The Politics of Love and War
What Is Our Responsibility?

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Throughout their history Christians have faced this question: Can I refuse to kill others and still be morally responsible when violent, aggressive groups threaten other people? Can Christian love respond effectively to political violence? Can we love our enemies and still exercise moral responsibility toward others in an age of terrorism, pre-emptive and preventive wars, ruthless dictators, weapons of mass destruction, and a too often divided United Nations? Another question also interests us: How can we translate our charitable motives into the prevention of hostile violence and the avoidance of war altogether? I address these questions here speaking as a political scientist for whom ethics matter, not as a theologian.

To address the preceding questions, I will describe, first, the main criticism of Christian pacifism, particularly the claim that the Christian pacifist is not politically responsible. This criticism has dominated most political thought since the origins of our present international system, which grew out of the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, a response to the European religious wars that preceded it.

Second, I will examine the claim that nonpacifists are politically responsible because they are willing to fight wars. I will argue that new conditions in world affairs increasingly call that claim into question. To be sure, political violence and war do threaten us in new ways. But it does not necessarily follow that focusing on preparation for war is the best way to address current and future threats of armed conflict.

Third, I will argue that a comprehensive expression of Christian pacifism, if understood in its full potentiality, can be a responsible way to live. Finally, I will sketch a future world on which many pacifists and nonpacifists could agree if they would take Christian values more seriously or, for those throughout the world who are not Christian, if they would take seriously what we might call the values of human dignity. These are values of respect for human life rooted in the world's major living religious traditions, even though they are expressed internationally not in religious language but in the lingua franca of international law found in seminal documents like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the human rights provisions of the United Nations Charter, and major human rights treaties.

Evaluating the Claim that Pacifists Are Not Politically Responsible

The influential Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr and political theorists such as Max Weber authored some of the most telling, classic criticisms of pacifism.[1] These and more recent similar criticisms continue to express the dominant school of thought in international relations. Policymakers in Washington, as well as political leaders in most capitals throughout the world, reject pacifism as politically irresponsible and ineffective in opposing military threats.

Widespread acceptance of political killing in war occurred much earlier in history, of course, going back to ancient times. In the 1500s, Niccolo Machiavelli developed arguments legitimizing military killing that are still widely accepted. In The Prince, he advocated the use of military force whenever a ruler calculated that it would bring substantial political or economic gain to do so.[2] Although this perspective, which views war as a morally acceptable instrument of normal statecraft, is called "realism," it is not necessarily more realistic in the sense of having an accurate grasp of reality than some other ways of thinking that are less ideological and more sensitive to empirical observation of the causes of war and the conditions for establishing peace.

Niebuhr considered himself to be a political realist, even a Christian realist. There are many varieties of realists; Machiavelli and Niebuhr typify realism as I use the term in this essay. They advised political leaders not to be constrained by moral reservations about killing when war seemed necessary for security. Political realists include people such as Otto von

Bismarck (known for practicing realpolitik, the German term for political realism), and more contemporary political scientists such as Hans Morgenthau, Henry Kissinger, Kenneth Waltz, and John Mearsheimer. And although she often seems driven by ideological preferences, former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice calls herself a realist. Most policymakers and scholars of international relations do also.

Political realists believe that officials should focus on maximizing the power of the state, measured primarily in terms of military power and secondarily economic strength. Moral principles and humanitarian values should not stop political leaders from using violence when they deem it necessary. The Christian realist—a term I use here interchangeably with "nonpacifist"—says that war in general is acceptable, but that a particular war can be considered legitimate only when it meets the standards for a just war.[3] Political realism has dominated U.S. foreign policy regardless of which political party has been in power. It has shaped high school civics classes, television programs, talk radio, and movies. It has influenced most people's minds and limited our imaginations in ways that discourage us, even without being conscious of it, from thinking about genuine possibilities for nonmilitary strategies to build peace. Religious pacifists have not always been immune to these influences. Indeed, the influence of some military thinking in our culture could be seen as a modern analogue to the influence of idol worship that led the ancient Hebrews astray.

