied to force reluctant beneficiaries

of social privilege to yield their privileges before injustice prompts to vehemence and violence.<sup>10</sup>

Though much of the foregoing discussion has based Niebuhr's theology on rejection of competing ideas, here we see an example of a positive formulation of the position. To put it simply, social justice demands that some evil be done for the greater good, but always with the knowledge that no conflict is ever between the sinful and the righteous, but between sinners on all sides.<sup>11</sup> Pacifists choose to ignore these facts about the political world in a selfish and irresponsible attempt to achieve some unreachable goal of humanistic perfectionism.

Having walked through Niebuhr's defense war as an acceptable policy of the church, we shall turn our focus to criticizing Niebuhr on two fundamental bases—one textual and one practical. To the latter, the question is simply 'why should we accept the historical evils of politics as good enough for our normative social life?' The question may be interpreted in two manners. The first inquires simply why some constraints of justice (i.e. just war theory) should not be here applied in effort to keep the sins of politics in check. Why should war-ism be broadly accepted as a byproduct of sinful politics when it can be mitigated by a conception of justice, even if the just party is not entirely free of sin? To be sure, Niebuhr's conception does not preclude the possibility of applying justice within the realist framework. But he declines to do so and structures his position to demonstrate that it would be irresponsible to do so. Consequently, Niebuhr will allow a great deal more war for potentially unjust reasons, as long as it claims to be in the interest of the political state. Such a position is far too permissive and reduces the accountability of the state to the global community as well as to its own people.

The second and fiercer interpretation of the question wonders why the sustained practice of a system that is so constructed to be inherently flawed and sinful should be desirable at all. If it is only this that we protect through war-ism, then perhaps it is not, in fact, worth protecting. One could argue that pacifism is a much needed attempt to turn the tide of sinful politics.

The question of Niebuhr's understanding of the New Testament (specifically the Sermon on the Mount) is also a major point of contention. For, oddly, though he insists on an "absolutist" interpretation of Jesus' ethic, his theory of "impossible ideals" seems not to take the proposed ethic seriously. In effort to construct a position of eschatological fulfillment of the requirements of Jesus and a support for social responsibility in the interim period, Niebuhr ignores the directives and example of Jesus provided in the text. The Sermon on the Mount appears to be a guide to discipleship, but by the end of the Sermon, we are told that Jesus addressed crowds of people.<sup>12</sup> He concludes by saying "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock."<sup>13</sup> It is fairly clear that Jesus intended immediate action upon his teaching by all hearers, not just disciples. Later, Jesus states that Christians are to venture out and teach the message to others, converting them to his school of thought.<sup>14</sup> Nothing contained within the Sermon appears to indicate that the principles contained within will not be applicable until the occurrence of a later, eschatological event. So despite Niebuhr's profound respect for the text's integrity, he has no textual support for the idea that they are not meant for direct implementation.

It seems that Niebuhr's theory of war, then, is more viable as an intentional and principled rejection of the Sermon on the Mount as a normative social ethic in favor of Christian involvement in the political policies of the state. If this is correct, then Niebuhr has failed to meet our needs for identifying a Christian social ethic and opted for Christians to identify themselves as primarily state citizens. Though he has attempted to provide a reconciliation between the New Testament and the ethical choice of support for war, his ultimate failure to convincingly do so leaves us in need of a new strategy. Presently we shall take on a position that is somewhat of a foil to the social ethics of Niebuhr. Instead of issuing the call for Christians to

make citizenship their primary responsibility, we shall see where we stand when citizenship is only marginally respected, and the church is the significant social vessel for Christians.

### 3.2. Stanley Hauerwas—Pacifism of the Messianic Community

Stanley Hauerwas is a prominent Christian ethicist who reluctantly finds himself in a position that he believes demands his endorsement of pacifism. He amusingly remarks of himself, “The last thing I wanted to be was a pacifist, mainly because I longed to do ethics in a way that might be widely influential. Moreover by disposition I am not much inclined to nonviolence.”<sup>15</sup> But as a feature of his theological ethics, he has come to believe that not only is nonviolence one among other behavioral mandates of the New Testament, but it is the very center of the Christian ethical system, and the heart of the Christian conception of God. The task he sets for himself, then, is to draw out the nonviolent ethic of the New Testament and show how it functions as a necessary feature of the theological system embodied by the Church.

Hauerwas’s ideas about the social ethical responsibility of the church are a necessary foundation for his stance within pacifism. Hauerwas notes that questions like ‘what stance should the Christian take on war?’, ‘how should he ensure justice?’, and ‘what should his involvement be in weaker states?’ have a tendency to pull the Christian in the direction of natural law, as they deal strictly with worldly problems of justice. As a result, the Christian finds himself in a position of cooperating with non-Christian persons in making agreements about the extent and application of natural law. This is especially challenging, because the entrance of non-Christians into judgment-making will require a reduction in the use of value-assessment tools that are uniquely Christian. Consequently, it is usually agreed that there are moral principles general enough to be accepted by both the secular and Christian communities.

