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The Christological and Ecclesial Pacifism of Stanley Hauerwas:
A Lutheran Analysis and Appraisal

A Dissertation presented to the faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Joel D. Lehenbauer

October 2004

Approved by: _____
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Christianity is connections. Connections often have a bad press, implying that through connections we can get things done in an underhanded fashion. Yet the connections that constitute Christianity, while certainly letting us get things done that would otherwise be impossible, are not hidden. To be a Christian is to be joined, to be put in connection with others so that our stories cannot be told without somehow also telling their stories.

--Stanley Hauerwas (*In Good Company*, xiii)

Like Stanley Hauerwas, I am keenly aware of and deeply grateful for the many and various “connections” apart from which the completion of this project would not have been possible. A debt of gratitude is owed, first of all, to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, which charged me with the task of pursuing a doctoral degree when calling me to serve as a member of its staff and graciously provided me with that most precious resource—time—to make possible the fulfillment of this goal. In expressing appreciation to the Commission as an entity, I also want to thank the many individual members of the Commission who, over the years, offered invaluable support through their prayers, words of encouragement, and good counsel.

My two colleagues on the staff of the Commission—Sam Nafzger and Jerry Joersz—are deserving of special mention and commendation: Sam for his unflagging and unflappable confidence and encouragement that this project actually could (and *would*) be completed, even during those times when the vicissitudes of life made this appear to be highly unlikely; Jerry for his humble and patient willingness to “pick up the slack” created by my frequent immersion in this work, without so much of a murmur of complaint (at least in my hearing!). The various members of the Commission’s support staff over the years also deserve thanks and commendation for their patience, encouragement, and assistance with technical matters that contributed greatly to the completion of this project.

Sincere thanks are also due to various members of the seminary faculty who provided invaluable assistance, especially my Doktorvater, Dr. John Johnson, and readers Dr. Joel Okamoto, Dr. Paul Robinson, and Dr. Joel Biermann. It was Joel Okamoto particularly who “pushed” me in the direction of Hauerwas’s work, and even to this day I’m not quite sure whether to bless him or blame him for forcing me to take on the formidable challenge of taking seriously what Hauerwas has to say and how it applies especially to us as Lutherans.

Last but certainly not least, words cannot express the debt I owe to the many faithful friends and family members who supported me in this effort through the years in various ways. My sainted mother, Shirlee Lehenbauer (who never had the opportunity to pursue a college education), instilled in me the pursuit of academic excellence and the determination to make the most of God-given gifts and opportunities. My father, Dr. Osmar Lehenbauer, and stepmother Katherine, provided constant and crucial moral and spiritual support. My dear wife Hope and our four children—Rachel, Anna, Adam, and Naomi—patiently endured countless days and hours of an absentee father or a distracted and moody one, as they bore along with me the burden of this task that was by no stretch of the imagination accomplished alone. “Great is their reward in heaven”—although I am also determined to find a way to repay them (in part) here on earth, by giving back to them at least some of the “quality time” willingly sacrificed as part of their contribution to this work.

Joel D. Lehenbauer

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
ABBREVIATIONS.....	vi
INTRODUCTION.....	1
PART ONE: THE PACIFISM OF STANLEY HAUERWAS: A LUTHERAN ANALYSIS	
Chapter One: Christian Perspectives on War and Peace.....	11
Introduction.....	11
The Crusade.....	15
The Just War Tradition.....	22
Pacifism.....	37
Chapter Two: The Pacifism of Stanley Hauerwas.....	52
Introduction.....	52
Background: Hauerwas’s “Yoderian Conversion” and His “Reformation Project”.....	54
A Particular Peace: Biblical Pacifism As a “Qualified Ethic”.....	57
A Storied Peace: The Narrative Character of Christian Pacifism.....	59
A Truthful Peace: Coming to Terms with the Vice of Violence.....	63
A Christ-Centered Peace: Jesus As the Presence of God’s Peaceable Kingdom.....	66
A Political and Ecclesial Peace: The Church As Social Ethic.....	70
A Disturbing Peace: The Activist Pacifism of the Church As <i>Polis</i>	80
Yoderian-Hauerwasian Christological and Ecclesial Presuppositions.....	88
Chapter Three: The Peaceable Witness of Martin Luther.....	101
Introduction.....	101
The Lutheran Confessions on Public Order and Just War.....	105
War and Peace As a Theological Issue.....	108
Luther’s Witness to the “Whole Truth” of Holy Scripture.....	110
Luther’s Witness to God’s Gift of Temporal Peace.....	115
Luther on the Limitations of War As an Instrument of Peace.....	119
Luther’s Witness Concerning War and Peace As a Witness to Christ.....	128
The Church in Luther’s Witness Concerning War and Peace.....	138
Luther’s Christological and Ecclesial Presuppositions.....	146
Summary and Conclusions.....	169

PART TWO: THE PACIFISM OF STANLEY HAUERWAS:
A LUTHERAN APPRAISAL AND PROPOSAL

Introduction: How Not to Respond to the Pacifism of Stanley Hauerwas.....	179
Chapter Four: War, Peace and the Particularist Nature of Christian Ethics.....	182
Valid Hauerwasian Insights and Concerns: Thinking Theologically about War and Peace.....	182
Lutheran Challenges and Contributions: Making a Theological Case for Just War Thinking.....	187
Issues Needing Further Clarification and Exploration.....	198
Chapter Five: War, Peace and the Narrative Character of Christian Ethics.....	212
Valid Hauerwasian Insights and Concerns: Staying Connected to Christ’s Story.....	212
Lutheran Challenges and Contributions: Worship and Catechesis.....	217
Issues Needing Further Clarification and Exploration.....	239
Chapter Six: The Problem of Violence and the Politics of Jesus.....	243
Valid Hauerwasian Insights and Concerns: Taking Violence (and the Words and Witness of Jesus) Seriously.....	243
Lutheran Challenges and Contributions: The Hidden Nature of God’s Work in Both Realms.....	250
Issues Needing Further Clarification and Exploration.....	265
Chapter Seven: The Witness of the Church in and to Society.....	287
Valid Hauerwasian Insights and Concerns: The Character and Conduct of the Church and Constantinian Temptations.....	287
Lutheran Challenges and Contributions.....	299
Issues Needing Further Clarification and Exploration.....	327
CONCLUSION.....	337
APPENDIX I.....	345
APPENDIX II.....	349
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	363

ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Augsburg Confession
Ap	Apology to the Augsburg Confession
BC	Kolb/Wengert Edition of <i>The Book of Concord</i>
FT	<i>First Things</i>
HR	<i>The Hauerwas Reader</i>
IGC	<i>In Good Company</i>
LC	The Large Catechism
LW	<i>Luther's Works</i> , American Edition
PK	<i>The Peaceable Kingdom</i>
PJ	<i>The Politics of Jesus</i>
PJWT	<i>Peace and the Just War Tradition</i>
RA	<i>Resident Aliens</i>
SC	The Small Catechism

INTRODUCTION

In the year 2001, *Time* magazine took on the task of selecting “America’s Best” contributors in the areas of science and medicine, arts and entertainment, and society and culture, including—in the last category—“America’s Best Theologian.” The recipient of this honor was Stanley Hauerwas, a United Methodist professor who teaches theology and ethics at Duke University. *Time* chose a Lutheran scholar, Jean Bethke Elshtain, to write the profile of Hauerwas that appeared in its September 17, 2001 issue. She writes:

Hauerwas is contemporary theology’s foremost intellectual provocateur.... [He] has been a thorn in the side of what he takes to be Christian complacency for more than 30 years. For him, the message of Jesus was a radical one to which Christians, for the most part, have never been fully faithful. Christians, he believes, are called to be a pilgrim people who will always find themselves in one political community or another but who are never defined completely by it. Thus, as the body of Christ on earth, Christians must be a “sign of contradiction,” to borrow a term from Pope John Paul II, a moral theologian much admired by the very Anabaptist Methodist Hauerwas.¹

Some, without wishing to deny the accolade conferred on Hauerwas in this way, have wondered aloud “how the editors of *Time* would know” who “America’s Best Theologian” might be.² Yet even those who question the theological awareness or competence of *Time*’s editors are quick to acknowledge Hauerwas’s status and influence in contemporary theology, thus (in effect) confirming *Time*’s assessment: “He is the author of dozens of books, and articles beyond numbering; interviews with him and discussions about him appear in numerous academic and popular publications, making him probably the most prominent theologian in the country.”³

¹ *Time* (September 17, 2001), 76.

² “In a Time of War,” *First Things* [FT] 120 (February 2002), 14.

³ *Ibid.*

Anyone who has read even a sampling of Hauerwas's essays, books or interviews is almost certain to have encountered his passionately-held views on Christian pacifism and its place in the theology and life of the church. Elshtain's brief article in *Time* calls attention to this pacifist concern that surfaces in one way or another in nearly all of Hauerwas's writings.

Hauerwas is a volatile, complex person with an explosive personality and high-energy style. For many, he is an unlikely pacifist. He insists that Christians should exemplify a radical message of peace. Hauerwas learned this lesson from the Anabaptist theologian John Howard Yoder. Hauerwas has respect for a position known as the just-war perspective, a mode of reflection on war's occasional tragic necessity, either for self-defense or to protect those who might otherwise be slaughtered. But he insists that most Christians who claim that position are not really serious about it, or they would oppose many more wars than they do. His radical pacifism leads him to condemn any and all forms of patriotism, nationalism and state worship. (And he disdains most distinctions between these positions.)⁴

Ironically, the issue of *Time* dubbing this radical pacifist "America's Best Theologian" went to press almost simultaneously with one of the most peace-shattering days in recent American history: September 11, 2001. The events of that day thrust our nation and others—as well as many Christians, theologians and church bodies—into yet another complex and passionate debate about the nature and necessity of war and the best means for securing and maintaining national and global justice, freedom and peace. In December of 2001, the editors of *First Things*—the editorial board of which Stanley Hauerwas had long been a member—published an editorial called "In a Time of War," offering their view that the terrorist attack on September 11 constituted a bona fide "act of war" placing America into the regrettable but necessary role of defender of fundamental national and even international human rights, justice, security and freedom.

⁴ *Time*, 76.

The editorial goes on to offer a defense of the “war against terrorism” proposed by the Bush administration on the basis of historic “just war” principles. It voices respect, even admiration, for authentic pacifist views, with one significant caveat:

One matter that has been morally muddied in recent decades should now be clarified: those who in principle oppose the use of military force have no legitimate part in the discussion about how military force should be used. They only make themselves and their cause appear frivolous by claiming that military force is immoral and futile, and, at the same time, wanting to have a political say in how such force is to be employed. The morally serious choice is between pacifism and just war. Here, too, sides must be taken.⁵

Hauerwas clearly was not a (willing) participant in the preparation of this editorial: his passionate dissent was published in the February 2002 issue of *First Things*. While this is not the place to discuss the details of that response, it illustrates well Hauerwas’s own view of the significance of his pacifist convictions for his theology and ethics as a whole:

The editorial makes clear that the Editors regard the Christian nonviolence I represent as at best “a reminder” to those who are about “being responsible.” I may be tolerated because of my theological commitments, but my pacifism can only be regarded as an aberration that is best ignored. The arguments Yoder and I have made in an attempt to show how Christian orthodoxy and nonviolence are constitutive of one another are quite simply not taken seriously by the Editors. Or at least they are not taken seriously if “In a Time of War” indicates the best thinking of the Editors of *First Things*. I did not expect nor do I expect the Editors to take a pacifist stance, but I confess that their lack of sadness that should accompany the use of violence fills me with sadness.⁶

Hauerwas wonders aloud how “my life may be changed” by the publication of this editorialized “dismissal” of his strongly held views:

Should I, for example, continue to be identified as a member of the Editorial Board of *First Things*? If “In a Time of War” constitutes the perspective of this magazine, should the Editors continue to list me as a member of the board? Surely the position taken in “In a Time of War” comes close to implying that the

⁵ “In a Time of War,” *FT* 118 (Dec 2001), 14.

⁶ “In a Time of War: An Exchange,” *FT* 120 (Feb 2002), 13.

pacifist refusal to respond violently to injustice makes us complicit with evil and injustice and, therefore, immoral.⁷

A response from the editors followed in the same issue, and additional articles, responses and “exchanges” ensued in subsequent months. Eventually, however (in May 2002), Hauerwas did resign from the editorial board of *First Things* because of his profound disagreement with the position taken by the editorial board and their construal of the role of pacifism and pacifists in war and peace debates. In an article published in the June 21, 2002 *National Catholic Reporter*, Richard John Neuhaus—editor in chief of *First Things*—expresses his sympathetic regret at Hauerwas’s decision.

His leaving the editorial board was entirely amicable, and I urged him not to, but understood why he did. Our essential disagreement is that for my friend Stan, pacifism is...the doctrine by which the church stands or falls, and I think that’s not only not true, I think it’s dangerously schismatic, and about that we have been arguing in a friendly manner I suppose going on 30 years.⁸

Still, says Neuhaus, Hauerwas is “provocative, energetic and a very, very useful person to have on the theological scene”—a well-intended comment, no doubt, but one that might be interpreted as implying the very sort of patronizing “dismissal” of his pacifism that Hauerwas finds so outrageous and unacceptable.⁹

Hauerwas’s “project” for reforming Christian ethics—with its emphasis on the virtues, character, narrative, the particularity and exclusivity of Christian ethics, and the vital role of the church, the Christian community, as witness in and to the world—has received a great deal of scholarly attention in recent decades in America and beyond. Considerably less attention, however, has been given to his pacifist convictions and the

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Patrick O’Neill, “Theologian’s Feisty Faith Challenges Status Quo,” *National Catholic Reporter* [NCR] (June 21, 2002), 3. Cf. *FT* 125 (Aug.-Sept., 2002), 106-107.

⁹ *Ibid.*

role that these convictions play in his theology as a whole. This relative neglect of what is arguably the over-riding theme in Hauerwas's ecclesial ethics seems to confirm his perception, noted in his classic work *The Peaceable Kingdom*, that "many have viewed my pacifism with a good deal of suspicion, seeing it as just one of my peculiarities."¹⁰ Whether or not Hauerwas would agree with the assertion that for him pacifism is "the doctrine by which the church stands or falls," there is ample evidence to demonstrate that Hauerwas does not regard pacifism as a tangential or secondary moral issue, a mere "quirk" in an otherwise sound and lucid theological system. Statements like the following confirm the utter seriousness of his claim (cited above) that "Christian orthodoxy and nonviolence are constitutive of one another:"

Indeed, nonviolence is not just one implication among others that can be drawn from our Christian beliefs; it is at the very heart of our understanding of God...such a stance is not just an option for a few, but incumbent on all Christians who seek to live faithfully in the kingdom made possible by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Non-violence is not one among other behavioral implications that can be drawn from the Gospel but is integral to the shape of Christian convictions.¹¹

For Hauerwas, the phrase "a Christian pacifist" is either redundant or misleading since it seems to suggest that "pacifism" is simply one moral choice among many for Christians.