Niebuhr acknowledged that pacifists, in refusing to fight wars, might be more faithful in following Jesus' example and teaching of nonviolent love than are soldiers. But he also said that they are not politically responsible. He was particularly concerned that pacifist thinking might discourage the United States from fighting Hitler in World War II. Later, he worried that pacifism could weaken public support for a U.S. military buildup against the Soviet Union during the Cold War. According to Niebuhr, to keep a clean conscience by not killing, pacifists refused to support high levels of military preparedness and to fight wars even though these were necessary to protect the United States from hostile violence.[4] Centuries earlier Augustine had said that, although it was wrong for Christians to kill others in order to defend themselves, because that would be too selfish and self-interested, they did have a duty to fight and kill, when necessary, in order to protect other innocent people against attacks by ruthless, aggressive armies.[5] However, despite the selfless origin for this thinking, it has led in practice to using violence for self-defense or self-aggrandizement more than for defense of the most innocent. Niebuhr said that willingness to kill in order to

protect one's society was a duty.[6]

In short, Christian realists may acknowledge that pacifists are faithful to Jesus' teachings of nonviolent love for all, even enemies, but they also usually condemn pacifists for not being responsible in defending the political order. Realists say that pacifists have too much faith in God, even a naïve faith that political conflicts will turn out in acceptable ways if people live as nonviolently as Jesus did.

How do pacifists respond to this criticism? Although there are many kinds of pacifists, most Christian pacifists historically have not claimed to be politically responsible. We can find exceptions, but in general religious pacifists claimed to be ethically responsible in following Jesus. They chose not to worry about political effectiveness. They believed that a Christian should place more emphasis on being faithful in following Jesus than on estimating the possible political consequences of being faithful and then watering down faithfulness in order to become more "effective" politically. Being effective in such instances usually has meant protecting one's own state through killing other people.

Those Christian pacifists who are also political activists point out that realists are in error if they say that pacifists do nothing to resist military aggression. Many pacifists oppose military aggression in every way they can while still keeping their actions consistent with agape. They refuse to kill others in their opposition to aggression, but they, like Brethren pacifist Ted Studebaker who died in Vietnam in 1971, are willing to put their lives on the line in the struggle to prevent hostile violence from engulfing the world.

If pacifists are not focused on the political effectiveness of their actions, are they guilty as charged, then, of not being responsible? "Responsibility" means having a duty to another, or being legally or ethically responsible for the welfare of another. To assess responsibility we need to ask, Responsible to whom? And for what? A person may be responsible to God, to family and friends, to fellow citizens in one's society, to all people, or particularly for the Christian, to "the least of these" described in Matthew 25. There Jesus explained, "I was hungry and you gave me food, … I was thirsty and you gave me drink, … I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me" (Matt. 25:35-36). Jesus seems to be saying that these downtrodden ones are the people to whom his followers should express responsibility in this world because that is a practical way of being faithful to God. This is an important

passage because it is the basis for God's judgment about who has lived rightly, and, as Jesus says in verse 34, this standard of compassion has been in place since "the foundation of the world." It expresses both God's will for our lives and our most authentic or true selves as God created us. Any other conduct expresses a false self and contradicts God's will.

We also need to ask, Responsible for what? The pacifist says that we are responsible for showing compassion for the "least of these," and for loving all people, as Jesus loved. In contrast, Christian realists emphasize that we are responsible for protecting our country and its way of life and for protecting the political order based on independent states in the inter-state system. In my view, God is the one to whom Christians should express first responsibility. In honoring this responsibility to love God, we discover our second responsibility: to love our neighbor and especially to express compassion for the poor and downtrodden. If we do this for the least of these, says Jesus, we have loved God and been faithful, or we might say "responsible."