As such, Hauerwas illuminates the disintegration of the distinctly Christian element in Christian social ethics. He calls for a reversal in the traditional reasoning of Christian social



responsibility. Rather than downplaying the religious elements, Hauerwas believes that the Christian should not seek to make humanistic compromises in ethics. Rather, “the first social ethical task of the church is to be the church—the servant community. Such a claim may well sound self-serving until we remember that what makes the church the church is its faithful manifestation of the peaceable kingdom in the world.”<sup>16</sup>

Hauerwas contends that the church does not need to cooperate with secular society regarding ethical judgments. The church sets its own agenda and determines for itself how it will act. Since the church has specific requirements that manage behavior in particular circumstances, it will inevitably differ in focus from the rest of society. The church may be obligated to act upon smaller, seemingly inconsequential issues (i.e. individual cases of poverty, abandonment, or weakness), often with society’s condemnation. But it is precisely such behavior that elucidates the church’s importance as a social ethic, in itself. The church stands as a beacon that points the world to the kingdom of God and thus assists the world in understanding itself as world. In other words, the church, acting only in the interest of being church, provides a backdrop against which society can view itself.

How could the world ever recognize the arbitrariness of these divisions between people if it did not have a contrasting model in the unity of the church? Only against the church’s universality can the world have the means to recognize the irrationality of the divisions resulting in violence and war, as one arbitrary unit of people seek to protect themselves against the knowledge of their arbitrariness.<sup>17</sup>

One might see the church and the world as partners on the same journey. Neither can exist without the other, though both constantly try to do so<sup>18</sup>. This leads to a great deal of enmity between them. The best remedy to this, Hauerwas suggests, is the church’s determined self-interest in its function as church.

How exactly does the function of the church demand pacifism? At the most basic level, the members of the church seek to live in the manner of God. “Therefore pacifism is not first of

all a prohibition, but an affirmation that God wills to rule his creation not through violence and coercion but by love. Moreover he has called us to be part of his rule by calling us into a community that is governed by peace.”<sup>19</sup> It is not as though one chooses to become a Christian, and then chooses to become a pacifist. Rather, nonviolence is a fundamental tenant of the Christian life; it is part and parcel of taking up the yoke of Christianity at all<sup>20</sup>. So the Christian life must be one that reflects the will of God, regardless of the threat of undesirable consequences. Hauerwas elaborates elsewhere that “God does not rule creation through coercion, but through a cross. As Christians, therefore, we seek not so much to be effective as to be faithful...”<sup>21</sup> The rightly structured Christian life will not have to make assessments about violence. Nonviolence will simply be inherent to its existence.<sup>22</sup>

It is notable that this inference does not solely rely on the textual mandates of bible. The specifics of “turn the other cheek” are not herein debated or even considered. What is influential, for Hauerwas, are the *actions* of Jesus; the unwillingness to use violence to ensure success, and the continued insistence of divine rule through the reality of the cross. Only through imitation can the already nonviolent church ever rightly read and interpret the texts.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the people of the church must follow Jesus’ example of patience and meekness. When injustice transpires, Christians must not move to defend themselves or others against it, but rather, recognizing the injustice, choose to suffer it. This is what makes Christians a hopeful people who relate to the poor and powerless.

The issue of defense raises a moral question about the Christian’s restraint that seems to propose a contradiction. In his eschewal of defensive violence, the Christian not only risks his own safety, but he also abandons his charge of caring for his neighbor. Surely if the Christian is required to love and protect his neighbor, he must be obligated to defend him when his life is threatened.

But Hauerwas sees this question as formulated far too narrowly to render an accurate answer. For on what basis is, say, a fellow citizen of the United States any more a neighbor than a citizen of the foreign state that is acting aggressively? As we saw above, Hauerwas believes state distinctions to be entirely arbitrary. It follows, then, that we are equally obligated to all humans, regardless of their aggressive or defensive actions. To believe otherwise would be to understate the radicalism of the love commandment that Jesus requires of all members of the community of God.

But to speak only of individual imitation of God in whatever capacity would not do justice to the thrust of Hauerwas's conception of Christian ethics. Indeed, at the center of Christianity is the church, itself, as a collective whole. "For you cannot know who Jesus is without the kind of community he gathered around him, since there is no Jesus without the church."<sup>24</sup> Just as (discussed above) the church is its own social ethic, the church is also its own polis. Christians, as members of the church polity, identify the church as their only home nation, and only successfully find value to their beliefs in relation to the church whole. Hence, Christian nonviolence is "unintelligible apart from Christological and ecclesiological presuppositions. Yet those very presuppositions are political exactly because they create and are created by a different polity"<sup>25</sup>, namely the church. It is the responsibility of the church community, in whatever state it resides, to augment the state community by freeing the people's imagination from violence and serving as a model of righteousness.<sup>26</sup> The entire project hinges on the church maintaining its integrity apart from the secular polity, and showing no favor to any state, regardless of its liberal objectives or so-called legitimacy.<sup>27</sup>

With this conception of the unified church as the foundation for Christian action in mind, we may now see another important reason that Hauerwas believes pacifism is mandatory: it is an eschatological necessity of the church to stand in tension with the normative violence of the

political world. Although the peace of God was inaugurated on earth with the crucifixion, the ultimate fulfillment of this peace is yet to be actuated. “Thus the Christian must live between the vision of the reign of God and its concrete realization in history.”<sup>28</sup> Indeed, this eschatological feature of God’s peace has usually been cited to a very different end than that of Hauerwas—the idea that this ‘time between times’ means that Christians are in the unfortunate position of knowing violence is sinful but having, nonetheless to use it. But Hauerwas interprets this eschatology in a unique way. He agrees that the peace of God is eschatological in nature, but elaborates:

The eschatology of the New Testament rests not in the conviction that the kingdom has not fully come, but that it has. What is required is not a belief in some ideal amid the ambiguities of history, but rather a recognition that we have entered a period in which two ages overlap. As John Howard Yoder has observed “These aeons are not distinct periods of time, for they exist simultaneously. They differ rather in nature or in direction; one points backwards to human history outside of (before) Christ; the other points forward to the fullness of the kingdom of God, of which it is a foretaste.”<sup>29</sup>

Hauerwas’s (and Yoder’s) understanding of pacifism is one that finds itself in disparity with just war thinking primarily on the issue of how to interpret history. While just war-ists believe pacifism to be one option in a continuing human history, Hauerwas’s pacifist understands pacifism as the only Christian option available in a present that is post-human history.