I believe the narrative into which Christians are inscribed means we cannot be anything other than nonviolent...nonviolence is simply one of the essential practices that is intrinsic to the story of being a Christian.¹²

Pacifism is "the form of life incumbent on those who would worship Jesus as the Son of God."¹³ "For a Christian to be nonviolent," says Hauerwas, "is not just another political

¹⁰ *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics [PK]* (Notre Dame, 1981), xvii.

¹¹ *PK*, xvii; xvi.

¹² "Whose 'Just' War, Which Peace?" in *Dispatches from the Front* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1994), 137.

¹³ "Can a Pacifist Think About War?" in *Dispatches*, 134.

position, but rather at the very heart of what it means to be a Christian.”¹⁴ Pacifism is “not just another ‘moral’ issue, but constitutes the heart of our worship of a crucified messiah.”¹⁵

Statements such as these and the broader context in which they occur make it clear that one cannot fully understand or appreciate the theology of Stanley Hauerwas without understanding and taking seriously his views on pacifism. The first purpose of this study, therefore, is to explore and examine the nature and content of Hauerwas’s pacifist convictions and claims as a way of understanding more deeply and clearly his contribution to contemporary theology and ethics. There are, as we will see, many different varieties of pacifism. What are the essential characteristics of Hauerwas’s pacifism, and what distinguishes it from these other varieties? Where do his pacifist convictions fit into his program for reforming Christian ethics? How do they inform and impact his theology as a whole?

A second purpose will be to examine Hauerwas’s pacifism in the light of historic and contemporary Christian perspectives on war and peace, particularly those that belong to the just war tradition with which Hauerwas most frequently finds himself in dialogue and debate. Is there in any sense in which Hauerwas’s pacifism is compatible with just war thinking in the Christian (and Lutheran) tradition, or are the two views simply irreconcilable? And if they are irreconcilable, does this mean—as suggested by the editors of *First Things*—that those who adhere to a Hauerwasian type of radical pacifism have no legitimate place at the table when it comes to practical discussions in the public square about the use of force by governing authorities? How much validity is there to

¹⁴ “Faith Fires Back: A Conversation with Stanley Hauerwas,” *Duke Magazine* (Jan.-Feb., 2002), 12.

¹⁵ “Remembering John Howard Yoder,” *FT* 82 (April 1998), 15-16.

Hauerwas's claim that most just war thinking is simply dishonest and disingenuous, and how are we to understand his repeated claims—both stated and implied—that the truly honest, consistent and clear-thinking Christian will have no choice but to recognize radical pacifism as a necessary response to the radical claims of Christ?

Among those who have been impressed, influenced and discomfited by Hauerwas's work are a considerable number of widely respected Lutheran theologians. There are many themes in Hauerwas's work—his stress on the particularity of Christian truth claims, his strong emphasis on the historical importance of the incarnation, life, suffering, death and resurrection of Christ, his high regard for the church and the means of grace and the “marks of the church”—that naturally appeal to Lutheran readers and thinkers. There are other themes in his work—his apparent merging of justification and sanctification, his disdain for “natural law,” his dismissal of the Reformation “two kingdom” distinction—which are obviously troublesome for those of a Lutheran orientation. Any Lutheran who embraces with conviction Article XVI of the Augsburg Confession, which clearly asserts that “Christians may without sin...punish evildoers with the sword,” “wage just wars,” and “serve as soldiers,”¹⁶ will obviously also be troubled by the apparent implications of Hauerwas's claim that all Christians are called by God to nonviolence, and that any form of killing—including that of a soldier in war—is necessarily sinful and to be avoided by Christians at all costs. And yet there are Lutheran theologians who have taken the position (along with others) that “just war” principles and distinctions no longer apply in this modern age of nuclear warfare.

¹⁶ AC XVI, 2. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000) [BC]. All quotations from the Lutheran Confessions in this study are taken from the Kolb-Wengert edition.

In view of the above, the third and primary purpose of this study is to examine the possibilities for meaningful, constructive, mutually beneficial dialogue between “Hauerwasians” and Lutherans on the issue of war and peace. How do we respond as Lutherans to Hauerwas’s pacifist claims and his critique of the just war tradition? Despite his commitment to a radical pacifism rooted firmly in the theological tradition of the radical reformation, does he have anything valuable to say to us as Lutherans—particularly Lutherans in America—about the potential dangers or weaknesses of just war thinking, especially in today’s world? Is there anything that Hauerwas might learn from “the Lutheran perspective” on war and peace that could serve to challenge and sharpen his own thinking on this issue?

Although (as noted above) a number of Lutheran theologians (e.g., Reinhard Hütter, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Robert Jenson, Gilbert Meilaender, Arne Rasmusson, Ronald Thiemann) have interacted with the work of Hauerwas in various ways, few of them have taken up specifically—much less extensively—the question of his pacifist convictions. Elshtain, for example, is well known for her expertise on the character and history of the just war theory, but she writes not so much as a Lutheran theologian drawing on the resources of the Lutheran theological tradition than as a just war scholar who also happens to be a Lutheran (e.g., Luther is only mentioned once, in passing, in her most recent book *Just War Against Terror*¹⁷). Nor (apart from a few brief, rather informal exchanges¹⁸) does Elshtain interact directly with Hauerwas’s views on pacifism. Reinhard Hütter offers his perspective on the implications of Hauerwas’s pacifism for

¹⁷ *Just War Against Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 101.

¹⁸ E.g., “War, Peace and Jean Bethke Elshtain: An Exchange,” *FT* 138 (October, 2003), 41-46; also Mark Tooley, “Theologians Debate Just War at National Press Club” (October 10, 2001), <http://www.ird-renew.org/News/News.cfm?ID=207&c=4>.

Lutherans in the essay “Be Honest in Just War Thinking! Lutherans, the Just War Tradition, and Selective Conscientious Objection,”¹⁹ but his treatment is very brief (14 pages), contains only two (very selective) quotations of Luther, and does not include any thorough, critical examination of the theological presuppositions on which the pacifism of Hauerwas is based. Arne Rasmusson’s impressive work *The Church As Polis: From Political Theology to Theological Politics As Exemplified by Jürgen Moltmann and Stanley Hauerwas* contains a helpful chapter (13) comparing the “peace theologies” of Hauerwas and Moltmann, but there is no direct engagement with the views of Luther or with historic Lutheran theology.²⁰ Meilaender offers a very helpful (albeit brief) summary and analysis of Luther’s views on just war in his contribution to the LCUSA-sponsored study *Peace and the Just War Tradition*, but neither Meilaender nor any of the contributors to this volume take up the distinctive pacifist views of Yoder and Hauerwas.²¹ To the best of my knowledge, no attempt has been made by a Lutheran scholar to offer a serious theological analysis of Hauerwas’s pacifism, nor has an attempt been made to engage in dialog with Hauerwas’s pacifism from a specifically Lutheran perspective.

In some respects the possibilities for genuine and meaningful conversation between those fully committed to Hauerwas’s view and Lutherans committed to honoring and upholding their own tradition may seem to be rather slim. “To put it plainly,” says Luther in his 1526 essay *Whether Soldiers, Too, May Be Saved*,

¹⁹ See *The Wisdom of the Cross: Essays in Honor of John Howard Yoder* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 69-83.

²⁰ Arne Rasmusson, *The Church As Polis* (Lund: University of Sweden, 1994).

²¹ *Peace and the Just War Tradition: Lutheran Perspectives in the Nuclear Age*, ed. Michael J. Stelmachowitz (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986). [PJWT]

I am dealing here with such questions as these: whether the Christian faith, by which we are accounted righteous before God, is compatible with being a soldier, going to war, stabbing and killing, robbing and burning, as military law requires us to do to our enemies in wartime. Is this work sinful or unjust? Should it give us a bad conscience before God? Must a Christian only do good and love, and kill no one, nor do anyone harm?²²

The diametrically opposed answers given to “such questions as these” by Luther and Hauerwas seem to suggest that perhaps the best confessional Lutherans can do is to pay Hauerwas what John Howard Yoder disparagingly dubbed “the Niebuhrian compliment”²³—i.e., to commend him for the courage and integrity of his pacifist convictions, but to disregard his views as having any meaningful practical theological (or political) value or significance, and thus to disregard any real possibility for constructive dialog. We want to argue, however, that there are authentic areas of common ground and common concern on the issue of war and peace between committed Hauerwasians and confessional Lutherans that encourage the possibility for meaningful and mutually beneficial conversation, without any theological compromise. In part two of the paper we will seek to identify and explore those possibilities, following a survey in part one of Christian perspectives on war and peace (chapter one), a summary of the main features of Hauerwas’s pacifism (chapter two), and a discussion of the “peaceable witness” of Martin Luther (chapter three).

²² *Luther’s Works [LW]*, American Edition, ed. Robert C. Schulz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 46, 95.

²³ See John H. Yoder, *Nevertheless: The Varieties of Religious Pacifism* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1971), 111-112; also the discussion on pages 43ff. below. Hauerwas also refers to this “compliment” in the *First Things* exchange referred to earlier in the introduction.

PART ONE

THE PACIFISM OF STANLEY HAUERWAS: A LUTHERAN ANALYSIS

Chapter One

Christian Perspectives on War and Peace

Introduction

The written history of the world," writes John Keegan, "is largely a history of warfare."¹ Christians who take history seriously, therefore, cannot avoid taking seriously the history of warfare, including the various attitudes toward war that have existed within the Christian tradition. One of the first challenges confronting a student of this history is the problem of enumerating and classifying these varying perspectives. Writing as a historian (not as a theologian), Keegan simplifies things helpfully by reducing the number of "types" to two, and at the same time zeroing in on one of the essential questions with which theologians have been wrestling for centuries:

The bounds of civilised warfare are defined by two antithetical types, the pacifist and the 'lawful bearer of arms.' The lawful bearer of arms has always been respected, if only because he has the means to make himself so; the pacifist has come to be valued in the two thousand years of the Christian era. Their mutuality is caught in the dialogue between the founder of Christianity and the professional Roman soldier who had asked for his healing word to cure a servant. 'I also am a man set under authority,' the centurion explained. Christ exclaimed at the centurion's belief in the power of virtue, which the soldier saw as the complement to the force of law which he personified. May we guess that Christ was conceding the moral position of the lawful bearer of arms, who must surrender his life at the demand of authority, and therefore bears comparison with the pacifist who will surrender his life rather than violate the authority of his own creed? It is a complicated thought, but not one which Western culture finds difficult to

¹ John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 386.

accommodate. Within it the professional soldier and the committed pacifist find room to co-exist—sometimes cheek-by-jowl: in 3 Commando, one of Britain’s toughest Second World War units, the stretcher-bearers were all pacifists but were held by the commanding officer in the highest regard for their bravery and readiness for self-sacrifice. Western culture would, indeed, not be what it is unless it could respect both the lawful bearer of arms and the person who holds the bearing of arms intrinsically unlawful. Our culture looks for compromises and the compromise at which it has arrived over the issue of public violence is to deprecate its manifestation but to legitimise its use. Pacifism has been elevated as an ideal; the lawful bearing of arms—under a strict code of military justice and within a corpus of humanitarian law—has been accepted as a practical necessity.²

Setting aside for now the question of the compatibility of these two antithetical positions, we seek to give a brief account of how they have manifested themselves in the course of Christian history. Most contemporary Christian surveys follow the lead of Roland Bainton, who suggests in his classic work *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace* that “broadly speaking, three attitudes to war and peace were to appear in the Christian ethic: pacifism, the just war, and the crusade.”³ Because of its prominence in the literature and its usefulness for grouping these relatively distinct types of historical views, Bainton’s threefold classification will also be employed here. It should be noted, however, that classifying various views according to these three types is a much more challenging and complicated task than it may appear to be. Definitions and understandings of these terms and “types” vary widely, and specific positions within each of these types often seem as different as they are alike.

In view of the purpose of this study, it is also important to note that Hauerwas has a deep distrust of almost any attempt to approach theological, ethical or historical realities by way of “categories” or “typologies.” While most theologians, for example, have considered H. Richard Niebuhr’s classic *Christ and Culture* as a helpful (if necessarily

² *Ibid*, 4-5.

³ Roland H. Bainton, *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1960), 14.

generalized) attempt to describe five typical ways in which Christians have interacted with culture, Hauerwas insists that “few books have been a greater hindrance to an accurate assessment of our situation than *Christ and Culture*” precisely because of its alleged (yet inauthentic) objectivity and its misleading oversimplification.⁴ Bainton’s approach falls under the same condemnation by Hauerwas:

Equally problematic from this perspective are typologies—crusade, pacifism and just war—developed by Roland Bainton in *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace*. The heuristic value of such typologies hides from us the complexity of Christian nonviolence (as well as the multivalence of violence). This concealment is not only because Bainton held to the kind of Constantinian liberal pacifism that I think is so doubtful, but more significantly such typologies result in a peculiarly ahistorical reading of Christian nonviolence. For the typology makes it appear that the three types are simply “there.” Each, it seems, necessarily exemplifies how Christians can, have, or should think about war and/or violence. Yet that very assumption relies on the notion that we have a clear idea of what war and/or nonviolence may be, apart from the practices of a community of nonviolence.⁵

Hauerwas’s unease with Bainton is inherited from Yoder, who—realizing that Bainton’s work could hardly be ignored or dismissed—prepared a 602-page tome transcribed from his classroom lectures titled *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution: A Companion to Bainton* aimed at supplementing and correcting Bainton’s treatment.⁶ This is not the place to take up in detail Yoder’s and/or Hauerwas’s critique of Bainton, but it could be argued that their concerns make it even more appropriate and necessary to begin by familiarizing ourselves with the typological approaches used by Bainton and (in some form or another) by nearly all other ethicists, theologians and

⁴ Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens [RA]* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 41-42; cf. also Yoder’s more extended critique in *Authentic Transformation: A New Vision of Christ and Culture* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 31-90.

⁵ “Can a Pacifist Think About War?” 118-119.

⁶ Yoder, *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace and Revolution: A Companion to Bainton* (Elkhart, Indiana: Distributed by Co-op Bookstore, 1983). [CA]

historians who address this topic. This will put us in a position to better understand and evaluate Hauerwas's concerns, even as we attempt to present as fairly as possible the various historical views typically grouped under these headings.