Let us use the label "type 1 responsibility" to refer to being responsible to God by being faithful to the ethic that Jesus taught. Let us call "type 2 responsibility" being responsible to those people who are most in need of help because of their possible victimization by hostile violence and poverty—the people Jesus referred to as "the least of these." Let us label "type 3 responsibility" the idea of political realists that we should shoulder responsibility for protecting the political order and the people who benefit from living in the political order. There is less Biblical authority for type 3 responsibility. Indeed, some pacifists might deny that we have a type 3 responsibility. But because political institutions provide benefits of law and order and economic organization, let us keep this third type of responsibility in view.

Type 1 and type 2 responsibility both emphasize being faithful to the Biblical injunction to be loving rather than to be calculating how to be politically effective. This emphasis is the reason that the Church of the Brethren, for example, since its origins in 1708, has opposed war in all its forms and has affirmed repeatedly at its annual meetings over the years that "all war is sin."[7] In opposing all war, Brethren do not ask, as nonpacifist Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Orthodox should, whether a particular war meets the standards for a just war. For Brethren, there can be no ethically acceptable war, no justifiable cause for killing, even if a war satisfies just war criteria. Type 1 responsibility emphasizes principles to follow and only secondarily pays attention to the consequences of following them. This

approach is sometimes called a deontological or rule-based ethic.

Let me sum up the argument so far. To the claim by nonpacifists that pacifists are not responsible, pacifists respond: Pacifists are responsible in fulfilling type 1 responsibility to God, and in fulfilling type 2 responsibility to neighbors, at least in part by not killing anyone in war and by helping the "least of these." Whether or not pacifists fulfill type 3 responsibility depends upon whether one considers nonviolent instruments of defense to be a satisfactory defense of the existing political order. Pacifists probably would; nonpacifists would not. However, we still need to discuss whether it is ethically desirable to fulfill type 3 responsibility when defined as defending the existing international political order. Before we do that, let us examine the seldom examined assumption that those who are willing to fight are responsible.

Evaluating the Claim That Nonpacifists Are Responsible

To be responsible, according to Christian realists, Christians should honor their duty to defend through military means the existing political order when it is threatened by hostile violence, and particularly to defend democratic nation-states and the balance-of-power system in which nation-states enjoy political independence. Refusal to defend the political order with violence would result, they claim, in capitulation to the most ruthless and aggressive political leaders. Christian just war thinkers have said since the time of Augustine that Christians are justified in using violence to protect other innocent people who might be attacked. Nonpacifists argue that without U.S. military force poised against Kaiser Wilhelm in World War I, against Hitler and Tojo in World War II, against Stalin in the Cold War, against North Korea in the Korean War, and against Iraq and Iran and North Korea today, evil forces would take over. At first glance, it appears that realists should receive high marks for type 3 responsibility. They sacrifice and struggle to uphold the political order and protect their society against intruders. But upon further examination, it turns out that, in practice, realists or nonpacifists have serious problems in meeting all three forms of responsibility.

As for type 1 responsibility to God and Jesus' teachings, even Niebuhr admits that nonpacifist realists do not do as well as pacifists in imitating Jesus' love for neighbor and enemy. In type 2 responsibility to other people, nonpacifists have found it difficult to

support justifiable wars without unintentionally also encouraging unjustifiable reliance on high levels of military preparedness and other militaristic policies for security. Realists' endorsement of high military preparedness and overseas deployments may have inadvertently encouraged subsequent reactive cycles of competitive armament, counter threats, and terrorism. The emphasis on a Christian duty to use military force has often moved people away from strict adherence to just war doctrine and to encouragement of unjustifiable threats and uses of military force. Many Christians have supported the George W. Bush administration's attack on Iraq, for example, even though it did not meet generally accepted just war standards. It began as a preventive war that the United States chose to start, not as a war of last resort or of defense against an imminent attack. If a U.S. adversary had waged such a war, many in the United States would probably have called it a war of aggression. Yet it was possible for the United States to wage this particular war with impunity because of Christian realist acceptance of war in general.