The ever-present, perhaps standard criticism that plagues Hauerwas (and has since his early writing) is that his account of the church is too sectarian. His idea of the church as the only home nation to Christians and his insistence that Christians should show no favor to any political regime seems to call for a withdrawal of the church from society<sup>30</sup>. So his answer to the question, “what are the church’s specific obligations to society” seems to be “there are none.”<sup>31</sup> Though this may be a legitimate response to the question, it leaves many of us, including some who otherwise sympathize with Hauerwas, disconcerted. John Owen, for one, is more

comfortable with a notion of “dual citizenship” for the Christian, despite the fact that the state does not share the values of the church.

Though American society may deploy many corrupting influences against the Church and its members, the American state, by the grace of God, mostly continues to allow the Church to do its thing. The state, being the supreme coercive power in any country, is capable in theory of forcing the Church (and other communities) to change their practices or suffer punishment. America’s religious toleration is a reason why America not only deserves our loyalty, but also merits our continuing involvement. In a democracy the state is in principle responsible to the society it governs. Were Christians to cease being Americans in any meaningful sense, to withdraw completely from society, the state would be less responsible to us, and maybe less hospitable.<sup>32</sup>

But however undesirable it may appear, we will not take the sectarian issue of Hauerwas’s theory to be detrimental to his entire account. After all, it is easy enough to avoid by acknowledging that the account is, *in theory*, one of sectarian withdrawal, but noting that, *in practice*, it entails no detriment to the non-Christian society of the state. Of course the Christians will be conscientious objectors to military service, but this is no great offense to the state as such objection routinely comes from other sources: personal morality, just war theorists who deem a particular conflict unjust, monastics of any religion, etc.

We will focus our attention, then, on the specific ethical situations that Hauerwas’s account will have to deal with. For it seems that there is some degree of naiveté in a position that calls for pacifism based on the church’s withdrawal from society, while still remaining documented members of that society. In other words, is the success of Hauerwas’s position of nonviolence dependent upon someone else (namely, the state) doing the “dirty work” of protecting and defending people like Hauerwas?

That Hauerwas’s theory is structured to rely upon the very thing that he condemns as sinful and wishes to withdraw from presents a myriad of problems. In the first place, does one want to adopt a theological ethic that depends upon the existence and continual practice of sin?

For if the state and the church are partners, each with a role to play, one can, supposedly, not survive without the other. Are we, then, to hope that too many politicians do not join the church (as they would then be required to withdraw from political life)? Likewise with military personnel and civil servants; do we pray for their continued ignorance of God's will? What happens if the state *does* become overwhelmingly identified with the church? In this case, the state should be necessarily defenseless and without governance, owing to the fact that individual Christians have no social responsibility other than being devout members of the church. In light of these questions, the positive critique is this: If the role of the church is to point the way of God to the state, and it convincingly does so to the point that the individuals of the state eschew their civil duties and change allegiance to the church, then the state will be left in such a severely diminished capacity that it will no longer be able to function as a state and defend itself against any rival state who seeks to take advantage.

The difficult truth is that Hauerwas may not be entirely opposed to such a scenario. He might respond that if such a situation arose, then the church, charged to suffer in the name of righteousness, would simply bear the burden. But this presents a crucial conundrum, because if the church is to stand by and allow its own annihilation, what becomes of the partnership that is supposed to exist with the state? Who will point the state to the heavenly kingdom? Essentially, what greater morality will be served by allowing the church's destruction and thereby depriving the world of its beacon of righteousness?

The same critique may also be explored on the level of the individual, as Hauerwas's conception certainly applies to personal use of violence, as well. If a man is walking in a parking lot and is attacked by a stranger for whatever reason, what morality is realized in his decision to allow the beating? If it is only for the sake of the victim's personal morality, then it seems to be self-serving; a sort of "clean hands" approach to morality. This kind of critique is usually

countered with examples of the many instances in which pacifists have paid high prices for their refusal to fight back, sometimes including their loss of life. These are supposed to show that their personal pacifism is anything but selfish, but in fact, do nothing of the sort. Such defenses only prove that the pacifist was unselfish with his life, not that he was unselfish in his conception of morality. All things considered, what moral implications did his loss of life perpetuate? The moral individual is extinguished from being while the unjust attacker is rewarded with easy accomplishment of his devious goal, thereby encouraging him to continue in his immoral ways.

It is one thing to contend that personal suffering is simply part of the burden that Christians are to bear (as Hauerwas must do in response to the above example). But it is quite another to claim that such suffering is necessary of an innocent third party who does not even identify with Christianity. In this case, a non-Christian man is being beaten by a stranger in a parking lot, and a Christian person spots the fray while passing by. What is the Christian entitled to do in defense of this person? It seems that, according to Hauerwas, he is bound to do nothing at all, save politely asking the aggressor to cease his sinful activity. If this fails, how are we to justify the resulting suffering? The victim, as a non-Christian, certainly does not share the burden of suffering in the name of faith. It appears, then, that the pain and injustice has served no purpose, not even personal morality in this case. Furthermore, as one with the power to bring a swifter end to the injustice, the Christian, in his inaction, must be at least partly responsible for the result.