In the introduction to his book Bainton provides, in capsule form, a summary of the three basic Christian attitudes toward war and peace and their emergence in Christian history:

The early Church was pacifist to the time of Constantine. Then, partly as a result of the close association of Church and state under this emperor and partly by reason of the threat of barbarian invasions, Christians in the fourth and fifth centuries took over from the classical world the doctrine of the just war, whose object should be to vindicate justice and restore peace. The just war had to be fought under the authority of the state and must observe a code of good faith and humanity. The Christian elements added by Augustine were that the motive must be love and that monks and priests were to be exempted. The crusade arose in the high Middle Ages, a holy war fought under the auspices of the Church or of some inspired religious leader, not on behalf of justice conceived in terms of life and property, but on behalf on an ideal, the Christian faith. Since the enemy was without the pale, the code tended to break down.⁷

These varying perspectives, Bainton argues, "were not rooted in different views of God and only to a degree in different views of man, because all Christians recognized the depravity of man."⁸ Rather, the basis for the emergence of these very different views was how to deal with the reality of sin and its consequences as manifested in relationships between individuals, groups and nations, and thus "the problem came to be an aspect of the relationship of the Church and the world:"

Pacifism has commonly despaired of the world and dissociated itself either from society altogether, or from political life, and especially from war. The advocates of the just war theory have taken the position that evil can be restrained by the coercive power of the state. The Church should support the state in this endeavor and individual Christians as citizens should fight under the auspices of the state. The crusade belongs to a theocratic view that the Church, even though it be a minority, should impose its will upon a recalcitrant world. Pacifism is thus often

⁷ Bainton, 14.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

associated with withdrawal, the just war with qualified participation, and the crusade with dominance of the Church over the world.⁹

Our primary concern in this study is with pacifism and the just war tradition since these are the dominant theological views in existence today and those with which Hauerwas is most frequently in dialogue and debate. But the crusade merits at least brief treatment here, not only for the sake of historical completeness (and contemporary relevance) but also because of Hauerwas's frequent allegation that contemporary just war arguments and rhetoric often masquerade a crusading attitude and approach.

The Crusade

Most historical and theological treatments of the crusade begin, as Bainton does, with a discussion of the Old Testament concept of the "holy war:" "The crusade stemmed out of the holy war which sought to ensure the favor of Yahweh by observing the conditions conducive to his good pleasure."¹⁰ Whereas "primitive" holy wars in the Old Testament (e.g. Deborah leading the Israelites against Sisera and the Canaanites) were characterized by an appeal to God for divine assistance, "the crusade went beyond the holy war in the respect that it was fought not so much with God's help as on God's behalf, not for a human goal which God might bless but for a divine cause which God might command."¹¹ Bainton offers as examples of ancient crusades the wars of conquest for the possession of the land of Canaan, battles fought under Saul and David, and the revolts of the Maccabees in the inter-testamental period.

As even Israel learned, however, it is dangerous for God's people to assume in

⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁰ Bainton, 44.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 44-45.

some simplistic or automatic way that God is on “our side” when engaged in battle, or that he guarantees victory to those who fight in his name. It is also dangerous to try to apply these holy war or crusade texts from the Old Testament directly or simplistically to situations beyond the biblical context in which they occur. Robert Clouse’s word of caution, though in itself somewhat simplistic, is (properly understood) in order:

Such passages as the war texts of the Old Testament remind the reader that some laws given to ancient Israel cannot be used today. The war regulations were specifically applicable to the Hebrew kingdom of God. In the teachings of Jesus the kingdom takes on a different emphasis. It is no longer confined within the boundaries of a single state but exists wherever Christ is accepted and acknowledged as Lord. The change in the form of the kingdom means that care must be taken in applying Old Testament laws to the new situation.¹²

Ultimately, of course, there is a dual danger involved in the interpretation of these texts: the danger of “spiritualizing” them in a way that virtually eliminates the possibility of any meaningful theological application to the church’s past and present warfare (involving soul *and* body) against the enemies of God’s kingdom (cf. Ephesians 6), and the danger of applying them too literalistically, without proper consideration of crucial “church-state” distinctions in both testaments.

If we remember that Old Testament Israel was a political as well as a spiritual unit, we will neither think that it can be used as a direct model for the political action of the “*church militant*,” nor will we spiritualistically imagine that it would have been possible for Israel to conquer Canaan only in some realm of the Spirit.¹³

It was the failure to recognize and guard against the former danger that resulted in the adopted of the crusade in the Middle Ages as an acceptable—and even necessary—form of carrying out God’s will and doing battle against his “enemies.”

¹² Robert G. Clouse, ed., *War: Four Christian Views* (Downer’s Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1981), 10-11.

¹³ Horace D. Hummel, *The Word Becoming Flesh* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), 111.

The emergence of the crusade as a recognizable and persistent religious and historical phenomenon in the Christian era occurred in the eleventh century. The first officially sanctioned crusade came as a result of Pope Urban II's call in 1095 to liberate the Holy Land from the Turks.

He stirred his audience by describing how the Turks had disemboweled Christian men, raped women and desecrated churches. Urban appealed for unity in the face of the enemy and promised forgiveness of sins for anyone who would fight to free the Holy Land. The crowd responded enthusiastically to his sermon shouting: "God wills it! God wills it!"¹⁴

Few would deny that the medieval theories regarding just war helped lay the theological groundwork for the acceptance, or at least tolerance, of the crusades in the Middle Ages. "A Christian pacifist would find little comfort in the medieval theories, for Christian dogma was used as a rationalisation for legal killing, even of the most indiscriminate sort that consecrated war and its bloody martyrdom, the crusade."¹⁵ Yet care should be taken not to overstate the church's support for or defense of the crusade on theological grounds, nor—in view of loose allegations of "crusading attitudes" present today—to understate the historical uniqueness of this phenomenon. As Frederick Russell points out in his comprehensive study *The Just War in the Middle Ages*:

The crusade as a juridical institution existed only in the Middle Ages, and was a *sui generis* synthesis of the pilgrimage, the vow, the holy war and the just war that has continued to defy attempts at neat analysis. Within the just war the crusade existed uneasily at best, partly because there was no precedent to serve as an unambiguous guide. There were, after all, no crusades before 1095, and the medieval Romanists were not about to incorporate the crusade into their debate.¹⁶

Even in the Middle Ages, ecclesiastical writers "were reluctant to consider the crusading movement explicitly in legal or theological commentaries," due to a "nagging

¹⁴ Clouse, 16.

¹⁵ Frederick H. Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1975), 304.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 294.

suspicion that the crusade was an unsuitable means to ecclesiastical and religious ends.”¹⁷

Even those who considered the crusades appropriate and necessary “seldom devoted too much attention to the theoretical bases or practical consequences of such crusades.”¹⁸

Moreover,

In spite of their endless repetition of the Augustinian justification of legal violence on evangelical grounds, [ecclesiastical scholars] continued, at least unconsciously, to consider Christian pacifism seriously, as witnessed by the peace movements. The moral suspicion attached to warfare or at least killing in the early medieval penitential literature went underground but did not cease to exist in the high Middle Ages, where it re-emerged as the scholastic hesitation to assimilate the crusades wholly into the just war theories.¹⁹

Robert Clouse makes the same point, and suggests that cultural and political realities, perhaps even more so than theological ones, formed the soil out of which the medieval crusades sprouted and grew.

Despite the just war theories advanced by Augustine which seemed to harmonize participation in conflict with Christian values, the pacifism of the early church remained a living force within the community of faith. Those who killed in war were forced to do long terms of penance, and there was no glorification of the holy Christian knight until the eleventh century. The situation in Europe changed due to the break-up of the Empire and the influx of the Germanic peoples. A new militant attitude was formed in the church. The Germans...placed a great emphasis on warfare. Their greatest virtues, such as devotion to gods of battle and the desire to die in conflict, were those of the warrior. A fusion of the Germanic religion of war and the religion of peace took place among the Christians of Western Europe.²⁰

“It is clear from the Crusades,” says Clouse, “that what finally overpowered the early Christian teaching against violence was not merely a just war theory but rather a merger of violence and holiness at all levels of Christian life.”²¹ Church liturgies blessed

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 295.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 294.

²⁰ Clouse, 16.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

weapons of war. Knights were consecrated for holy battle. New religious orders were formed—such as the Templars—that vowed to defend “God’s cause” at all costs. And “when violence became sacred, the enemy was believed to be diabolical;” it was “considered wrong to show mercy” to enemies of God such as the Turks:

The code of the just war...was largely in abeyance in fighting the infidel. Crucifixion, ripping open those who had swallowed coins, mutilation—Bohemond of Antioch sent to the Greek Emperor a whole cargo of noses and thumbs sliced from the Saracens—such exploits the chronicles of the crusades recount without qualm. A favorite text was a verse in Jeremiah, “Cursed be he that keepeth back his hand from blood.”²²

Joseph Allen notes the similarities and—more significantly—the differences between a crusade mentality and the just war tradition:

In the Christian tradition, there is agreement between a crusade approach and just-war teaching in certain limited respects. In both, it can sometimes be justifiable to resort to war. Further, both believe that in a particular case resort to war may be an obligation before God: that is, both approach the issue of war, like all moral questions, as a matter of religious and not merely secular morality. Beyond those points, however, the two diverge so sharply as to constitute virtually opposite ways of thinking about war.²³

Allen lists three characteristics of a crusade approach to war that sharply distinguish it from the just war tradition. First, “Crusaders see a justifiable war as a conflict between forces of good and forces of evil.”²⁴ God himself has called them to war, he is unquestionably on their side, and he promises victory to those who are faithful in fighting for his cause. As a result, secondly, “Crusaders characteristically pursue absolute and unlimited goals:”

In a crusade spirit the goal of war becomes an undefined “victory”—utter and unqualified destruction of the enemy military forces and often of the enemy’s

²² Bainton, 112.

²³ Joseph L. Allen, *War: A Primer for Christians* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 8-9.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

government and even whole society—rather than specific limited goals in the interests of one’s own side.²⁵

Third, when war is seen purely in terms of good and evil and the goals of war are framed in absolute terms, little room is left for restraint in the conduct of war. Since “God is on our side” and the enemy is “utterly evil,” any means useful or necessary for the total extermination of the enemy is justified. “Crusaders believe that they have no moral responsibility for those who, whether in uniform or not, willingly support the evil against the good.”²⁶

Are there Christians today who support and defend the notion of war as crusade? This is not as simple a question to answer as it may seem to be. Few if any Christians, one suspects, would be willing to identify fully (or at least openly) with the attitudes characteristic of a crusade mentality listed by Allen. Yet Allen suggests that one can find evidence of “crusading tendencies” and “crusading attitudes” in our day and age. He argues that

Leaders sometimes intentionally encourage crusade attitudes on the part of the public. They do so by propaganda that pictures citizens of the other country as all alike, as morally depraved, as equally responsible for their government’s injustices, even as all deserving death. To the extent that the public accepts this picture, it is more inclined to accept unlimited goals and unrestrained means.²⁷

Allen expresses concern about the use of terms such as “good and evil” when describing hostile nations and their leaders, which—he fears—contributes to a crusading attitude.

For example:

In the [1991] Persian Gulf War, a presumption about absolute good and evil was present in the pronouncements of President Saddam Hussein, as when he described his adversaries as forces of evil and portrayed the war as one of Moslem faith against infidels. Although President Bush’s language about the war was not

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

always that of a crusade, it did sometimes evoke that spirit, as when he described the Iraqi president as another Hitler. Whatever his intention, such a term tends to encourage people to think one side simply good and the other simply evil, and to disregard matters of degree. On the other hand, he said repeatedly that the war was not with the Iraqi people but with their leaders—a comment that tends to undermine a crusade spirit.²⁸

Complicating matters further is that not everyone would agree with the rather narrow definition of a crusade employed by scholars such as Bainton and Allen. In the book *War: Four Christian Views*, for example, discussion of the crusade is linked together with “preventive war,” and is strongly defended by Harold O. J. Brown as a legitimate Christian option. Brown defines a crusade as “a war that is begun not in response to a present act of aggression, but as the attempt to set right a past act.” It is a war “waged to remedy a past atrocity, especially one recognized as such for spiritual or religious reasons.”²⁹ On the basis of this definition, Brown labels America’s effort to help overthrow Hitler and the Nazis as a “crusade,” since “Nazism was a pagan ideology, with at least a latent militancy against Christianity and an active religious-racial persecution of God’s Old Testament people, the Jews.” “Curiously,” he writes, “this definition of a crusade means that the closest modern parallel to the Christian reconquest of the Holy Land in 1098 is the Jewish land-taking in Palestine, beginning in 1948 and culminating with the reconquest of Jerusalem in 1967.”³⁰ Brown bemoans the demonizing of the term “crusade” and argues for its redemption:

The term *crusade*, which implies fighting for one’s faith, has become a bad word in modern English—it even sounds a little awkward when applied to evangelistic efforts. Non-Christians repudiate the idea of a military crusade as a matter of course, and most Christians hasten to announce that under no circumstances would they endorse or defend the historic Crusades of the Middle Ages. Rather than simply reject the term outright, we may put matters into perspective a bit if

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

²⁹ Clouse, 155-156.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 156.

we observe the way in which what the Jews did in 1948 resembles what the Christian Franks did in 1098.³¹

Whether or not one finds Brown's arguments persuasive, they are helpful in cautioning against the kind of oversimplification and generalization that Hauerwas fears so often accompanies the use of "types" in doing history and theology. The concept of the crusade, like that of the just war and pacifism, ought not be pigeon-holed in ways that distort the historical evidence or caricature carefully articulated views. We will have opportunity later in the study to discuss both Hauerwas's and Luther's attitudes toward crusading tendencies present in the church and world of their day.

The Just War Tradition

Is it possible to define "just war" or describe the just war tradition in a clear, coherent and historically responsible way? We begin with this question in view of Hauerwas's frequent allegation that there is, in fact, no cohesive historical tradition or coherent theological doctrine of just war thinking. "The attempt to label just war a doctrine is of very recent vintage and mistakenly gives the impression that the historical development of just war reflection is much more coherent than in fact it was and is."³² Yoder argues that "the so-called 'just war theory,'" which "is the official teaching of most Christian traditions... is not taught very carefully and not applied very carefully." Because of this lack of care and consistency in explication and application, just war theory—"the standard moral guidance given by most Christian churches to their members

³¹ Clouse, 156.

³² Hauerwas and J. Alexander Sider, "Pacifism Redux," *FT* 128 (Dec 2002), 3.

since the fourth century”—offers in reality (according to Yoder) little or no guidance at all.³³

Nearly all historians and analysts of the just war tradition—regardless of their personal convictions—acknowledge that, as with pacifism, there have been and are distinct varieties of just war thinking, and that the just war tradition has evolved and developed in significant ways over the years (and continues to do so). Yet most would agree with James Turner Johnson’s assessment:

The term just war is, ...of course, imprecisely used; yet it is possible to define just war tradition in a meaningful way through the various concepts of the *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* that center discussion on restraining war in Western culture from the Middle Ages on. Such terms as just cause, right authority, right intention, last resort, and end of peace, proportionality of good to evil, and noncombatant immunity thus operate, in the just war tradition, as focal points about which thought and argument revolve. But...these terms are more than mere empty focal points; they have a content, more or less well specified and agreed upon at different moments in history but persistent nonetheless, that normatively defines the boundaries to initiating and waging war for the heirs of that tradition.³⁴

Bainton begins his treatment of the just war tradition by giving attention to its classical roots. Without using the actual term, Plato “first gave formulation to the code which came to be called that of the ‘just war,’” while Aristotle coined the expression itself and applied it to the efforts of a state to vindicate justice in the hopes of restoring peace between feuding political entities.³⁵ It was Cicero, during the days of the Roman empire, who “transform[ed] the just war into a code for conquerors—an ethic for an empire.”³⁶ Classical views of justice were rooted in an understanding of “natural law” which was accommodated without great difficulty by Christian thinkers:

³³ CA, 13.