Another negative consequence of endorsing political violence is that this endorsement, over time, changes our values, our ways of thinking, and ourselves. As the psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton, who has studied moral degeneration produced by relying on military power, has concluded, the way we survive determines the future we create.[8] If we survive by the sword, we will create a world with many swords pointed at us. Or as Seneca said more than 2000 years ago, "Power over life and death—don't be proud of it. Whatever [others] … fear from you, you'll be threatened with."[9] To illustrate, every offensive weapon we have procured in the past to protect ourselves has eventually come back to haunt us when others have obtained it. Throughout the Cold War we were, in our nuclear deterrence policies, fully prepared to kill millions of innocent Russians for the misdeeds of their government over which they had no control. Christian realists became numb to threatening this sort of mass murder. In nuclear deterrence policies the United States threatened to kill more innocent civilians than were killed by the ruthless aggressive states in World War II. We also built a military-industrial complex so large that now it has begun to control the government rather than the other way around. We still have not been willing to say that we would never use nuclear weapons first in battle, even though willingness to use nuclear weapons first, let alone use them at all, cannot be squared with Christian ethics or even with the United Nations Charter, which prohibits both the threat and the use of force except in self-defense.

The failure to meet type 2 responsibility to love other people is further indicated by a look at contemporary violent conflicts. Seventy to 90 percent of the people killed in modern intrastate wars are civilians. In interstate wars also, often more civilians than soldiers are killed. It is difficult to show that these wars are primarily wars about protecting the innocent from harm, the only possible way Christians could justify them.[10]

Another negative consequence of endorsing war as a legitimate instrument is that wars and preparation for wars encourage deceit. Wars are almost always justified in highly moralistic terms, but often they serve much narrower, selfish purposes, so governments mislead people in order to elicit their support. Prolonged deceit, which accompanies both cold and hot wars, conditions a society to accept military solutions to problems where military means are not necessary or the most effective means. High levels of military preparedness also interfere with devoting money and energy to helping the poor and alleviating conditions that give rise to violence. General acceptance of war and of nuclear deterrence as legitimate instruments of foreign policy brings so many negative consequences that this acceptance hardly fulfills type 2 responsibility to other people.

What about type 3 responsibility—to defend the existing political order and one's own society within it? Nonpacifists' endorsement of high levels of military preparedness, over time, perpetuates the present balance of power system, which is ultimately a military balance of power and a war-based system of international relations. This system encourages national governments to rely on military means for their security, encourages arms competition, discourages policies aimed at replacing the rule of military force with the rule of international law, and disadvantages the poor and the weak, who are most in need of being protected. Although the international system has positive features, such as the diversity among different societies that it facilitates, the negative consequences of this system lead us to ask the question, Is upholding the present international political order a Christian responsibility? Does this order need reform at least as badly as it needs to be maintained? The continuation, year after year, of extreme poverty, lawlessness, and gross violations of human rights in the current international system suggests that prevailing institutions and priorities do not meet our responsibilities to love God and our neighbor. They need deep change. The failure of existing national and global institutions calls into question whether the third responsibility, defined by nonpacifists as the need to uphold the political order, is really an ethically desirable responsibility.

Indeed, to perpetuate the present international system may not be consistent with Christian ethics, if a better system can be created. The present system provides many material incentives for national selfishness, military rivalries, gross violations of human rights, and related unchristian conduct. The possibility that what we have defined as type 3 responsibility (to protect the existing political order) is not a Christian duty is much more likely today than when Niebuhr wrote. Although the mixed results of the present international system are debatable, the poorest half of the world's population does not find this systemic structure congenial to human life.