These considerations make it extremely difficult to see the value of Hauerwas's conception of pacifism, and harder to understand how it should be morally, even theologically desirable. He has based his theory on a social system that is far from stable and under the most successful circumstances liable to collapse. Any injustice that results from his pacifism seems to serve either ego-centric conceptions of morality, or pointless instances of suffering devoid of

moral significance. Hauerwas attempts to explain away these concerns within the umbrella statement (mentioned above) of the broadness of love for the neighbor. How, he asks, are we to qualify love for the victim state over and above love for the enemy state? But in the examples dealing with individuals and violence, we are hard pressed to see how failure to save an innocent victim for suffering or death is an act of love, or even an act *with respect* to love. Therefore, we must part company with Hauerwas since his theory fails to avoid any of the basic critiques of pacifism that we have already mentioned.

### 3.3. Social Ethics of Christian Love

Given the irresolvable problems with Hauerwas's theory, and the harshness of Niebuhr's brand of Realism, we find ourselves in the market for a theological position that will allow justifiable war while limiting violence and maximizing humanitarian compassion. As we enter into this final approach of the project let us briefly restate the overall goals of our study and where we currently stand. The question that we have been chasing is what should be the canonically supported, yet socially responsible Christian reaction to the use of violence. We have given particular emphasis to the question of violence as it manifests itself in war; i.e. violence of the state. Thus we have sought the best stance on war for a Christian state, or more practically, for Christians within a secular state.

Heretofore, we have recounted a number of ways in which one can be a pacifist, either ethically or theologically. We must now search out a competing position that will maintain some ethical coherence, as all of the conceptions of pacifism that we have examined have proven problematic. Having worked through these deep concerns about pacifism, we are now in a position to see the merit of a theory that is both intrinsically valuable and textually accordant. This position will be founded on the Christian's charge to reflect the love of God as a worldly manifestation. The biblical principle of love is clear and prevalent throughout the text. The



challenge, then, will be to show that love does not, in fact, preclude violence and may, at times, require it.

### 3.3.1. Christian Love

Love tends to be summoned by both ends of the theological spectrum on war, each believing the concept to be an asset to the respective position. As we have already seen with Hauerwas, love has sometimes been interpreted as an ideal that totally eschews evil to instantiate the love of God for the world, maintaining that only He is in a position to evaluate the one's deservingness of love. However, it is unavoidable that a theory which intentionally chooses to value inaction in the name of the universality of love shows favoritism towards an unjust party, and a diminished capacity for mercy towards the weak. Such interpretation of love also appears surprisingly cynical about our ability to positively influence the world. Inaction for love's sake seems to say, converse to the popular quotation, "stand by while they all kill each other, and let God sort them out." Surely this is not how we wish to conduct ourselves as Christians in the world.

A better interpretation of love must be developed and applied to a theory of just war. One theoretical approach to the ethics of love and violence is offered by Paul Ramsey, a Christian ethicist who wrestles with a theological understanding of social ethics that support a conception of limited and just war. Ramsey's Christian social ethics may be seen as a cousin to those of Hauerwas (as most theories of pacifism and just war can) insofar as they both reject the use of natural law as the sole or even a primary foundation for the ethical responsibility of the church. Both seek a theological justification for war or peace based on the ethic of Jesus and the community of the church as it applies to social obligations. In contrast, Ramsey can be seen in relation to Niebuhr for their agreement on the legitimized use of war as an acceptable vehicle of Christian social justice. Indeed, the two approach their idea of war from drastically different

principles. But Ramsey may be seen as an attractive alternative to the widely permissive realism of Niebuhr.

Once again, we shall start with a general conception of the social ethical responsibilities of the Christian before moving to its specific application to war, this time giving primacy to the feature of the gospel that is the over-arching theme of the New Testament: obedient Christian love. This love finds its source in both the righteousness and love of God and the reign of God's righteousness in his kingdom. For Ramsey, no Christian ethical theory can operate apart from these necessary religious foundations.<sup>33</sup>

In search of concrete tenants of social responsibility for the Christian, Christian love is constantly searching for social policies to which it may attach. Ramsey seeks to find these policies through a twofold investigation: first to examine the purpose of Christian ethics in society and find out if Christian love may be broad enough to serve as a social ethic in itself, and second to see if outside sources of ethical thought might be appropriate candidates for supplementing Christian love.

Quite simply, the function of Christian ethics in society is to provide a restraint on sin. Just as systems of checks and balances are woven into our everyday life in order to draw back the temptation of sin, so is the responsibility of a Christian social ethic to facilitate the organization of laws and policies in such a way that sin is kept debarred. In stark contrast to Hauerwas's idea that the church is to be essentially uninvolved in the workings of society, this position maintains that the church should make it its business to rightly influence society through love.