³⁴ James Turner Johnson, *Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War: A Moral and Historical Inquiry* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 190.

³⁵ Bainton, 38-39.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

The concept of natural law...was adopted and adapted by the Christian Church to undergird the political ethic alike to the Scholastic theologians and of the Protestant reformers. It was to enjoy an enormous vogue in the age of the enlightenment. Though obscured in the nineteenth century by the romantic movement, it continues today in large measure to provide the presuppositions of the Western democracies. In content it is vague and therein may lie, in part, the secret of its popularity. To be applied it must be rendered concrete, and concretion produces divergent interpretations. Its value lies in the assumption that a universal moral code exists. Such a faith inspires the quest in our day for an international ethos.³⁷

The initial response of the early Christian church to the classical just war tradition, however, “was at best equivocal,” says Russell:

Before Constantine’s conversion churchmen tended to condemn warfare in general and Roman wars in particular. On New Testament grounds they concluded that wars violated Christian charity and that Roman wars only resulted in violence and bloodshed. Even while employing military metaphors to describe proper Christian conduct, many Christians rejected worldly military service in favor of the *militia Christi*, a pacific expression of their struggle against evil.³⁸

After Constantine’s conversion, however, things soon began to change. “The Emperor’s benefactions to the Church and the peace he achieved exerted a subtle but powerful pressure on Christian theologians to accommodate Christian citizenship to Roman wars.”³⁹ Eusebius of Caesarea introduced a distinction between two types of Christian vocation: “The laity was to shoulder the burdens of citizenship and wage just wars, while... the clergy was to remain aloof from society in total dedication to God.”⁴⁰ Ambrose, the “Christian Cicero,” produced a diffuse but attractive amalgam of the “*fides Romana*” and the “*fides catholica*” that, while lacking theoretical and systematic grounding, exerted “a powerful influence over medieval theory and practice.”⁴¹

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 39. The issue of “natural law” and its place in the development of Christian just war thinking is a major one, and it plays a significant role in Hauerwas’s critique of the just war tradition. We will return to this topic at various points in the course of our examination.

³⁸ Russell, 11.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 13-15.

The principal architect of medieval just war theory, however, was Augustine.

Russell's summary helpfully highlights Augustine's primary theological presuppositions and argumentation:

The die for the medieval just war was cast by St. Augustine, who combined Roman and Judaeo-Christian elements in a mode of thought that was to influence opinion throughout the Middle Ages and beyond. The just war served as Augustine's means of reconciling the evangelical precepts of patience and the pacifistic tendencies of the early Church with Roman legal notions. Central to his attitude was the conviction that war was both a consequence of sin and a remedy for it. The real evils in war were not war itself but the love of violence and cruelty, greed and the *libido dominandi* or lust for rule that so often accompanied it. Although the sin originated in man's wounded will rather than in his actions, when man's evil volition led him to sinful acts, war provided a rough punishment. Inspired by the Old Testament Augustine argued that by divine judgment wars punished peoples for sins and crimes, even those unrelated to the war. Even wicked men could serve God's providence by punishing the sins of other peoples. Every war had peace as its goal, hence war was an instrument of peace and should only be waged to secure peace of some sort.⁴²

Augustine helped to systematize just war theory by providing a Christianized version of Cicero's "code of war."⁴³ First, he insisted, war must have a just intent, namely, to restore peace. Second, it must seek to vindicate justice, to "avenge injuries" threatening the existence of a state and the welfare of its citizens. Third, it must be just in disposition—in other words, it must be motivated by Christian love. Augustine writes:

If it is supposed that God could not enjoin warfare because in after times it was said by the Lord Jesus Christ, "I say unto you, Resist not evil..." the answer is that what is here required is not a bodily action but an inward disposition... Moses in putting to death sinners was moved not by cruelty but by love. So also was Paul when he committed the offender to Satan for the destruction of his flesh. Love does not preclude a benevolent severity, nor that correction which compassion itself dictates. No one indeed is fit to inflict punishment save the one who has first overcome hate in his heart. The love of enemies admits of no dispensation, but love does not exclude wars of mercy waged by the good.⁴⁴

⁴² *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴³ The following summary is based primarily on Bainton, 95-100.

⁴⁴ *Sermo Dom.*, I, xx, 63, 70: J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* XXXII, 1227. Cited in Bainton, 97.

A fourth principle for Augustine is that of just auspices—war may be waged only by a legitimate ruler or authority, one to which God himself has entrusted the use of the sword. Finally, the conduct of the war must be just: “Faith must be kept with the enemy. There should be no wanton violence, profanation of temples, looting, massacre, or conflagration. Vengeance, atrocities, and reprisals were excluded, though ambush was allowed.”⁴⁵ Self-defense by individuals was ruled out by Augustine, since this could not be done without self-seeking passion and was not motivated by love for the neighbor. Clergy were not to engage in battle, and even laity were to do so with a sense of sadness and mournfulness, couched in the prayer: “From my necessities deliver me.” But “the distinctive points in Augustine’s theory were these: that love should be the motive in war, and that justice should lie on one side only.”⁴⁶

Augustine’s arguments were adopted and adapted by Christians through the centuries, but not radically altered. “In the thoughts on war scattered throughout his works,” for example, Thomas Aquinas “fused the Aristotelean political theory to the traditional Augustinian outlook of his predecessors.”⁴⁷ Luther “reworked the theory of the just war of Augustine and the early Middle Ages and stoutly rejected the crusading idea.”⁴⁸ In fact,

The churches of the Reformation, with the exception of the Anabaptist, all endorsed the theory of the just war as basic. The Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England affirmed that “it is lawfull for Christian men, and the commandment of the Magistrate, to weare weapons and serve in the warres.”⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Bainton, 97.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁴⁷ Russell, 258ff.

⁴⁸ Bainton, 136.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 142-3.

Although variations exist in number, order, emphasis and terminology, the classical Christian tradition as formulated by Augustine and developed over the years consists of certain basic criteria, under the twofold heading of *jus ad bellum* (factors that justify engaging in war) and *jus in bello* (the means by which a just war is to be conducted). Criteria in both categories must be carefully considered, met and upheld for a war to be considered just. We follow here the list of criteria as summarized by Allen because it is a bit more comprehensive than most.

1. *Justifiable cause*. This is the most basic and fundamental of *ad bellum* criteria, though it is by no means the simplest to apply. Allen lists three traditional types of just cause, all of which are rooted in the principle that a just war is necessarily *defensive* in nature: it seeks to “protect people from unjust attack,” to “restore rights that have been wrongly taken away,” and/or to “defend or reestablish a just political order.”⁵⁰ Especially in recent years, the question has been raised whether a “preemptive strike” can ever be justified and harmonized with this first essential criterion. While some answer this question with an unqualified no, others (like Allen, a former pacifist who converted to just war thinking) argue that “protecting people from unjust attack may sometimes justify a preemptive strike—attacking first in the face of an imminent enemy invasion.”⁵¹ He gives as examples Israel’s 1967 attack on Egypt and Syria based on reports of a clear and imminent danger posed by Arab forces, and also the 1991 Persian Gulf War:

One could say that the Persian Gulf War began when the coalition launched an attack, and that Iraq was at that point fighting a defensive war. Yet whether the coalition had just cause would depend upon other grounds, such as whether it should have attacked to restore the rights of Kuwait, which Iraq had unjustly invaded; and whether attacking Iraq was essential to reestablish a more just order in the region and to protect it from further Iraqi military action. People of good

⁵⁰ Allen, 36.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

will have argued on both sides of those questions, but questions like those are crucial and not simply who initiated the shooting.⁵²

2. *Legitimate authority.* This was an essential criterion of the Augustinian code, but it is sometimes downplayed in contemporary discussions because of the difficulties of applying it meaningfully in today's complex world of national and international politics. The basic question here is who has the right or "authority" to decide whether or not a war is necessary and just. Especially in democratically constituted governments, there will always be some tension here:

Those in legitimate authority must decide for the country. At the same time citizens must decide for themselves—decide whether they are prepared to support the government's decision as right. Private citizens are usually not in as good a position to decide. They lack adequate information about the wider context, they will not be held responsible in the same way, and they may be preoccupied by the impact of the decision on their private pursuits. For such reasons, the just-war tradition has held that citizens should presume that legitimate authorities, if they have followed proper procedures, have decided rightly. There may, however, be good reason to conclude otherwise. Before private citizens reach that conclusion, however, they should try to imagine themselves in the situation of the authorities—look at the wider picture, ask what would happen if this or if that, and imagine that they will be held responsible by the public for their judgments. Justifiable decisions about war are decisions about the public good, within and beyond one's own country.⁵³

3. *Last resort.* War is justified only "when it is reasonably determined that there are not alternate ways to resolve the conflict,"⁵⁴ when all peaceful means have been considered, attempted or exhausted. Pacifists like Yoder and Hauerwas often critique just war thinkers for their lack of "imagination," hope and effort in this regard. Just war defenders, however, would no doubt sympathize with Allen's point:

If a government literally tried every imaginable possibility before resort to war, it would often make it impossible...to serve its just cause. When Neville Chamberlain accepted Hitler's terms at Munich in 1938, he supposed that Hitler

⁵² *Ibid.*, 36-37.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

⁵⁴ "In a Time of War," *FT* 118 (Dec. 2001), 12.

was acting in good faith and that the agreement could prevent war. Others judged at the time that Hitler's promises were worthless and that last resort had already been reached. Hindsight has supported those judgments. Last resort requires a considered judgement about whether some imagined alternative has a good chance of avoiding war. It does not require that every idea actually be pursued to the end of the line. That would only play into the hands of a skillful and determined adversary.⁵⁵

4. *Declaration of war.* This point is sometimes combined with other criteria (e.g., the concern that war be waged by a legitimate authority and not merely as an act of personal vengeance), and its status as a necessary criterion is sometimes disputed (e.g., by those who would argue for the possible legitimacy of a preemptive strike that might well preclude warning the enemy in advance). Some, like James Childress, include it as an extension of the "last resort" criteria, "because it is the last opportunity short of war to persuade the enemy to come to terms."⁵⁶ In a democracy, Allen notes, "declaring war brings the public intentionally into the deliberative process, and it creates a stated commitment to the declared aims."⁵⁷

5. *Proportionality.* This criterion attempts to "count the costs" of a potential war, and to calculate (as far as possible) whether the means employed are proportionate to the ends sought. This is, to a certain extent, simply common sense: "not only is it morally wrong to make matters worse; it also makes no sense."⁵⁸ Once again, the ambiguities involved in such calculations make this criterion a frequent target for pacifist critics:

Sometimes we are told that because it is impossible to calculate consequences adequately, we ought to put this criterion aside. In response, just-war thinkers grant that we cannot calculate consequences well. They also hold that this criterion is perhaps not the foremost limit on resort to war. Yet, they continue, it is better to calculate consequences the best we can, however imperfectly, than not

⁵⁵ Allen, 39.

⁵⁶ James F. Childress, "Just-War Criteria," *Moral Responsibility in Conflicts* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 75-76.

⁵⁷ Allen, 41.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

to do so at all. People are apparently guided by that belief in private life. We often ask of an act, like changing jobs, or buying a car, or enlisting in the military, “What might happen if we do that?” Best that we do ask that, even though our forecasts are far from perfect.⁵⁹

6. *Reasonable chance of success.* This could be viewed as an extension or implication of the principle of proportionality. War is not worth waging and cannot be justified if there is no reasonable hope or expectation that the intended ends can actually be achieved. This criterion also serves, therefore, to help crystallize and specify those goals: what exactly are we trying to accomplish? Just war involves clearly articulated and limited aims: not the total destruction of the enemy, but the re-establishment of peace and stability in a particular region or country or the restoration of lost or threatened rights and freedoms.

7. *Right intention.* The term “intention” refers not only to outward objectives, which must be just (e.g., the restoration of peace, not territorial conquest or financial gain), but also (at least for the Christian) the motivation for action: “Even if there is a just cause, the war must not be waged out of hatred for the enemy, nor for the desire for revenge. Rather, when Christians go to war, they are to do so out of love for their enemies, as well as for the victims involved.”⁶⁰

The criteria for the conduct of war, *jus in bello*, are usually listed as twofold: discrimination and proportionality. Just war thinkers insist that this second set of criteria is “quite distinct” from the first “and must be kept so.”⁶¹ They often complain that critics of the just war theory typically focus on *in bello* considerations that are, by their very nature, less certain, predictable and controllable than *ad bellum* factors, and on that basis

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Allen, 43.

⁶¹ “In a Time of War,” 12.

reach a negative verdict on the justifiability of virtually any and every war. On the other hand, just war thinkers like Paul Ramsey persuasively argue that in today's world of (nuclear) "weapons of mass destruction," the *in bello* factors of discrimination and proportionality are, in fact, inseparable from *ad bellum* considerations. If we know in advance that the *means* of conducting war will inevitably be at odds with the limitations imposed by *in bello* restraints upon just war, then it is impossible to justify fighting on the basis of *ad bellum* considerations, no matter how compelling they may be.⁶²

The principle of discrimination "forbids direct and intentional attack upon noncombatants in war."⁶³ Clearly identifying noncombatants, distinguishing "intentional" from "unintentional" attacks, and judging the degree to which military strategies take care to avoid possible injury to innocent civilians are some of the difficult but crucial problems encountered when debating the application of this criterion. "Proportionality" in this *in bello* context refers to the use of limited force in accomplishing the "just goals" of a war. This requires constant assessment and re-assessment during the war itself, and is obviously subject to a great deal of (fallible) human judgment. Considered hand in hand with right intention, "proportionality requires more than merely achieving one's objectives at the lowest cost in lives and resources for one's own side." Rather, it "calls for the least destruction possible for all concerned," since the war is being waged in pursuit of goals that will ultimately benefit even citizens of the nation against which one is fighting.⁶⁴ Allen summarizes:

These then are the just-war criteria. Applying them, it may be possible to judge some wars justifiable. By the same logic, some wars—probably most—will be judged unjustifiable in various respects. In the judging, both sets of criteria are

⁶² See *War and the Christian Conscience* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1961).