It is possible today to take steps toward more effective and more democratic global governance in which the rule of law would, gradually over many years, replace the rule of force in international affairs. Yet even modest steps in this direction, such as ratifying treaties to limit nuclear weapons testing and production, or to prevent deploying weapons in space, are not being taken. Indeed such steps have been opposed by the United States. Washington has refused to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which would have prohibited all nuclear weapons testing by signatories. At the same time, the United States strongly opposes efforts by some other states to move closer to testing nuclear weapons. Washington withdrew from the anti-ballistic missile treaty because U.S. officials did not want to be legally bound to stop testing space weapons, even though they do not want other states to test them. This treaty had already been ratified, had become international law, and was working to discourage deployment of weapons in space. The United States leads in military technology for space by a huge margin. But rather than seek a total ban of all weapons in space, the United States seems eager to put its own weapons in orbit. If it does, they will be followed by weapons from others that will eventually make us all less secure than we are now.

Because the United States and some other great powers actively oppose creating a more stable and peaceful international system in which international mechanisms for war prevention could be enhanced gradually until eventually they would become quite reliable, those governments can hardly claim that war for them is a last resort. They have refused to take reasonable peace-time steps to build institutions to constrain war. As a result, even from a Christian realist standpoint, one cannot be politically responsible in endorsing wars by these governments because their wars cannot satisfy a fundamental just war standard, namely, that war is justified only after all other avenues have been tried in good faith and

failed.[11]

Ironically, the most worrisome violent threats that U.S. citizens face today cannot be effectively addressed through primarily military means. Yet it is in military means that a majority of people continue to place their ultimate faith. We cannot eliminate terrorism with war or military threats. Such threats, together with the maintenance of an inequitable global system, are likely to generate terrorism. Even U.S. national intelligence reports conclude that terrorism has been made worse by the war in Iraq, a war that the U.S. elected to start. To address terrorism, we need good civilian police, international sharing of intelligence, effective internal and equitable international legal processes, cooperation from nearly every country on earth, and genuine efforts to address the conditions that give rise to terrorism.

Similarly, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction cannot be effectively addressed through primarily military means. In fact, it is in part because North Korea and Iran have felt threatened militarily by the United States that they want nuclear technology. Their fears grew, following the U.S. attack on Iraq, that the United States might attack governments that it does not like unless they have some means of striking back at the United States to deter it.

To justify his willingness to attack Iraq without UN authorization, President George W. Bush famously said in a nationally televised address before both houses of Congress that the United States would never seek a permission slip to use military force. As he spoke, nearly every member of Congress in our revered Capitol building rose in a standing ovation and cheered upon hearing no “permission slip.” This is an understandable reaction to an understandable statement when one places faith in military power. Subsequently, President Bush and the same members of Congress now wish that North Korea and Iran would seek a permission slip before they obtain the weapons that the United States already has set an example for obtaining.

In the long run, security threats, including the impending deployment of weapons in space, can be dealt with most successfully and sustainably through equitable arms control agreements that are solidly verified and enforced. Yet Christian realist support for war and for the present international system in practice impedes efforts to meet security threats through nonmilitary means and to transform our system of world order. The present international system has been around so long that we think of it as natural or necessary,

even though it is neither. It is analogous to other institutional structures that have existed for centuries but then were dramatically changed. Slavery is an example of a time-honored institution that was so undesirable that people dismantled it.[12] The present international system, like feudalism, slavery, and the institutions of the Roman Empire, is an institution created by humans and able to be transformed by humans. The meaning of political responsibility today should include a willingness to establish a different political order if it would do better in fulfilling type 3 responsibility for preventing war, building peace, and implementing justice.

To sum up this look at the claim that nonpacifists are politically responsible, we have discovered that many people who acquiesce in current policies—the policies that may have brought some semblance of security in an earlier age—are not very effectively exercising responsibility in today's international context. Those policies and institutions are no longer producing security nor are they dedicated to helping the "least of these." They appear to be incapable of producing security in the future because technologies of death and destruction are too readily available to those governments and nongovernmental actors willing to kill. The United States has led the way in producing many of these technologies with the support of Christian realists. If nonpacifists continue on the present path, they may not fulfill type 1, type 2, or, surprisingly, even type 3 responsibilities.