What positive things can be said about the substance of Christian ethics as it exists as a social ethic in itself? Ramsey finds it prudent to search for its content in two popular conceptions of Christian ethics: intuitionism and legalism (or natural law). Intuitionism can be

characterized as the idea that Christians are to act upon intuitively felt moral absolutes, which are presumably instances of divine command. A troubling feature of this sort of ethic is that there is no identifiable coherence from one moral judgment to the next. No universal truths are therein contained and nothing about the character of the demands of God are revealed. Thus intuitionism is to be rejected as an ethical system for the following reasons: (1) No intuition based on absolute faith in God can rightfully negate natural ethical duties. "Faith doubtless renders more impartial and sensitive the employment of reason in actually making moral judgments, but reason itself assesses the worth of any ethical truth disclosed to it."<sup>34</sup> (2) When love is seen as the definition of obedience to God, then no intuition which runs contrary to commonly perceived Christian love is permissible. The disbanded nature of judgment and contrariness to general reason render intuitional accounts of Christian ethics useless in providing substance to Christian ethics itself as social ethics.

Christian ethics may have a closer connection with conceptions of natural law, though natural law cannot serve as the foundation for Christian social ethics. Natural law must not be granted primacy for reasons similar to the rejection of intuitionism. In the first place, natural law may be seen as a sort of intuitional ethic, itself, as it relies on assumptions about moral absolutes of nature. In this case, the above objections to intuitionism apply. Furthermore, natural law, insofar as it is a legalist ethic, relies on dogmatic adherence to "natural" codes of conduct without room allotted for love and mercy. Thus,

Christian social ethics consists neither of intuition in search of a social policy nor of natural law possessed of a social policy. Christian love itself contains more definite or determinate directions for a social policy than natural law interpreted as an intuition; in terms of these intuition should be guided. On the other hand, the ethics of love approaches the task of finding a social policy with an indefinite, indeterminate and liberating norm when this is contrasted with any legalistic understanding of the law of nature.<sup>35</sup>

So it appears that Christian ethics must be supplemented by some other principle or principles in order to flesh out a social ethic of the church. The most important factor in searching through non-Christian specific ethics is the fact that the element of Christian love must enjoy sole primacy. No other principle shall be accepted as co-prime, nor shall any permanent coalition of ethical principles be adopted, lest Christian love should lose its element of mercy and adaptability and fall into legalism.

The only notion available to meet these conditions, for Ramsey, is a conception of Christian ethics that bonds with and makes use of the ethic produced by any school of thought that happens to best represent the most advanced version of “truth” and correspond with the nature of Christian love. These relationships blossom for the good of the people of the church and society, but are transitory coalitions in light of the constant and everlasting nature of Christian love. So, “...while Christian love makes alliance or coalition with any available sources of insight or information about what should be done, it makes *concordat* with none of these.”<sup>36</sup> Christian love must always remain “dominant and free,” though at any given time it may be in debt to any given social ethic.

We are now in a position to see justice interpreted through love. Basing an ethic solely on love raises worries about justice concerning the ability of love to adopt the discretion that justice requires. It seems that love, rather than upholding fairness, might be required to give partiality to any “neighbor” who presents himself, thus providing service to persons or groups at random or in whatever haphazard order they come. Such a (Hauerwasian) view casts love quite unfavorably. But surely “love which is unselfish need not therefore be unreasoning or unenlightened or accept no distinctions in its vocational obligations.”<sup>37</sup> With respect to justice, Christian love can and must still take account of the concrete factors that surround a situation, and make discretionary judgments. Such a concept of love as justice may require that persons be

treated equally in the name of justice, but it is just as possible that love as justice would require that persons be treated differently with respect to their situational inequality (i.e. distributive justice).

The generally agreed upon minimal functions of justice (ala Rousseau) should be to (1) create systems of objective generality which therefore (2) produce laws that apply equally to all people so that no individual or group must shoulder any undue burden. Satisfaction of these conditions is inherent to the structure of Christian love as justice. After all, Christians believe themselves to be accountable before God, and to be judged, themselves, by the standard with which they have judged others. Christian love necessarily demands minimal justice.

Now theological appropriateness of justified violence comes into the light through a coupling of discriminate justice and a foundational concept of love. Consider this biblical example of Christian love:

It was a work of charity for the Good Samaritan to give help to the man who fell among thieves. But one step more, it may have been a work of charity for the inn-keeper to hold himself ready to receive beaten and wounded men, and for him to have conducted his business so that he was solvent enough to extend credit to the Good Samaritan. By another step it would have been a work of charity, and not of justice alone, to maintain and serve in a police patrol on the Jericho road to prevent such things from happening. By yet another step, it might well be a work of charity to resist, by force of arms, any external aggression against the social order that maintains the police patrol along the road to Jericho. This means that, where the enforcement of an ordered community is not effectively present, it may be a work of justice and a work of social charity to resort to other available and effective means of resisting injustice: what do you think Jesus would have made the Samaritan do if he had come upon the scene while the robbers were still at their fell work?<sup>38</sup>

The underlying motivation for action in each of the scenarios above is Christian love. But as the narrative progresses farther each step, love can be increasingly seen as understood through justice, as it begins to qualify some violence. It is not the business of love to indiscriminately provide service to any and all parties (surely love does not require the Samaritan to express love to the bandits by helping them subdue the victim). Rather love as justice understands the

unbalance and injustice of the situation, and impels the Samaritan to take action in favor of the victim for the sake of mercy. Indeed, the narrative rings true with our moral feelings about how love functions in the world: not as a blinder to the reality of sin and injustice, but as a motivator to use proportional means to defend justice.