⁶³ Allen, 44.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 46-47.

obligatory. Justifiable resort to war does not license the use of unlimited means, nor do permissible means make a war right that should never have been fought at all. From the Christian faith one knows that limits are required in war because all those on both sides are one's neighbors in Christ. The very existence of such a serious and unavoidable conflict is a matter of deep regret. Therefore one seeks at every point to restrain the destruction in behalf of a more just peace.⁶⁵

Certain basic convictions underlie the acceptance and use of these criteria in Christian just war thinking. The first is a conviction regarding the sanctity of human life, a recognition that all people—even one's enemies—are God's creatures and are to be valued and respected as such. Here pacifists and just war thinkers share common ground, in contrast to the attitude of most "crusaders," who tend to view whole nations or peoples as good or evil on the basis of ethnic, cultural, national, religious or ideological differences. The second conviction involves a sober realism about the nature of sin and its consequences in a fallen world. It recognizes the inevitability of conflict between individuals and groups, and the impossibility and irresponsibility of ignoring these conflicts or hoping that they can be overcome without resorting to any kind of force or coercion. The third conviction, emphasized by Augustine and those that followed him in both the Reformation and Roman Catholic traditions, is that nothing less than Christian love compels the believer to accept the necessity of the use of force in certain circumstances to protect those whose lives or safety are in danger. This use of force, therefore, while regrettable, is not inherently evil. Rightly motivated and used, it can even be described as a "good deed" performed in the service of one's neighbor in a sin-sick, violent world. Ramsey, one of the foremost contemporary Christian expositors and defenders of the just war theory, goes to great lengths to emphasize that "the western

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 47.

theory of the just war originated, not primarily from considerations of abstract or ‘natural’ justice, but from the interior ethics of Christian love.”

While Jesus taught that a disciple in his own case should turn the other cheek, he did not enjoin that his disciples should lift up the face of another oppressed man for *him* to be struck again on *his* other cheek. It is no part of the work of charity to allow this to continue to happen. Instead, it is the work of love and mercy to deliver as many as possible of God’s children from tyranny, and to protect from oppression, if one can, as many of those for whom Christ died as it may be possible to save. When choice *must* be made between the perpetrator of injustice and the many victims of it, the latter may and should be preferred—even if effectively to do so would require the use of armed force against some evil power. This is what I mean by saying that the justice of sometimes resorting to armed conflict originated in the interior of the ethics of Christian love.⁶⁶

Although this is not the place to investigate or evaluate these issues and arguments, Ramsey’s words highlight some of the questions that consistently surface in debates between pacifists (such as Yoder and Hauerwas) and Christian just war thinkers, and even among just war thinkers themselves. One of these questions is whether war is to be viewed as the consequence of sin or as evil in and of itself. Arthur Holmes, who has written and edited several scholarly books on war from a Christian perspective, and who speaks as a representative of the just war tradition in the book *War: Four Christian Views* edited by Robert Clouse, begins his treatment of the just war tradition in this work by stating bluntly: “War is evil.” “To call war anything less than evil,” he says, “would be self-deception.” “The issue that tears the Christian conscience is not whether war is good, but whether it is in all cases entirely avoidable.”⁶⁷ Given this presupposition, Holmes has no choice but to defend just war on so-called “lesser evil” grounds. Since

⁶⁶ Paul Ramsey, *The Just War: Force and Political Responsibility* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983, 1968), 142-143. Just war thinkers within the Roman Catholic tradition like to point out that Aquinas locates his discussion of “just war” within the treatise on *charity* in the *Summa Theologiae* (II-II, 40.1); see, e.g., George Weigel, “Moral Clarity in a Time of War,” *FT* 129 (January 2003), 22.

⁶⁷ Clouse, 118.

“not all evil can be avoided,” it is necessary to ask: “Could participation in war perhaps be a lesser evil than allowing aggression and terror to go unchecked and unpunished?”⁶⁸ In Holmes’ just war scheme, justice, not love, is the basic consideration: “The just war theory does not try to justify war. Rather it tries to bring it under the control of justice so that, if consistently practiced by all parties to a dispute, it would eliminate war altogether.”⁶⁹

Other Christian just war thinkers flatly reject this view. “Just war,” writes Richard John Neuhaus and the editors of *First Things*, “although occasioned by evil, is not itself an evil; nor is it even, as is commonly said today, a necessary evil. It is, if just, a positive duty, the doing of which, while it may entail much suffering, is to be counted as good.”⁷⁰ Darrell Cole agrees:

Classical just war advocates (those who rely upon the tradition as formulated by the likes of Ambrose, Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin) deny that the just war criteria allow us to do evil—even *prima facie* evil—that good might come. They hold in fact that the just war criteria rule out evil altogether and help us determine when we must refrain from certain proposed acts of force. Just warriors refuse to restrain evil with evil. If we cannot prevent an evil without doing evil ourselves, then we throw ourselves on God’s mercy and trust in His will for us, even if it means dying; for such dying is a noble death, and noble dying always beats ignoble living.⁷¹

Cole singles out Reinhold Niebuhr as the theologian most responsible for spawning “lesser evil” views of just war. Since Niebuhr is a frequent target of both Yoder and Hauerwas, we will have occasion to discuss his views in more detail later in our study. At this point, however, we simply note Cole’s basic concern and critique:

The idea that Christians ought to play the lesser-evil game is the product of Christian Realism. Reinhold Niebuhr is the most famous and compelling of the

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 119-120.

⁷⁰ “In a Time of War,” 12.

⁷¹ Darrell Cole, “Listening to Pacifists,” *FT* 125 (Aug./Sept. 2002), 23.

Christian realists and is often referred to as the “father” of the movement. Christian messianic pacifists such as Yoder and Hauerwas have rightly attacked Niebuhr for transforming Jesus’ teaching into an “otherworldly” ethic. By contrast, the sort of theology we see at work in figures such as Aquinas and Calvin insists that Jesus’ ethic be harmonized with God’s “this worldly” ethic as revealed in the Old Testament. Those adhering to classical just war doctrine should, I suggest, make common cause with Hauerwas and Yoder in rejecting Niebuhr’s position. But they part company on how to remedy the mistake.⁷²

Closely related to the question of whether war is inherently evil is the question of whether the just war tradition, properly understood and applied, begins with a “presumption against war and violence.” This, too, is an issue that surfaces frequently in the writings of Yoder and Hauerwas, and (therefore) one that calls for further examination. We note already here, however, the caution of some just war thinkers against confusing the fact that peace is the *goal* of just war with the idea that honest and consistent just war thinking necessarily begins with a “presumption against war.” George Weigel writes: “The claim that a ‘presumption against violence’ is at the root of the just war tradition cannot be sustained historically, methodologically, or theologically.”⁷³ Keith Pavlischek, reviewing James Turner Johnson’s most recent work, *Morality and Contemporary Warfare*, affirms Johnson’s thesis that “the concept of just war...does not begin with a ‘presumption against war’ focused on the harm war may do, but with a presumption against *injustice* focused on the need for responsible use of force in response to wrongdoing.” According to Johnson, “the presumption-against-war position...is simply not to be found in classic just war teaching, ‘even in the specifically churchly theorists Augustine and Aquinas to whom Catholic just war theorists generally refer for authority.’”⁷⁴

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Weigel, 23. Cf. “Just War: An Exchange” *FT* 122 (April 2002), 31-37.

⁷⁴ Keith J. Pavlischek, “The Justice in Just War,” *FT* 103 (May 2000), 43.

A third question is whether war, in any sense, can be seen or described by a Christian as “an act of love,” or whether the best Christians can do in defending just war thinking is to appeal to the necessity of justice in the face of acts and threats of violence and oppression. Hauerwas’s critiques of just war thinking tend to focus on issues of “justice,” while prominent just war thinkers like Ramsey emphasize Augustine’s appeal to love. Luther, following Augustine, clearly sees love as a necessary criterion for Christian participation in or support of war. We will have opportunity to consider Luther’s views on this issue more fully in chapter three.

The fact that Ramsey and Hauerwas (both Methodists) collaborated on the book *Speak Up for Just War or Pacifism* (a critique of the United Methodist Bishops 1986 Pastoral Letter “In Defense of Creation,” with Hauerwas supplying an “epilogue”) is clear evidence of the seriousness with which they regard each other’s work, the desire for dialog, and the search for some kind of “common ground” or “common cause” that might be claimed by both pacifists and just war thinkers despite significant differences in conviction, emphasis and argumentation.⁷⁵ We will explore some of these possibilities for dialog from a Lutheran perspective later in the study. In this connection, however, it is interesting to note that Allen concludes his discussion of the just war tradition by referring to Yoder’s hopeful appeal to just war thinkers, which serves well as a transition to a brief discussion of Christian pacifism:

John Howard Yoder, a witnessing pacifist, has said that if he cannot persuade others to be pacifists, then he would like for them to be good just war thinkers. At least they would then be disposed to impose moral restraints on violence. And many just-war thinkers believe that their closest allies over the morality of war are not the crusaders, who agree with them that it can sometimes be justifiable to go

⁷⁵ *Speak Up for Just War or Pacifism: A Critique of the United Methodist Bishops’ Pastoral Letter “In Defense of Creation,”* with an epilogue by Stanley Hauerwas (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988).

to war. Rather they are witnessing pacifists, who recognize the universal rule of God, Christians' obligation to all God's children, and the persistence of destructive conflict.⁷⁶

Pacifism

Dale Brown, professor at Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Indiana, begins his book on *Biblical Pacifism* with a striking quotation from Mohandas Gandhi: "The only people on earth who do not see Christ and His teachings as nonviolent are Christians."⁷⁷ Nearly all Christian pacifists would sympathize with this observation by Gandhi, acknowledging (with deep regret) the "minority position" occupied by pacifism in the Christian tradition. They would also insist, however, that it was not always so. Virtually no one disputes the assertion of Bainton that "the early Church was pacifist to the time of Constantine."⁷⁸ Most Christian pacifists, like Yoder, see this historical fact as having clear implications about the teaching of the New Testament: "If... the pre-Constantinian church was pacifist, this also obviously means that the New Testament was pacifist."⁷⁹ One of the primary goals of (and challenges for) Christian pacifists, therefore, is to help non-pacifists see how they and the church at large have strayed from this basic New Testament teaching.

With pacifism, however, as with the crusade and the just war positions, one immediately encounters significant problems when it comes to defining terms and classifying types. Most scholars, like Yoder himself, define pacifism as the position that "war is always morally wrong."⁸⁰ We will work with this definition here, even though—

⁷⁶ Allen, 52.

⁷⁷ Dale Brown, *Biblical Pacifism: A Peace Church Perspective* (Elgin, Illinois: Brethren Press, 1986), ix.

⁷⁸ Bainton, 14.

⁷⁹ *CA*, 10.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

as we will see—not all who describe themselves as pacifists necessarily hold that war is morally wrong for everyone or in every sense or in every situation. This inconsistency in definition contributes to the difficulty in classifying types of pacifism. After providing the seemingly absolute definition of pacifism noted above, Yoder himself goes on to say that pacifism is “not just one position, but a set of positions” which “has a great variety of sub-definitions and mediating forms.”⁸¹ In his book *Nevertheless: The Varieties of Religious Pacifism*, Yoder identifies, describes and evaluates no less than twenty-five distinct types of *religious* (as distinct from secular) pacifism. The second type of pacifism discussed in his book is somewhat euphemistically titled “The Pacifism of the Honest Study of Cases,” later described as “just war pacifism.”⁸² In *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace and Revolution* Yoder notes:

There will be borders and mixtures....Sometimes the term “pacifism” is used to include a kind of reasoning and deciding which uses the just war theory, and by measuring clearly the particular cause or particular weapons or particular situation comes to the conclusion that in this situation a war cannot be commanded, although it might be elsewhere.⁸³

When just war theory becomes subsumed under the general heading of “pacifism,” however, one might question either the consistency and clarity of the definition of pacifism or the accuracy and objectivity of the depiction of the just war theory (or both). There is no simple solution to this problem of definition, but it is important to be aware of it and keep it in mind, not only in connection with this survey of Christian perspectives on war and peace but also in the context of our examination and evaluation of Hauerwas’s pacifism.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Nevertheless*, 18-25.

⁸³ *CA*, 13.

Allen summarizes the pacifist attitude and lifestyle of the early church as follows:

Prior to 312 C.E. no Christian writer approved of Christians' going to war, and very few Christians served in the military. There were several reasons for this, including expectation of the end of the world, reluctance to join the army of their persecutors, and the danger that in the Roman army, Christians might be asked to commit idolatry—to sacrifice to the emperor or at least to approve of doing so.⁸⁴

Nonpacifists emphasize these historical and practical considerations cited by Allen as the primary reasons for the pacifist attitude and approach of the early church. This enables them to explain the change in attitude that gradually took place after Constantine in a way that does not conflict with the essential theological convictions of the early church.

Pacifists argue that the pacifism of the early church was, in fact, firmly grounded in moral and theological convictions inherent in the teaching of Jesus and of the New Testament, specifically his commands to love one's enemies and to refuse to resist those who do evil (Matt. 5:39, 44). These teachings were not seen as contradicting the Old Testament but as superceding its theocratic constraints and limitations and bringing to more complete fruition its prohibitions against killing (Ex. 20:13, etc.), its own "love ethic" (e.g., Lev. 19:17-18), and its vision of a kingdom of peace ushered in by the Messiah (Isaiah 2:4; 9:4-6; 11:6-9; Micah 4:3-4, etc.).

It is not difficult to collect and cite, as Bainton does, numerous quotations from the early fathers underscoring the serious, even radical, nature of Christ's injunctions in this regard:

Tertullian asked, "If we are enjoined to love our enemies, whom have we to hate? If injured we are forbidden to retaliate. Who then can suffer injury at our hands? Clement of Alexandria said to the heathen: "If you enroll as one of God's people, heaven is your country and God your lawgiver. And what are his laws? . . . Thou shalt not kill. . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. To him that strikes thee on the one cheek, turn also the other. Cyprian reminded his brethren of Paul's hymn of love, "And what more—that. . . when buffeted you should turn the other

⁸⁴ Allen, 16.

cheek; and forgive not seven times but seventy times seven....That you should love your enemies and pray for adversaries and persecutors?" Dionysius of Alexandria declared: "Love is ever on the alert to do good even to him who is unwilling to receive it." Tertullian called love of enemies the "principal precept." Justin inquired: "If you love merely those who love you, what do you do that is *new*?"⁸⁵

Even among the church fathers, however, one can discern certain varieties of pacifism. Bainton distinguishes between the "legalistic and eschatological" pacifism of Tertullian, the "Gnostic" pacifism of Marcion, and the "pragmatic or redemptive" pacifism of Origen, Irenaeus and Justin Martyr.⁸⁶ In each case, however, the fundamental appeal was to the teaching and example of Christ and his command to love others unconditionally and indiscriminately, just as he had loved them and the whole world (cf. John 15:12).

Despite the gradual embrace of just war theory after the rise of Constantine, one finds evidence of pacifist convictions and sympathies throughout Christian history.

In the fourth century, the theologians who believed that some wars could be justifiable for the laity also taught that the clergy could not go to war. Their nonviolence was considered a higher way. A similar belief was present in the monastic movement. In the Middle Ages there were pacifist tendencies among the Franciscans. Other groups, like the Waldensians, the Cathari, and one branch of Hussites, were pacifist. During the Reformation and afterward there arose several peace churches—Mennonites and Hutterites, and during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Quakers and the Brethren. In the twentieth century, in addition to the peace churches, strong pacifist movements have arisen within other Protestant denominations and among Catholics.⁸⁷

Obviously, we cannot consider here all the varieties of pacifism that have existed or that currently exist in the Christian tradition, nor even attempt to discuss the many and various classifications of types suggested by both contemporary pacifists and nonpacifists. Even a summary of Yoder's twenty-five "distinct types" of pacifism would

⁸⁵ Bainton, 77.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 77ff.