Possibilities for Becoming More Responsible

We have been looking at two different ethical approaches to fulfilling responsibility: Christian pacifists emphasize following moral principles, such as loving neighbors and enemies; Christian realists emphasize the consequences of how one's conduct helps to defend the political order. Although both groups may give some attention to both the moral principles that they should follow and the consequences, the Christian pacifist emphasizes the first more than the second, and the Christian realist emphasizes the second more than the first. Perhaps both can benefit from further reflection. Pacifists could look more fully at the meaning and consequences of their pacifism, not to weaken their commitment to a nonviolent ethic, which can be morally responsible, but to see how to apply their ethical principles more effectively and comprehensively to round out their love of others and to move far beyond simply not killing them or simply acquiescing in the existing, unsatisfactory political order. It is time to develop a new theology of peace that explores

how to create a more compassionate political, economic, and environmental world order that would do better at war prevention.

At the same time, Christian nonpacifists need to pay more attention to ensuring that the consequences that they want to achieve, such as peace and stability, are in fact attained through the means they choose rather than undermined by them, as now often seems to be the case. If one consequence of chronic high levels of military preparedness is to encourage unjustifiable wars and killings and to reinforce an unrepresentative, violence-prone international system that appears to be a form of global apartheid for the poor, then new policies are required. If both pacifists and nonpacifists reflect, they may both find some common ground in building a more effective, more democratic, and more peaceful form of global governance with enhanced capabilities to discourage war.

Pacifists can work at their responsibility in several ways. First, to fulfill their responsibility to the "least of these," pacifists can do more than refuse to kill others in war. The same love for neighbor that leads pacifists to non-killing should also motivate them to intense efforts to end poverty, ensure access to public education, and promote justice throughout the world. Their desire not to kill should lead them also to do their utmost to see that other people are not killed, harmed, or their lives shortened substantially by the economic and political structures within which they live (sometimes called "structural violence"). In doing this, pacifists can in part address the Niebuhrian and Augustinian criticism of pacifists that they do not do enough to protect the victims of aggression and injustice.

Thoughtful pacifists may also witness to the need for fundamental changes in the international system because the poverty perpetuated by the present international system kills more people, day after deadly day, than are being killed in war. "About 50,000 human deaths per day are due to poverty-related causes and therefore avoidable insofar as poverty itself is avoidable."[13] Today 800 million people are malnourished; a billion lack access to safe drinking water, adequate shelter, and basic health services. More than two billion lack basic sanitation. The ratio of income between the richest fifth of the world's population to poorest fifth was three to one in the early 1800s. It was seven to one in 1870, eleven to one in 1913, thirty to one in 1960, sixty to one in 1990, and seventy-four to one in 1997.[14] Can a global system that has done this over the past 200 years possibly be consistent with Jesus' teachings about concern for the poor? The members of the historic peace churches in the past have favored dismantling military conscription because it forced young people into a

killing organization. It might follow logically that they should also favor reforming the international system because it is forcing people to kill indirectly. We do not choose this form of killing, but we are trapped by the present balance-of-power system into going along with it and being part of it.[15]

The same compassion for others that leads pacifists not to kill can also be an act of political responsibility if they communicate a simple vote of “no confidence” to elected officials who support present priorities. Pacifists can educate their families and churches and work with fellow citizens, including nonpacifists, to nudge the U.S. government and other governments to change. Pacifists can make it clear that they do not intend to endorse war and inequitable global economic structures, because more effective and equitable global governance could be established to increase human security while gradually reducing reliance on military instruments.

Pacifists need to be clear not only where they stand on U.S. political issues, but also on acts of violence by others everywhere in the world. Loving enemies means genuine concern for their wellbeing and a principled evaluation of their conduct, especially if it is violent conduct. Evaluations of international conduct can be globally more legitimate when they are done cooperatively with people of other faiths and by applying international law equally on all governments and people. Over the long course of history, the politically most responsible path toward peace and justice and the most loving path toward enemies are likely to be same path, especially when diverse nationalities are seen as part of one global human community.