Specifically concerning the violence of war in the international arena, Christian love as justice evokes thoughts of Augustine, who espoused support for war in the name of love. Love, in this context, may lend its support to a state that means to punish or stop another state from wrong-doing (read: humanitarian intervention). Much as a parent who disciplines a child through coercive actions, such inter-state actions (when always yielding to just cause and right intention) constitute a selfless act of loving concern.

Though Augustine proclaimed wars of punishment and defense of a third party to occasionally be necessary products of Christian love, he generally proscribed wars of self-defense. This proscription appears to be the result of an inability to properly carry out the situational information gathering that is necessary to make an impartial judgment on behalf of love. In other words, one's own involvement as a party to an unjust occurrence threatens one's judgment of the situation to be biased in favor of self-preservation. Since this bias makes it impossible to objectively measure the situation, for Augustine, the requirements of justification cannot be met.

This picture certainly seems strange, not least because of its assumption that one cannot rightly know that he is the victim of injustice when being attacked. (Is our man who is assailed in a parking lot and beaten for his wallet to acquiesce on the grounds that he cannot be sure that he was the innocent party in the situation?) But we can also argue that Christian love does not only justify but may require violence in self-defense, at times. In the first place, it is conceivable that justified punishment for evil may take its shape in self-defense (again, the man in the

parking lot).<sup>39</sup> Moreover, if genuine love for one's neighbor is a love that subsists simply on the basis of the neighbor existing as a human being without further qualification, then perhaps love for (and action in preservation of) the self is not a vice, but a virtue. One's own humanity is necessarily equal to that of others, so there is no reason why one should not have the necessary rights of others to preserve himself.

The position I wish to establish is one that begins with a conception of love that reflects the love of God, with respect to wisdom, mercy, and justice. Love demands that we act upon justice as one manifestation of love in a world where Christians actively seek to positively influence society and restrain sin. In regards to violence, love as justice understands the intrinsic value of all humans (including the self or self-state) but understands the prudence of prioritizing commitments to others based upon each party's moral actions. Christian love as justice provides a general theologically supported, ethical foundation to the obligation to use justifiable violence, but itself does not propose specific and socially binding rules of execution. For this reason, tangible and contemporary ethical principles must supplement Christian love to enable its activity and guide its use in the contemporary social scene. In this case, Christian love finds favor with a moderate conception of cosmopolitan war theory to give a voice to love in the global political arena. Though human rights based war theory tends to justify more violence than appropriate, as the primary party in the relationship the love ethic should assist the moderation of violence and aid the deterrence of excessive aggression. This is a position to which we can confidently lend our support, both ethically and theologically. The final issue, then, shall be squaring this view with the New Testament texts.

### 3.3.2. The Sermon on the Mount

The particularly compelling aspect of pacifism as embodied by Hauerwas and Hays is, of course, its seemingly close adherence to the direct instructions given by Jesus. The decision to

favor a theory of justified violence (above the apparent New Testament instruction of nonviolence) revives the importance of Tom Wright's biblical interpretation that questions exactly *for whom* Jesus' instructions were intended. To review, Wright asserts that Jesus offered the ethical commandments of nonviolence to the specific audience of Israelites who were actively in support of rebellion against their imperial situation. Jesus preached Israel's unique purpose as the chosen people of God to usher in a new earthly, though divinely reflective, kingdom. The Israelites were to bring about this kingdom by resuming their call to be the salt of the earth. They should conduct their revolution in a manner that is contrary to the methods and expectations of the corrupt world.

Wright may agree with Hays in a minimal way: Jesus preached nonviolence to the audience, and he should be interpreted as having intended the audience to consequently practice nonviolence. But Wright does not believe that the advice was intended for all persons at all times. Up to now, we have left this tension between Hays and Wright unresolved, holding open the possibility that a successful conception of universal pacifism may blossom out of Hays's position. This clearly not having been the case, we are inclined to favor Wright's view of the Sermon on the Mount, opting to believe that Jesus did not provide generally applicable instructions that are in disparity with our best moral thinking.

But the gap cannot be definitively closed until we consider one possible loophole in Wright's theory. Wright contends that Jesus intended action only by a particular audience, the chosen people of Israel. The defender of Hays may choose to concede this point, but with one theological caveat: the church, as the followers of Christ, *is* Israel. After all, what is the church but the priesthood of Christ who stands apart from the world and calls the people to the one God? Thus the church could still be subject to the rigorous demands of Jesus in the Sermon.



It appears, then, that the crux of Wright's proposal must not just be the *who* of the Sermon, but also the *when*. That is, Jesus spoke exclusively to the nation of Israel in specific relevance to its first century imperial situation and in particular reference to the people's revolutionary aspirations. At this point in time, Jesus identified Israel's abandonment of its duty to be the chosen people, in substitution for a commonplace nationalism identical to that of all the other states under imperial rule. Far from being the city on a hill, Israel was one among many dissatisfied nations who sought to achieve independence through violence. Noting the specific intention of the Sermon on the Mount, it would be a mistake to extrapolate ethical meaning outside the context of its original time and audience. Following this line, we shall maintain that Jesus, in fact, did not call for absolute pacifism for all people at all times. Moreover, his personal nonresistance should not necessarily serve as an example of how all people should react to violence, but rather as an illustration of how a first century Palestinian Jew should act if he desires to overcome his imperial yoke.