⁸⁷ Allen, 18.

take us too far afield.⁸⁸ Keeping in view our interest in the pacifism of Hauerwas, we will attempt a more modest twofold task: first, to identify some of the questions regarding pacifism often discussed and debated by contemporary pacifists and just war thinkers, especially those that arise frequently in the writings of Hauerwas; second, to offer a brief summary of the type of pacifism espoused by John Howard Yoder, “The Pacifism of the Messianic Community,” as background for our inquiry into the pacifist views of Hauerwas.

The most basic question regarding pacifism is the question of definition referred to above. Even if it is granted that there are “varieties” and “mixtures” and “mediating forms” of pacifism, is it possible to locate a border or limit beyond which certain positions, even though they might claim to be pacifist, fall outside the pale of a consistent and meaningful definition? Is it possible to distinguish clearly and consistently between pacifists and nonpacifists on the basis of one or more *sine qua non* characteristics? Allen insists that this is not only possible but also necessary if pacifists and nonpacifists have any hope of understanding each other and communicating meaningfully with each other. For him, the *sine qua non* is that “pacifists believe that war is *always* wrong:”

One is not a pacifist simply because one believes that this war or that is unjustifiable, or that most wars are unjustifiable, or even that it is unlikely that there could be a justifiable war today. Just-war thinkers could come to any of those conclusions, since they believe that using the just-war criteria might lead one either to approve or disapprove morally of a particular war. In contrast, a pacifist...does not recognize any conditions under which it would ever be right to go to war.⁸⁹

For this reason, argues Allen, terms or categories such as “nuclear pacifism” or “selective

⁸⁸ For a somewhat simpler survey of eight types of representative pacifist views, see Brown’s chapter on “Variations within the Peace Church Tradition,” 41-62.

⁸⁹ Allen, 19.

pacifism” are unhelpful and misleading, since they qualify “pacifism” in a way that makes it virtually indistinguishable from nonpacifist positions.

One must then be either a pacifist or nonpacifist; there are no mixtures or middle possibilities. Either all wars everywhere under all conditions are wrong, as pacifists hold, or some wars might be justifiable, as just-war thinkers hold. There is good reason for using the term “pacifist” this way. The argument that some wars might be justifiable presupposes some different beliefs and makes use of different criteria from the argument that no war could ever be justifiable.⁹⁰

When the positions are mixed or merged, the discussion becomes hopelessly confused.

This issue is important because (as noted earlier) pacifists like Yoder and Hauerwas—while holding personally to an “absolute” definition of pacifism—seem to want to argue that even the just war tradition is actually based (historically and theologically) on pacifist presuppositions. Just war thinkers, from their perspective, are really half-hearted pacifists who (if they are honest) are willing to acknowledge the moral and biblical superiority of consistent pacifism but are also (unfortunately) willing to compromise Christ’s radical demands because of the difficulty or even seeming impossibility of following them in the “real” (sinful) world.

A second question, following from the first, is whether there is any basis at all for conversation and cooperation between pacifists and nonpacifists, beyond simply seeking to better understand each other’s mutually exclusive positions. Even if there is no *middle* ground between the two positions, is there any *common* ground? Allen says:

Christian pacifists and just war thinkers do...hold some basic theological beliefs in common. One shared belief of special significance for war is that all people are of worth in God’s sight and that therefore we ought to recognize that worth, among enemies as well as allies. On this they contrast sharply with crusaders’ absolute distinction between good and evil....Shared regard for the worth of all means that there is a sense in which the disagreements between pacifists and just-

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

war thinkers, however deep and enduring, are “within the family.” This is far less the case in the relation of both positions to crusade ethics.⁹¹

We will want to explore the issue of common ground further without diminishing the distinctiveness of these positions or downplaying their basic disagreements. We also want to examine possible ways in which each position can test and challenge the other constructively despite those disagreements.

A third question that frequently arises in discussions of pacifism is whether it is helpful, or even legitimate, to distinguish between “non-violent resistance” and “non-resistance” as valid types of Christian pacifism. Although this distinction is readily accepted in most pacifist circles as denoting two different strategies for giving expression to a common pacifist conviction, it has been called into question (in radically different ways) by both pacifists (like Yoder and Hauerwas) and by nonpacifists—most famously, by the (former pacifist) Reinhold Niebuhr. In response to the pacifist charge that nonpacifists fail to take seriously the radical “love ethic” of Jesus, Niebuhr writes:

Curiously enough the pacifists are just as guilty as their less absolutist brethren of diluting the ethic of Jesus for the purpose of justifying their position. They are forced to recognize that an ethic of pure non-resistance can have no immediate relevance to any political situation; for in every political situation it is necessary to achieve justice by resisting pride and power. They therefore declare that the ethic of Jesus is not an ethic of non-resistance, but one of non-violent resistance; that it allows one to resist evil provided the resistance does not involve the destruction of life or property.⁹²

However, says Niebuhr, “there is not the slightest support in Scripture for this doctrine of non-violence. Nothing could be plainer than that the ethic uncompromisingly enjoins non-resistance and not non-violent resistance.”⁹³ It is on this basis that Niebuhr alleges

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

⁹² Reinhold Niebuhr, “Why the Christian Church Is Not Pacifist,” in *War and Christian Ethics*, ed. Arthur C. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 306.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

that “most modern forms of Christian pacifism are heretical”—because they disingenuously reject Jesus’ ethic of nonresistance and embrace instead, under the guise of “Christian pacifism,” a humanistic ethic of “non-violent resistance.”⁹⁴ Yoder is well aware of Niebuhr’s critique of pacifism and summarizes it as follows:

Pacifism commits an error in both exegesis and ethics when it argues that nonviolent resistance is the practical application of New Testament love in politics. Niebuhr insists that the New Testament teaches nonresistance, not nonviolence. Nonviolence is a pragmatic method, and on certain occasions may be preferable to violence. In *Moral Man and Immoral Society* Niebuhr argues extensively in favor of nonviolence as a strategy “which offers the largest opportunities for a harmonious relationship with the moral and rational factors in moral life.” But nonviolent resistance remains a means of coercion and of conflict, and is far from being a faithful translation of nonresisting love into social action.⁹⁵

According to Niebuhr, however, not all forms of Christian pacifism are heretical.

In medieval ascetic perfectionism and in Protestant sectarian perfectionism (of the type of Meno Simons, for instance) the effort to achieve a standard of perfect love in individual life was not presented as a political alternative. On the contrary, the political problem and task were specifically disavowed. This perfectionism did not give itself to the illusion that it had discovered a method for eliminating the element of conflict from political strategies. On the contrary, it regarded the mystery of evil as beyond its power of solution. It was content to set up the most perfect and unselfish individual life as a symbol of the Kingdom of God. It knew that this could only be done by disavowing the political task and by freeing the individual of all responsibility for social justice.⁹⁶

This is the (rare and radical) type of pacifism, says Niebuhr, that is not a heresy.

It is rather a valuable asset for the Christian faith. It is a reminder to the Christian community that the relative norms of social justice, which justify both coercion and resistance to coercion, are not final norms, and that Christians are in constant peril of forgetting their relative and tentative character and of making them too completely normative.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 303.

⁹⁵ Reinhold Niebuhr and Christian Pacifism (Washington, D.C.: The Church Peace Mission, 1966), 13-14.

⁹⁶ “Why the Christian Church is Not Pacifist,” 303.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

This seemingly obscure distinction and debate is actually quite significant as background for our study of Hauerwas and for an understanding of contemporary Christian pacifism in general. It explains why, for example, the widely-used historical survey edited by Robert Clouse presents *four* basic “Christian views” regarding war rather than the classic “three” sketched out by Bainton. In *War: Four Christian Views* “Nonresistance” and “Christian pacifism” are distinguished as two different and (for some) irreconcilable perspectives. Herman Hoyt strongly argues that nonresistance, not nonviolence, is the only valid biblical position, emphasizing that “the doctrine of nonresistance is not a plank in some political platform” or “a part of some merely social program.”⁹⁸ He criticizes most so-called “Christian pacifists” for their view that war is forbidden not just for Christians but that “it is wrong even for the nations of this world and therefore they should oppose the war effort in their own nation.”⁹⁹ Biblical nonresistance, on the contrary, affirms “patriotism and obedience to the government.”¹⁰⁰ It recognizes that “God permits human governments to exercise force for the protection of lives and property. War is wrong, but armed might is the one final argument understood by sinful men and the one to which they ultimately bow.”¹⁰¹ While Christians are forbidden to kill or do physical harm, they are at liberty to serve in the armed forces or in other governmental capacities in ways that do not involve them directly in actual acts of violence. “Christians can therefore perform their responsibilities to the

⁹⁸ Clouse, 38.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 46-47.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 48.

government in everything except participation in armed conflict and let war take its course knowing that shortly Christ will come and usher in the age of peace.”¹⁰²

Hoyt’s position is similar to, though not identical with, the position of the “Second Wind” Mennonites described in Yoder’s book *Nevertheless*. Embracing the term “nonresistance” in favor of “nonviolence,” these Mennonites

...since 1940 have thus invested as much concern in keeping their distance from “pacifism” as they have in denouncing militarism; in fact the military have their place in the non-Christian world, and some Mennonites commend the violence of the state, as long as they need not be a part of it.¹⁰³

Such a position, in Yoder’s view, does not (strictly speaking) merit the title “pacifism.” Even though he includes it among the various types of religious pacifism, he disparagingly dubs it “The Non-Pacifist Nonresistance of the Mennonite ‘Second Wind,’” and criticizes it rather harshly for accepting what he terms the “Niebuhrian compliment:”

The unspoken axiom underlying this position would seem to be double; socially, it assumes that if you are complimented on your integrity, you should accept the compliment. The Niebuhrian analysis, while rejecting the “sectarian” position as proud and irresponsible, concedes to it both consistency and that it understands Jesus aright. Rather than look twice to test the sincerity or the hidden assumptions of such a backhanded compliment, dualistic Mennonites, gratified for a place in the sun even if it be under a shadow, accepted the challenge and set out trying to be consistently “apolitical....It accepts as it were a compliment the judgment of political irrelevance pronounced not only on “sectarians” but also thereby on Jesus by mainstream theologians.¹⁰⁴

Yoder’s comments raise a fourth and more fundamental question: can one be an authentic, “absolutist” pacifist and still have a legitimate voice and an active role in the politics of this world? Or, to put it another way, are “sectarianism” and complete

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 44-49.

¹⁰³ *Nevertheless*, 111.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 111-112.

withdrawal from politics necessary implications of a true, consistent Christian pacifism? In *War: A Primer for Christians*, Allen takes up this question by distinguishing between two basic types of pacifists, “pragmatic pacifists” and “witnessing pacifists.” The former take a pacifist position because they are firmly convinced “that a nonviolent method ‘works’—it resists wrongdoing in the world in a much more effective way and at less cost in human life than does war.” Pragmatic pacifists emulate the example of such leaders as Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., who demonstrated “the power of nonviolence” in the real world of history and politics.¹⁰⁵

“Witnessing pacifists” put arguments about pragmatics aside. They insist that “whether nonviolence produces better consequences or not, war is always wrong for a more basic reason: it is incompatible with a Christian understanding of God— incompatible with what it means to be a follower of Jesus.”¹⁰⁶ The primary representatives of this position singled out by Allen are Yoder and Hauerwas. As Allen rightly indicates, however, as a “witnessing pacifist”

Yoder does not call for Christians to withdraw from the world of political life. Nor does he reject the use of all power. . . . Rather, Christians must refuse to use power violently, and they must refuse to collaborate with political structures that in their violence are rebellious against God. They must refuse “to use unworthy means even for what seems to be a worthy end.”¹⁰⁷

Yoder, in other words, rejects Niebuhr’s argument that nonresistance is the only valid and consistent form of Christian pacifism. He also rejects, therefore, the “Niebuhrian compliment” that “pure pacifism”—i.e., nonresistance—is to be greatly admired and respected as the most authentic testimony to the person and work of Jesus, as long as it is

¹⁰⁵ Allen, 20.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

willing to acknowledge its irrelevance for social and political life in the real world. This is a primary theme and concern also in the writings of Hauerwas, and one to which we will return in our examination of Hauerwas's pacifism. First, however, we offer a brief summary of Yoder's position based primarily on his own description of it in the closing chapters of his book *Nevertheless*.

The most consistent form of pacifism, the stance which grants the church the "radical moral independence" that it needs to be the church which God has called it to be, is described by Yoder as "The Pacifism of the Messianic Community." This pacifism is "Messianic" because it is "in the person and work of Jesus, in His teachings and His passion, that this kind of pacifism finds its rootage, and in His resurrection that it finds its enablement."¹⁰⁸ The true nature of this position, argues Yoder, "can be known only in relation to Jesus Christ"—this is what makes this form of pacifism utterly unique:

...whereas all of the positions reviewed above are held by Christians, this is the only position for which the *person* of Jesus Christ is indispensable. It is the only one of these positions which would lose its substance if Jesus were not Christ and its foundation if Jesus Christ were not Lord.¹⁰⁹

This form of pacifism, says Yoder, is not mere moralism, "a stuffy preoccupation with never making a mistake:"

The question put to us as we follow Jesus is not whether we have successfully refrained from breaking any rules, but whether we have been participants in that human experience, that peculiar way of living for God in the world, of being used as instruments of the living of God in the world, which the Bible calls *agape* or *cross*.¹¹⁰

This is pacifism of the "Messianic *Community*" because the focus is not on "the individual asking himself about right and wrong in his concern for his own integrity," but

¹⁰⁸ *Nevertheless*, 123.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

on “the human community experiencing in its life a foretaste of God’s kingdom.”¹¹¹

Most historic forms of pacifism, Yoder observes, have taken their cue from “powerful individuals” seeking (usually unsuccessfully) to create a “movement” for peace. The pacifism of the Messianic community

...is communal in that it is not a life alone for heroic personalities but for a society. It is communal in that it is lived by a brotherhood of men and women who instruct one another, forgive one another, bear one another’s burdens, reinforce one another’s witness.¹¹²

The witness given by this community, according to Yoder, has real and practical significance for this world. To label it “sectarian” or “monastic” or “separatistic” or “socially irresponsible” is to misunderstand and misrepresent its true nature.

The existence of a human community dedicated in common to a new and publicly scandalous enemy-loving way of life is itself a new social datum. A heroic individual can crystallize a widespread awareness of need or widespread admiration: only a continuing community dedicated to a deviant value system can change the world.¹¹³

Ironically, however, one of the serious disadvantages of this form of pacifism—which alone has the power to “change the world”—is that “it does not promise to work.” It does not contain “a strategy for resolving the urban crisis tomorrow.” “It is not a position which can be institutionalized to work just as well among those who do not quite understand it or are not sure how much they believe in it.”¹¹⁴

The resurrection is not the end product of a mechanism which runs through its paces wherever there is a crucifixion. There is about the Christian hope in the kingdom that peculiar kind of assurance which is called faith, but not the preponderant probability of success which is called for by the just war theory or by a prudential ethic.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 126-127.