In considering and possibly implementing the measures suggested here, Christian pacifists can be responsible in a new way: by building global peace and justice, not simply refraining from killing. If pacifists exercise all three types of responsibility even while prioritizing type 1 and type 2 responsibilities, they can help usher in new national and international initiatives to advance peace and justice. The refusal to fight, if the reasons for the refusal are carefully communicated and combined with new work for economic justice and system change, can be more responsible than an easy readiness to send troops into crises as they arise. Easy endorsement of military combat today reveals an unwarranted faith in the utility of military power and, perhaps, an ideological mindset. In our era and in the foreseeable future, military power is useful mainly for destruction but not for social integration and peacebuilding. Yet the power to promote healthy social integration is the form of power most needed today, even by the greatest military the world has known. The United States

military can easily destroy any other army on earth, but it has not provided minimal security or kept the lights on in a small country that it occupied in the Middle East, even after several years of trying and the expenditure of nearly a trillion dollars.

As a result of these changes, Christian pacifists today can exercise a more influential political role, if they choose to do so, in a context where the utility of military power has declined drastically and the many-faceted costs of relying on military preparedness and war have risen enormously. Moreover, humans' ability to achieve global security through nonmilitary means has increased sufficiently to make war obsolescent, given the will to do so.

Christian pacifism, of course, does not solve all problems. For example, Christian pacifists understandably struggle with the agony of Christian-Muslim violence wherever it occurs, and especially among friends in Kenya, Nigeria, Sudan, and elsewhere. When religious bigots or militia bent on ethnic cleansing knock on the door, when an airplane is deliberately crashed into the World Trade Center, when families are sent to the gas chambers or die in bombing raids, there are no simple answers. Of course Christian realists have not solved all problems either, as much of history shows, so the inability of the Christian pacifist to solve every problem is in itself not a reason to take a more violent position.

A Future on which Many Pacifists and Nonpacifists Might Agree?

To continue relying on military policies that have not worked in the past is not likely to make sense to someone who is a careful consequentialist or a thoughtful realist (as compared to someone following ideology or political dogma). Some who call themselves realists, however, appear not to look carefully at the consequences, in terms of all the losses, that flow from their endorsement of war. Governments often try to hide the consequences of war and do not want pictures on television to show the consequences of war policies, such as soldiers' flag-draped coffins. When blindfolded by political leaders, the public more readily follows. Ideological proclivity to accept killing appears, in this era of global interdependence and weapons of mass destruction, to be more at odds with rule-based pacifism in the quest for moral responsibility than is a morally cautious consequentialism. This proclivity seems widespread in U.S. culture today, even among some Christians.

Why do many in the peace churches fail to appreciate how relevant and responsible pacifists can be? Why do they not feel confident that their best beliefs offer supremely valuable guidelines for how the world can successfully address its major problems? Is it because the great Christian pacifist traditions have inadvertently internalized too much of the larger culture's ideological skepticism of those who refuse to kill? Have people in these traditions believed too much of the political realists' criticism that pacifists are unrealistic and are not politically responsible? Perhaps members of the peace churches need to live their own faith more deeply, more creatively. They can confidently interact with Christian nonpacifists and people of other faiths who share their aversion to war even though they are not pacifists. Although Christian pacifists ought not replace their traditional emphasis on faithfulness with an over-emphasis on political responsibility, they may be strengthened in their faith by the knowledge that being faithful, in the fullest sense, brings with it highly responsible consequences as well.

It is good to follow the ethic of agape for its own sake and also to consider more carefully the consequences of where following this ethic leads. Christian responsibility calls us to make the right choices, not to achieve great political outcomes. Our choices we can determine; political outcomes are usually beyond our control. Type 1 responsibility to God and type 2 responsibility to love "the least of these" should shape our choices about how we carry out type 3 responsibility to the political order. Pacifists' refusal to endorse war should highlight their commitment to building more just, peaceful, democratic, and compassionate international and national political orders. Pacifists can work with all people of goodwill in making peace through peaceful means and by trying harder to replace the rule of force with the rule of law in world affairs.