Having further qualified Wright's position, we might now wonder if the Sermon on the Mount truly advances any sort of strict pacifism at all, even in the appropriate time/place circumstances. Wright offers a very non-general reading of the beatitudes that enables us to see the fundamental goal of his teaching: "Israel, abandon your revolutionary ambitions and return to your calling as the chosen people of God. Only then will you bring about God's kingdom." From this reading it is not necessary to extrapolate a general sort of ethical pacifism. Presumably, justice could still be upheld, even through personal or national violence (provided that it conforms to the principles of justice in war). The Sermon entreats the people of Israel to remember their call to servitude and act accordingly. Although the actionable steps of nonviolence are specific to the first century nationalistic ambitions of Israel, the ethically

interesting and timeless agenda of the speech is its demand on its hearers to *be* the people of God; an act that is greatly rooted in the manifestation of love.

Before the final rehearsal of the preferred theory, we should briefly acknowledge the awkwardness of the love theory of war. Although I have strongly remarked against conceptions of love that would not allow discriminate justice, the oddity of love as a foundation for violence is not lost on me. Is this a paradoxical position to maintain? To be sure, it rings dissonant with our general ideas about love. But we must recall that it is justice that love endorses, and justice which entails defense, rights, and punishment, and these things which, in proportionate degrees, might entail violence. So love and war are not entirely incompatible. But love's leading to war is certainly tragic, and reflects the tragic state of worldly affairs. Love, however, is our best effort to influence these affairs and affect the world in a positive way.

Let us conclude with a positive and final statement of the position. The teaching of Jesus regarding violence should be understood as being meant for the nation of Israel, specifically, as a part of its function as the chosen people of God. The message was meant for immediate application in first-century Palestine in effort to nonviolently usher in the politically righteous kingdom. The imperatives of the Sermon on the Mount have no application in any other context, thus we must not extrapolate Jesus' command to the present global political situation, nor should we assume that he called for any dogmatic sort of pacifism or eschewal of justice at all. Instead, we must seek a theology regarding violence and war that *is* rooted in a right understanding of Jesus' message of love that does in fact apply to all people and nations at all times. Love, while unbiased, is able to assess injustice with discrimination and act mercifully. At times, for reasons of self-defense, defense of a third party or other humanitarian concerns, such an action may involve violence and war. However, in effort to avoid abusive war-mongering, the strict and limiting tenants of justifiable entrance into war must be upheld. At the heart of it, wars of

defense are the only sorts that are permissible. Wars of intercession may be defined as defensive. The principle of Christian love, however, reduces the feasibility of aggressive humanitarian wars, which are morally dubious.

### 3.4 End Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Hays's discussion of Niebuhr's influence in Hays, Richard. 1996. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 215-225.

<sup>2</sup> For a fuller understanding of how Christian realism functions in relation to specific problems of social ethics, see Niebuhr 1953, *Christian Realism and Political Problems*.

<sup>3</sup> Niebuhr, Reinhold. 1940. *Christianity and Power Politics*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., ix.

<sup>5</sup> Niebuhr, Reinhold. Ed. Brown, Robert. 1986. *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 104.

<sup>6</sup> Niebuhr, Reinhold. 1940. *Christianity and Power Politics*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 6.

<sup>7</sup> Niebuhr, Reinhold. Ed. Brown, Robert. 1986. *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 103-105.

<sup>8</sup> See Niebuhr, Reinhold. 1958. *Essays in Applied Christianity*. New York: Meriden Books, 82-83. Niebuhr takes issue with those who point to figures like Ghandi as examples of pacifism perfectionism. In fact, Ghandi was nonviolently resistant (in disparity with the nonviolence of the gospel) and approached his position with strategic, realistic goals in mind for changing the climate of British imperialism. This nonviolence will not suffice for the Christian, for only truly self-sacrificial nonviolence can align with Jesus' ethic of love.

<sup>9</sup> Niebuhr, Reinhold. 1940. *Christianity and Power Politics*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 10. emphasis mine.

<sup>10</sup> Niebuhr, Reinhold. 1958. *Essays in Applied Christianity*. New York: Meriden Books, 80-81.

<sup>11</sup> Niebuhr, Reinhold. Ed. Brown, Robert. 1986. *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 114.

<sup>12</sup> Matt 7:28-29.

<sup>13</sup> Matt 7:24.

<sup>14</sup> Matt 28:18. See also Hays, Richard. 1996. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 321-322.

<sup>15</sup> Hauerwas, Stanley. 1983. *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, xxiv.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 101. This idea of the church and world as relational concepts is an odd feature of Hauerwas's account which we will discuss further in the following.

<sup>19</sup> Hauerwas, Stanley. 1985a. "Pacifism: Some Philosophical Considerations." *Faith and Philosophy*, Vol. 2, No. 2., 99.

<sup>20</sup> Hauerwas, Stanley. 1994. *Dispatches from the Front: Theological Engagements with the Secular*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 137.

<sup>21</sup> Hauerwas, Stanley. 1983. *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 104.

<sup>22</sup> Hauerwas, Stanley. 1985a. "Pacifism: Some Philosophical Considerations." *Faith and Philosophy*, Vol. 2, No. 2., 101.

<sup>23</sup> Hauerwas, Stanley. 1994. *Dispatches from the Front: Theological Engagements with the Secular*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 118.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>26</sup> Hauerwas, Stanley. 1983. *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 114.

<sup>27</sup> Hauerwas, Stanley. 1994. *Dispatches from the Front: Theological Engagements with the Secular*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 134.

<sup>28</sup> Hauerwas, Stanley. 1984. *Should War Be Eliminated?* Milwaukee, Marquette University Press, 17.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 51. Imbedded quote is from Yoder, 1971. *The Original Revolution*. Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 58.