“*Nevertheless*,” concludes Yoder, “this position is closer than the others to the idiom of the Bible and to the core affirmations of the Christian faith:”

It reckons seriously with the hopelessness of the world as it stands and yet affirms a gospel of hope. It shares the integrity of the “absolutist” views...without their withdrawal from history, and the practical concern of the programmatic views... without placing its hope there.¹¹⁶

As for the (anticipated) charge that this form of pacifism is simply another form of radical “messianism” conceived by a self-appointed remnant convinced that they alone have the message and means to save the world, Yoder responds by attempting to turn the tables on nonpacifists:

After all, the invocation of violence to support any cause is implicitly a messianism; any national sense of mission claims implicitly to be a “saving community.” You cannot avoid either messianism or the claim to chosen peoplehood by setting Jesus or His methods aside; you only cast the aura of election around lesser causes.¹¹⁷

The final turning of tables comes in the conclusion, where Yoder once again observes that “academic Protestant thought in the past generation has been largely dominated by the social-responsibility models of the Brothers Niebuhr,” with the result that “the post-Niebuhrian non-pacifist will see all pacifism, as he rejects it, as utopian purism... or as withdrawal, rather than recognize a respectable pacifist argument when presented in his own terms [e.g., so-called “just war pacifism”].”¹¹⁸ In the end, however, argues Yoder, all sound and honest ethical thinking must grant the superiority of pacifism as the most “morally responsible Christian stance.”

It could be claimed, after analysis of the entire assortment, that any ethical system, if taken seriously, as more than self-justification, can, and that some ethical systems must, lead to one kind of pacifism or another. These various pacifisms are sometimes compatible with one another, sometimes even mutually

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 129.

reinforcing, sometimes directly contradictory in their assumptions. Yet they are no more so than the various reasons men have for participating in war. In their denunciation of war, however it be explained, the moral commonality of all of them is greater than their systematic diversity. There is no ethical system, no morally responsible stance a Christian can take, to which one form or another of the pacifist appeal cannot be addressed. There is no serious critique one can address to the pacifist which does not, if taken honestly... turn back with greater force upon the advocate of war.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 132.

Chapter Two

The Pacifism of Stanley Hauerwas

Introduction

The question laid before John [of the book of Revelation] by his vision of the scroll sealed with seven seals is precisely the question of the meaningfulness of history. This is a question that, the vision says dramatically, cannot be answered by the normal resources of human insight. Yet it is by no means a meaningless question or one unworthy of concern. It is worth weeping, as the seer does, if we do not know the meaning of human life and suffering.

Speaking more generally, let us affirm, as numerous historians of philosophy are arguing, that to be concerned about history, to assume that history is meaningful, is itself a Judeo-Christian idea. The concern to know where history is going is not an idle philosophical curiosity. It is a necessary expression of the conviction that God has worked in past history and has promised to continue thus to be active among men. If God is the kind of God-active-in-history of whom the Bible speaks, then concern for the course of history is itself not an illegitimate or an irrelevant concern. No mystical or existential or spiritualistic depreciation of preoccupation with the course of events is justified for the Christian.

But the answer given to the question by the series of visions and their hymns is not the standard answer. “The lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power!” John is here saying, not as an inscrutable paradox but as a meaningful affirmation, that the cross and not the sword, suffering and not brute power determines the meaning of history. The key to the obedience of God’s people is not their effectiveness but their patience (13:10). The triumph of the right is assured not by the might that comes to the aid of the right, which is of course the justification for the use of violence and other kinds of power in every human conflict; the triumph of the right, although it is assured, is assured because of the power of the resurrection and not because of any calculation of causes and effects, nor because of the inherently greater strength of the good guys. The relationship between the obedience of God’s people and the triumph of God’s cause is not a relationship of cause and effect but one of cross and resurrection.¹

These words of Yoder from the closing pages of his book *The Politics of Jesus* serve as the preface to Hauerwas’s essay “Can a Pacifist Think about War?” and as a summary of Hauerwas’s conviction, learned from Yoder, “that the Christian commitment

¹ Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 237-238. [PJ]

to nonviolence is not separable from the very structure of Christian theology and, even more, Christian practice.” Yoder’s words, says Hauerwas, show clearly “to what extent Christian nonviolence involves extraordinary claims about the nature and telos of history—or as I would prefer, providence.”² Yoder would undoubtedly agree with Keegan’s observation (page 12 above) that “the written history of the world is largely a history of warfare.” The mission of the church, however, is to help the world see what a hollow, false, tragic, hopeless story that is, and to bear witness to the true meaning of history by embodying in its life and worship “His story”—God’s story, the story of God’s peaceable kingdom in Jesus Christ. At the heart of that story is the cross, which for Yoder and Hauerwas “determines the meaning of history.” Thus Hauerwas prefaces his book *With the Grain of the Universe* with another quotation from Yoder:

The point that apocalyptic makes is not only that people who wear crowns and who claim to foster justice by the sword are not as strong as they think—true as that is: we still sing, “O where are Kings and Empires now of old that went and came?” It is that people who bear crosses are working with the grain of the universe. One does not come to that belief by reducing social processes to mechanical and statistical models, nor by winning some of one’s battles for the control of one’s own corner of the fallen world. One comes to it by sharing the life of those who sing about the Resurrection of the slain Lamb.³

“There can be no deeper reality-making claim,” says Hauerwas, “than the one that Yoder makes [here]: those who bear crosses work with the grain of the universe.”

Christians betray themselves as well as their non-Christian brothers and sisters when in the name of apologetics we say and act as if the cross of Christ is incidental to God’s being. In fact, the God we worship and the world God created cannot be truthfully known without the cross, which is why the knowledge of God and ecclesiology—or the politics called church—are interdependent.⁴

² “Can a Pacifist Think About War?” 118.

³ Yoder, “Armaments and Eschatology,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 1, no. 1 (1988), 58.

⁴ *With the Grain of the Universe* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2001), 17.

We seek in this chapter to set forth the basic logic and structure of Hauerwas's Christological and ecclesial pacifism, but first we offer some essential background regarding the formative influence of Yoder and Hauerwas's larger project for reforming Christian ethics.

Background: Hauerwas's "Yoderian Conversion" and His "Reformation Project"

"John [Yoder] changed my life," says Stanley Hauerwas in a tribute written shortly after Yoder's death in 1998. "Reading Yoder made me a pacifist. It did so because John taught me that nonviolence was not just another 'moral issue' but constitutes the heart of our worship of a crucified messiah."⁵ Hauerwas describes his "reluctant conversion" to Yoder's pacifism in the introduction to *The Peaceable*

Kingdom:

Yoder was a pill I had no desire to swallow. His ecclesiology could not work apart from his understanding of Jesus and the centrality of nonviolence as the hallmark of the Christian life. 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. But the more I read of Yoder the more I was convinced that the main lines of his account of Jesus and the correlative ethic of nonviolence were correct. I was also slowly coming to see that there was nothing very passive about Jesus' form of nonviolence, rather his discipleship not only allowed but required the Christian to be actively engaged in the creation of conditions for justice and peace.⁶

Even in this brief paragraph the key features of Yoder's (and therefore Hauerwas's) pacifism are highlighted: the trinity-like centrality of ecclesiology, the person and work of Jesus Christ, and nonviolence itself as "the hallmark of the Christian life." "What Yoder made me see," writes Hauerwas, "is that the Christian commitment to nonviolence is not separable from the very structure of Christian theology and, even

⁵ "Remembering John Howard Yoder," *FT* 82 (April 1998), 15.

⁶ *PK*, xxiv.

more, Christian practice...nonviolence cannot be isolated or abstracted from fundamental theological claims.”⁷ Also highlighted in this paragraph is the conviction shared by both Yoder and Hauerwas regarding the necessarily *activist* nature of Christian pacifism as nonviolent *resistance*. Hauerwas recollects his first reading of Yoder’s most famous work in the ironically-titled “Why *The Politics of Jesus* is Not a Classic:”

The more I read it...the more I was frightened. Here was a position I was sure implied withdrawal from the world, but that certainly did not seem to be what Yoder was about. Indeed, his *Christian Witness to the State* was an extraordinary attempt to convince Mennonites not to accept Niebuhrian characterizations of them as morally necessary but politically irrelevant. Yoder simply challenged all the neat intellectual and theological classifications with which I had been so carefully educated.⁸

Hauerwas’s pacifism must be viewed not only in the light of Yoder’s theology, but also within the context of Hauerwas’s own broader project for reforming Christian ethics. Dissatisfied with traditional ethical approaches focusing either on duty (Kant’s “deontological” ethics) or on the consequences of one’s actions or decisions (John Stuart Mill’s “utilitarian” approach), Hauerwas advocates a “virtue ethics” (similar in some ways to that proposed by Alasdair MacIntyre) that focuses not on specific ethical “decisions” but on the character of the one making those decisions and the development of the virtues that constitute and cultivate such a character.⁹ In an early essay Hauerwas writes:

I have tried to reclaim and develop the significance of character and virtue for the moral life. Character is the category that marks the fact that our lives are not constituted by decisions, but rather the moral quality of our lives is shaped by the ongoing orientation formed in and through our beliefs, stories and intentions.¹⁰

⁷ “Can a Pacifist Think About War?” 118.

⁸ In *A Better Hope* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2000), 134.

⁹ See Hauerwas’s *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Ethic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981). See also Joel D. Biermann, *Virtue Ethics and the Place of Character Formation within Lutheran Theology* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, May 2002).

¹⁰ “The Ethicist As Theologian,” *The Christian Century* 92 (April 1975), 411.

In his book *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic*, Hauerwas spells out this “program” in more detail. Chapter one begins by invoking Luther and his ninety-five theses and continues by offering ten Hauerwasian theses for reforming Christian ethics. Key emphases in these theses include the narrative structure of Christian convictions, the social nature of Christian ethics, the oft-repeated Hauerwasian dictum that “the church does not *have* a social ethic, but *is* a social ethic,” the caution against seeking to “control national or world history,” and the need for cultivation of Christian practices that will instill the virtues necessary for Christians to be and become the kind of people they need to be to bear witness to God faithfully in and to the world.¹¹ All of these emphases surface in significant ways also in Hauerwas’s discussions of pacifism.

Indeed, one of the reasons—if not the primary reason—Hauerwas wrote *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* was to explain and demonstrate more fully and clearly how his views on pacifism are central to his entire understanding of theology and ethics. He writes:

Many have viewed my pacifism with a good deal of suspicion, seeing it as just one of my peculiarities. Such an interpretation is not unjust, since I have not written in a manner that exposes its centrality. I hope this book will make it clear why it is so methodologically crucial as I try to show why a position on nonviolence entails, for example, a different understanding of the significance of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection than that offered in other forms of Christian ethics. Indeed, nonviolence is not just one implication among others that can be drawn from our Christian beliefs; it is at the very heart of our understanding of God.¹²

Since *The Peaceable Kingdom* is the closest Hauerwas comes to presenting his views on

¹¹ *A Community of Character* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 9-12.

¹² *PK*, xvii.

pacifism in a somewhat systematic format that demonstrates its centrality and inter-relatedness to the other major themes of his “ecclesial ethics,”¹³ this work will be used as a primary resource in setting forth the major features of his pacifist convictions. Other pertinent books and essays will also, of course, be utilized along the way.¹⁴

A Particular Peace: Biblical Pacifism As a “Qualified Ethic”

For Hauerwas, theology embraces ethics and ethics is an essential, integral component (or even mode) of theology itself. Indeed, to begin any theological or ethical inquiry “by asking what is the relation between theology and ethics is to have already made a mistake. Christian convictions are by nature meant to form and illumine human lives” (xvii). Hauerwas strongly rejects the notion, therefore, that Christian pacifism is merely a theory (comparable, for example, to the “just war theory”) based on certain moral, doctrinal and/or rational “truths” or “principles” that require “application” to specific, ever-changing circumstances resulting in various right or wrong decisions or actions. The very notion of abstract, systematic, self-existing doctrinal truths or principles is itself very troublesome for Hauerwas:

Because truth is unattainable without a corresponding transformation of self, “ethics,” as the investigation of that transformation, does not follow after a prior systematic presentation of the Christian faith, but is *at the beginning* of Christian theological reflection. (16)

All ethics, furthermore, is “qualified ethics” for Hauerwas. “Ethics always requires an adjective or qualifier—such as, Jewish, Christian, Hindu, existentialist, pragmatic, utilitarian, humanist, medieval, modern—in order to denote the social and historical character of ethics as a discipline” (1). Hauerwas rejects the search for an

¹³ See *PK*, xvi.

¹⁴ Page numbers referenced in the text in this chapter are from *PK*.

“absolute ethic” based on universal truths or principles accessible to all people. Such “foundationalist” approaches to Christian ethics, rooted primarily in Kantian presuppositions, are understandable but misguided and ultimately counter-productive:

Confronted by the fragmentary character of our world, philosophers have undoubtedly tried to secure a high ground that can provide for security, certainty, and peace. It is a worthy effort, but one doomed to fail, for such ground lacks the ability to train our desires and direct our attention: to make us into moral people. (11)

Hauerwas has no interest, therefore, in defending pacifism “in general” (as if such a thing exists or could exist). His interest is in “pacifism with a qualifier”—a specifically *Christian* pacifism rooted in specifically Christian convictions and practices. Like Yoder, Hauerwas wants to “make it clear that for Christians peace is not an ideal known apart from our theological convictions; rather the peace for which we hunger and thirst is determined and made possible only through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ” (xvii). For this reason, it is impossible for Hauerwas to view this pacifism as one position or opinion among many: “I do not intend to present just my ‘personal views,’ but want to argue that the position I develop should be any Christian’s” (xvi). He presents his views on pacifism, therefore, with an evangelical zeal, seeking not just to explain or even defend, but also to persuade and convert others to his position.

Hauerwas recognizes that some, if not many, will view this commitment to a specifically Christian pacifism as a capitulation to the ever-increasing moral fragmentation and confusion in today’s world—a state of affairs that all those who value peace are seeking to remedy or at least ameliorate.