When facing hostile violence over the long run, it is not necessary to limit ourselves to a twofold choice between surrender and sending in the troops. The possibility of establishing a third alternative, a rule-of-law society on the global level, makes it likely that refusing to endorse war is a politically responsible way to live in today's violent world, especially if one does this with humility about what this position does not solve, because it points the way toward the third alternative.

For both pacifists and nonpacifists, the political ends they seek are never assured, no matter what they do. For both, the means they have chosen are imperfect, in that they do not solve

all problems. But in examining the two sets of imperfect means, the least imperfect appears to be that of the politically responsible Christian who chooses not to kill and to move toward a more peaceful global system. Taking the non-killing path expresses a humble responsibility to God (type 1) and to the "least of these" (type 2), while also opening a door toward enhanced responsibility for building a peaceful, just, democratic world society (type 3).

1. 1. See, for example, Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Scribner's, 1934); Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," http://www.ne.jp/asahi/moriyuki/abukuma/weber/lecture/politics_vocation...., 28-34.
2. 2. Niccolo Machiavelli, "Concerning the Way in Which the Strength of All Principalities Ought to Be Measured," *The Prince* (New York: Random House, 2007).
3. 3. Because not every war meets just war standards, in one sense those who are committed to following just war standards are, almost by definition, selective conscientious objectors. They would object to certain wars. According to just war theory, a just war must meet these eight standards: it must have a just cause (such as self-defense); the decision to use force must be made by a legitimate authority; the purpose of the war must be in accord with a right intention (e.g., it cannot be for aggression or conquest); it must have limited objectives (an unlimited war of attrition or destruction is unacceptable); it must be a last resort (all peaceful means must be exhausted first); there must be reasonable likelihood of success (a war that is unlikely to achieve limited, legitimate goals is immoral); military force must be focused on combatants (noncombatants may not be targeted); and the destructive means must be proportional to the ends one achieves.
4. 4. Reinhold Niebuhr, "Why the Christian Church Is Not Pacifist," in *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr*, edited by Robert McAfee Brown (Yale University Press, 1986), 102-122.
5. 5. Augustine of Hippo, *City of God* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003).
6. 6. Niebuhr, "Why the Christian Church Is Not Pacifist."
7. 7. "Peace," *The Brethren Encyclopedia* (The Brethren Encyclopedia, Inc., 1983), 999-1000.
8. 8. Robert J. Lifton, *Death in Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1967), 479-541; Robert J. Lifton, "On Numbing and Feeling," in *Indefensible Weapons: The Political and Psychological Case Against Nuclearism*, by Robert J. Lifton and Richard Falk (New

York: Basic Books, 1982), 100-110.

9. 9. Lucius Annasus Seneca, *Moral Essays*, vol. 1, translated by John W. Basore (W. Heinemann, 1928).
10. 10. UNICEF, “Information: Impact of Armed Conflict on Children,” http://www.unicef.org/graca/patterns.htm.
11. 11. James F. Childress, “Just-War Theories: The Bases, Interrelations, Priorities, and Functions of Their Criteria,” *Theological Studies* 39 (1978): 427-45.
12. 12. Patriarchy is another example. Beliefs that kept women subordinate often shaped the minds of men and women; they unreflectively accepted that women were inherently inferior and poorly equipped for political office or even to vote. For centuries people believed that women could not contribute much to foreign policy, or peace policy, even though in many societies more than 90 percent of all acts of violence were carried out by men.
13. 13. Thomas W. Pogge, "Human Rights and Human Responsibilities," in *Global Responsibilities: Who Must Deliver on Human Rights*, edited by Andrew Kuper (New York: Routledge, 2005), 4.
14. 14. Pogge, 4.
15. 15. Pogge, 4.

Endnotes:

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