<sup>30</sup> Hauerwas has argued continually that his ethic is not one of withdrawal. Unfortunately, the facts on the ground prove otherwise, and Hauerwas's unqualified insistence has not deterred them.

<sup>31</sup> Perhaps it would be more favorable to qualify the answer with "any social obligations that the church does have are, in fact, satisfied alongside the act of satisfying the obligations of the church to be the church." However, the point remains that no specific, concrete duties to the state without appeal to the church are herein endorsed.

<sup>32</sup> Owen, John. 2004. "St. Benedict after September 11." *First Things*.  
[http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id\\_article=324](http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id_article=324)

<sup>33</sup> Ramsey, Paul. 1950. *Basic Christian Ethics*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 339.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 342-343.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 344.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 347.

<sup>38</sup> Ramsey, Paul. 1968. *The Just War*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 142-143.

<sup>39</sup> This is the reasoning of Martin Luther who argued that one might be able to use violence in self-defense for the sake of others. In this way, the use of violence is preserved as a selfless act. Luther strongly cautioned against this usage, however, fearing abuse of the principle. Ramsey discusses this view in 1950, *Christian Ethics*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 176.

## REFERENCES

- Augustine. 1963. *City of God*, trans. J.W.C. Wand. London: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, Robert. 1986. *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Doppelt, Gerald. 1978. "Walzer's Theory of Morality in International Relations." *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 8, no. 1: pp. 3-26.
- Elshtain, Jean B. 1992. *Just War Theory*, New York: New York University Press.
- Fiala, Andrew. 2006. "Pacifism", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pacifism>.
- Glover, Jonathan. 2000. *Humanity: A Moral History of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Guelich, Robert. 1982. *The Sermon on the Mount*, Waco: Word Books.
- Hauerwas, Stanley. 1974. *Vision and Virtue*, Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, Inc.
- 1983. *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- 1984. *Should War Be Eliminated?* Milwaukee, Marquette University Press.
- 1985a. "Pacifism: Some Philosophical Considerations." *Faith and Philosophy*, Vol. 2, No. 2. pp. 99-104.
- 1985b. *Against the Nations*. Minneapolis: Winston Press.
- 1994. *Dispatches from the Front: Theological Engagements with the Secular*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Hays, Richard. 1996. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Holmes, Robert. 1989. *On War and Morality*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Horsley, Richard. 1993. *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Johnson, James Turner. 1975. *Ideology, Reason, and the Limitation of War*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- 1981. *Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- 1984. *Can Modern War be Just?* New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Lackey, Douglas. 1982. "Review: A Modern Theory of Just War." *Ethics*, Vol. 92, No. 3, Special Issue: Symposium on Moral Development. pp. 533-546.
- Luban, David. 1980a. "Just War and Human Rights", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 9, no. 2: pp. 160-181.
- 1980b. "The Romance of the Nation State", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 9, no. 4: pp. 392-397.

Orend, Brian. 2005. "War." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/war>.

Piper, John. 1979. *Love Your Enemies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nagel, Thomas. 1972. "War and Massacre", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 1, no. 2: pp. 123-144.

Narveson, Jan. 1965. "Pacifism: A Philosophical Analysis", *Ethics*, vol. 75, no. 4: pp. 259-271.

Niebuhr, Reinhold. 1940. *Christianity and Power Politics*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons.  
-----1958. *Essays in Applied Christianity*. New York: Meriden Books.

Owen, John. 2004. "St. Benedict after September 11." *First Things*.  
[http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id\\_article=324](http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id_article=324)

Ramsey, Paul. 1950. *Basic Christian Ethics*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.  
-----1968. *The Just War*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Reader, Soran. 2000. "Making Pacifism Plausible", *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, vol. 17: pp. 169-180.

Simmons, A. John. 1999. "Justification and Legitimacy." *Ethics*, vol.109., no. 4., pp. 739-771.

Song, Edward. 2008. "Cosmopolitan Sovereignty and the Morality of Intervention."  
(forthcoming)

Swartley, Willard M. (ed.) 1992. *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament*, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press.

Teichman, Jenny. 1986. *Pacifism and the Just War*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Walzer, Michael. 1977. *Just and Unjust Wars*, New York: Basic Books.  
-----1980. "The Moral Standing of States: A Response to Four Critics", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 9, No. 3: pp. 209-229.

Weaver, Dorthy Jean. "Transforming Nonresistance: From *Lex Talionis* to 'Do Not Resist the Evil One'", *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament*, ed. Swartley, Willard, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press.

Wink, Walter. 1988. "Neither Passivity nor Violence: Jesus' Third Way", *SBL Seminar Papers*, pp. 210-224. Rpt. in *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament*, ed. Swartley, Willard, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press.

Wright, N. Thomas. 1996. *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.  
-----1999. *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

Yoder, John Howard. 1984. *The Priestly Kingdom*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

----- 1994. "How Many Ways Are There to Think Morally About War?" *Journal of Law and Religion*, Vol. 11, No. 1. pp. 83-107.



## **VITA**

John T. Thames, Jr. is a native of Pineville, Louisiana. He obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree from Louisiana State University in 2004 with a major in philosophy, a concentration in religious studies, and a minor in Jewish studies. John returned to Louisiana State University in 2006 to begin his graduate work. In addition to religious ethics, John is active in the study of the Hebrew bible and Ancient Near Eastern language and culture.