We need instead, they say, to reformulate a universal morality that is able to bring order to our fragmentary world, securing peace between and in ourselves. Yet such universality will not come if Christians fail to take seriously their particularistic convictions. We Christians who...are inextricably committed to a

peaceable world, believe that peace is possible only as we learn to acknowledge and serve the Lord of this world, who has willed to be known through a very definite and concrete history. Therefore, Christian ethics holds to the importance of its qualifier, because the peace Christians embody, and which they offer to the world, is based on a kingdom that has become present in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. (7)

Indeed, from Hauerwas's perspective the greatest danger and fatal flaw of all attempts to secure peace on the basis of universal morality or natural law is that they ultimately succumb, in one way or another and to some degree or another, to the use of coercion or violence that undermines the very peace they want to achieve. "When the particularity of Christian convictions is made secondary to an alleged more fundamental 'morality,' we lose the means to be a peaceable people. For the attempt to secure peace through founding morality on rationality itself, or some other 'inherent' human characteristic, ironically underwrites coercion." As Christians, says Hauerwas:

We must maintain day in and day out that peace is not something to be achieved *by our power*. Rather peace is a gift of God that comes only by our being a community formed around a crucified savior—a savior who teaches us how to be peaceful in a world in rebellion against its true Lord. God's peaceful kingdom, we learn, comes not by positing a common human morality, but by our faithfulness as a peaceful community that fears not our differences. (12)

A Storied Peace: The Narrative Character of Christian Pacifism

The first two theses of Hauerwas's "Ten Theses for Reforming Christian Ethics" underscore the crucial role of narrative in Hauerwas's ethical scheme. Thesis one reads: "The social significance of the Gospel requires the recognition of the narrative structure of Christian convictions for the life of the church." Thesis two asserts: "Every social

ethic involves a narrative, whether it is concerned with the formulation of basic principles and/or with concrete policy alternatives.”¹⁵ And yet as critical as narrative is as a framework for properly understanding Hauerwas’s approach to ethics, it would be a mistake to see it as the central focus of his theology or as part and parcel of what he describes as another recent fad in theology. Hauerwas claims that he “honestly does not know” where this emphasis in his theology originated, though he notes that “my first interest in narrative was sparked by the realization that the early church thought that narrative was the appropriate mode of expression for what they took to be the significance of Jesus” (xxi, xxv). Hauerwas is certainly aware of the work of narrative theologians such as Hans Frei and Julian Hartt, though he insists that “it has never been, nor is it now, my intention to develop a narrative theology or a theology of narrative.”

Theology itself does not tell stories; rather it is a critical reflection on a story; or perhaps better, it is a tradition embodied by a living community that reaches back into the past, is present, and looks to the future. Hence, it is a mistake to assume that my emphasis on narrative is the central focus of my position—insofar as I can be said even to have a position. Narrative is but a concept that helps to clarify the interrelation between the various themes I have sought to develop to give a constructive account of the Christian moral life. (20)¹⁶

One might say that for Hauerwas narrative is the preferred biblical and ecclesial alternative to systematics as a way of “doing theology.” While systematics tends to “distort the ad-hoc character of theology as a discipline of the church” (xx), narrative allows for the challenges, struggles, freedom of movement and organic growth that Hauerwas sees as so critical for the theological task while also affirming the historical reality of the story of God’s journey with his people.

¹⁵ “Reforming Christian Social Ethics: Ten Theses,” in *The Hauerwas Reader* [HR], ed. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2001), 111-112.

¹⁶ See, e.g., “Story and Theology” in *Truthfulness and Tragedy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 71-81.

Obviously, the Bible plays a crucial role in helping Christians to understand the narrative structure of Christian ethics. Hauerwas warns repeatedly against viewing the Bible as a “set of rules” for determining what is “right and wrong.” Rather “the Bible is fundamentally a story of a people’s journey with their God” (24). Even those sections of the Bible that appear to be most “rule-oriented,” such as the Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount, must be read as part of the larger Biblical narrative—they “make sense only within the particularity of the story of God’s dealing with Israel” (23).

The nature of Christian ethics is determined by the fact that Christian convictions take the form of a story, or perhaps better, a set of stories that constitutes a tradition, which in turn creates and forms a community. Christian ethics does not begin by emphasizing rules or principles, but by calling our attention to a narrative that tells of God’s dealing with creation. (24-25)

To speak of Christian ethics as “narrative” is not to call into question its reliability, truthfulness, or trustworthiness. In fact,

There is no more fundamental way to talk of God than in a story. The fact that we come to know God through the recounting of the story of Israel and the life of Jesus is decisive for our truthful understanding of the kind of God we worship as well as the world in which we exist. Put directly, the narrative character of our knowledge of God, the self, and the world is a reality-making claim that the world and our existence in it are God’s creations; our lives, and indeed, the existence of the universe are but contingent realities. (24)

Other ways of talking about God, such as doctrinal formulations, creeds and (especially) the liturgy with its built-in quality of “re-enactment,” may serve as outlines of the story or as tools to help us tell the story better. But it is the story itself that is crucial to our understanding of God, ourselves and the world.

While the Gospels most obviously and explicitly bear this narrative form, the entire Bible in one way or another “tells the story of the covenant with Israel, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and the ongoing history of the church as the

recapitulation of that life” (29). Scripture’s story continues in the church through the baptism, training, and transformation of believers:

...we cannot be brought to understanding without training, for we resist at least the part of the narrative which describes us as sinful creatures. We can only know God by having our lives transformed through initiation into the kingdom. Such a transformation requires that we see the world as it is, not as we want it to be—that is, as sinful and ourselves as sinners. Thus the story requires transformation as it challenges the presumption of our righteousness and teaches us why we so badly need to be reborn through the baptism offered by this new community. (29)

The very shape and character of this narrative teach us that “Christian ethics is concerned more with who we are than what we do” (33). This does not mean, of course, that “our actions, decisions and choices are unimportant, but rather than the church has a stake in holding together our being and behaving in such a manner that our doing only can be reflection of our character” (33).

As we will explore in more detail, Hauerwas’s radical pacifism is inextricably tied to this understanding of the narrative structure of Christian ethics, since he is convinced that the “Christian story” by its very nature reflects and requires an absolute commitment to nonviolence. Consider his personal testimony in “Whose ‘Just’ War? Which ‘Peace?’”

I am a Christian pacifist. From my perspective that is an unhappy description, since I believe the narrative into which Christians are inscribed means we cannot be anything other than nonviolent. In other words, Christians do not become Christians and then decide to be nonviolent. Rather, nonviolence is simply one of the essential practices that is intrinsic to the story of being a Christian. “Being a Christian” is to be incorporated into a community constituted by the stories of God, which, as a consequence, necessarily puts one in tension with the world that does not share those stories.¹⁷

Only as we are incorporated into God’s story as Christ’s disciples within the community of believers do we come to learn what it means to be “at peace” with God and with others, and with that knowledge and experience comes responsibility:

¹⁷ In *Dispatches*, 137.

As Christians we believe that peace is most perfectly realized as we learn to find our role in God's story. That is, the peremptory story of peace as peace, the sense of being at home, comes only as we learn to live true to our nature as God's creatures. Moreover God has charged us with the particular responsibility of being his representatives to attract others to that story of peace by manifesting it in our common life. That is why Christians feel such an urgency to witness, to offer the stranger hospitality, so that God's peace might be possessed by all. (44)

A Truthful Peace: Coming to Terms with the Vice of Violence

The primary purpose of "God's story" as related in Scripture and in the life of the church is not to teach us "what to do and what not to do" but to help us to see the truth about "how things really are." This is what Hauerwas means when he insists, again and again, that the Christian narrative is first and foremost "a reality-making claim."¹⁸ And the first lesson we need to learn about "how things really are" is a disconcerting one:

The story Christians tell of God exposes the unwelcome fact that I am a sinner. For without such a narrative the fact and nature of my sin cannot help but remain hidden in self-deception. Only a narrative that helps me place myself as a creature of a gracious God can provide the skills to help me locate my sin as fundamental infidelity and rebellion. As a creature I have been created for loyalty—loyalty to the truth, to the love that moves the sun and the stars and yet is found on a cross—but I find myself serving any powers but the true one in the hopes of being my own lord. (31)

Instead of recognizing and accepting God's role as Creator and Lord and Giver, we seek to create our own "story," a false story, by means of which we seek to take control of our own lives and also the lives of others who would (actually or potentially) seek to expose our self-deception and rob us of the control we so desperately crave. According to Hauerwas, "our sin—our fundamental sin—is the assumption that we are the creators of the history through which we acquire and possess our character. Sin is the form our character takes as a result of our fear that we will be 'nobody' if we lose control

¹⁸ See, e.g., *PK*, 29ff.

of our lives” (47). It is this fear and craving that lead to the perceived need to use violence:

Our need to be in control is the basis for the violence of our lives. For since our “control” and “power” cannot but help but be built on an insufficient basis, we must use force to maintain the illusion that we are in control. We are deeply afraid of losing what unity of self we have achieved. Any idea or person threatening that unity must either be manipulated or eliminated. We fear others because they always stand as an implicit challenge to our deceptions. Thus it seems the inherent necessity of all people to have or create an enemy. (47)

As we embrace God’s gracious invitation to become a part of his kingdom and learn to make his story our own story, we are freed from the lie that we can be or need to be in control of our lives and the lives of others, and we are also freed, therefore, from the need to use violence to maintain control.

This does not mean that tragedy is eliminated from our lives; rather we have the means to recognize and accept the tragic without turning to violence. For finally our freedom is learning how to exist in the world, a violent world, in peace with ourselves and with others. The violence of the world is but a mirror of the violence of our lives. We say we desire peace, but we have not the souls for it. We fear the boredom peace seems to imply. Even more we fear the lack of control a commitment to peace would entail. As a result the more we seek to bring “under our control,” the more violent we have to become to protect what we have. (48-49)

This sinful and deceptive craving for control applies not only to individuals but also to communities—religious groups, ethnic groups, economic “castes,” and entire nations. It is a special temptation for the church, especially since the days of Constantine, when the church slipped comfortably but dangerously into the role of protector and preserver of a (distorted) version of “God’s story” in which the church, rather than God (but always in the name of God), would assume the responsibility for making the world “safe” and “secure” and “peaceful,” and would ensure that “everything would come out all right in the end.” Thesis six of Hauerwas’s “Ten Theses,” therefore, asserts that

“Christian social ethics can only be done from the perspective of those who do not seek to control national or world history but who are content to live ‘out of control.’” He explains:

To do ethics from the perspective of those “out of control” means Christians must find the means to make clear to both the oppressed and the oppressor that the cross determines the meaning of history. Christians should thus provide imaginative alternatives for social policy as they are released from the “necessities” of those that would control the world in the name of security. For to be out of control means Christians can risk trusting in gifts, so they have no reason to deny the contingent character of our existence.¹⁹

If seeking to control national and/or world history (in God’s name and for his sake) is a special temptation for Christians, it is an especially dangerous temptation for Christians in America, not only because of the dominant influences of its Constantinian-affirming Puritan-Reformed history, but also because the ideals and values which it purports to uphold in a democratic system (freedom, justice, human rights, equality, etc.) seem so necessary, so virtuous and so amenable to “God’s agenda” for the world.

Democracy, says Hauerwas,

...has been a particularly subtle temptation to Christianity. Christians have never killed as willingly as when they have been asked to do so for “freedom.” I take it, therefore, that one of the most important challenges facing Christians today is to remember that the democratic state is still a state that would ask us to qualify our loyalty to God in the name of some lesser loyalty.²⁰

According to Hauerwas, however, “the only freedom worth having” is the freedom to learn how to live as people who are *not* in control, the freedom to live in peace with ourselves and with one another. We learn this freedom as we sit at the feet of a very different kind of political leader, one who bears the title “Prince of Peace.”

¹⁹ *The Hauerwas Reader*, ed. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001) [HR], 113.

²⁰ “Can a Pacifist Think About War?” in *Dispatches*, 134. Cf. *PK*, 12.

A Christ-Centered Peace: Jesus As the Presence of God's Peaceable Kingdom

Hauerwas's pacifism is nothing if not Christ-centered. We noted earlier Yoder's claim that what makes "The Pacifism of the Messianic Community" unique is its inseparability from the unique person and work of Jesus—his teachings, passion and resurrection.²¹ It is not surprising, therefore, that Hauerwas introduces chapter five of *The Peaceable Kingdom* (titled "Jesus: The Presence of the Peaceable Kingdom") by emphasizing that the first half of the book has merely been "preparation" for this central and pivotal chapter.

The emphasis on the qualified nature of Christian ethics, the significance of narrative, the historic nature of human agency, the character of our sinfulness have been attempts to establish a framework that can help us understand the moral significance of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. That such preparation was necessary may seem odd, for it would be natural to assume that what makes Christian ethics Christian is the overriding significance of Jesus. But how that significance is understood has varied, and the ways in which Jesus is claimed to be morally significant often bear little likeness to the Jesus we find portrayed in the Gospels. (72)

Hauerwas is critical of traditional approaches to Christian ethics that focus on "Christology" as a set of doctrinal truths rather than attending to the actual story of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels. Only by attending to the story of Jesus—rather than to doctrinal truths about Jesus—do we learn what it means to be followers of Jesus and citizens of God's kingdom.

Hauerwas summarizes the ethical teaching of Jesus by pointing to Matthew 5:38-48, a portion of the Sermon on the Mount that includes Jesus' words about not resisting evildoers, turning the other cheek, loving one's enemies and praying for them. He comments:

²¹ *Nevertheless*, 123-125.

We are called to be like God: perfect as God is perfect. It is a perfection that comes by learning to follow and be like this man whom God has sent to be our forerunner in the kingdom. That is why Christian ethics is not first of all an ethics of principles, laws, or values, but an ethic that demands that we attend to the life of a particular individual—Jesus of Nazareth. It is only from him that we can learn perfection—which is at the very least nothing less than forgiving our enemies. (75-76)

“Imitating Jesus” does not, for Hauerwas, consist in asking questions like “What Would Jesus Do?” or seeking to duplicate his life “point by point.” “We are called upon to be *like* Jesus, not to *be* Jesus” (76). But it does mean taking his words and actions utterly seriously, especially the climactic act of nonviolent submission that summarizes all that he came to accomplish and teach:

It involves seeing in his cross the summary of his whole life. Thus to be like Jesus is to join him in the journey through which we are trained to be a people capable of claiming citizenship in God’s kingdom of nonviolent love—a love that would overcome the powers of this world, not through coercion and force, but through the power of this one man’s death. (76)

The Old Testament—the story of God’s dealings with Israel—is crucial for understanding the life and work of Jesus, since Jesus’ activity in the Gospels is presented as the recapitulation of the Israel’s life. “We cannot understand what it means to learn to follow Jesus without understanding what it means for Israel to be on a journey with the Lord” (83). For Hauerwas, the crucial aspect of God’s journey with Israel is that he “does not impose his will upon her. Rather he calls her time and time again to his way, to be faithful to the covenant, but always gives Israel the possibility of disobedience” (81). This “refusal to coerce” is seen as the key to Jesus’ life as well. Quoting from Donald Mickie and David Rhoads’ commentary on Mark, Hauerwas observes that

Jesus confronts the authorities with the nature of God’s rule and the seriousness of their offenses against it, but he does not impose his authority on them. After each confrontation, he moves on, leaving the authorities to choose their response. He is not a military messiah who uses a sword or manipulates the crowds to impose

his authority. He does not even fight to defend himself, and he endures the consequences of his opponent's scorn.²² (81)

The non-coercive and non-violent nature of Christ's life and work comes to a climax in the cross, where we see how God "deals with the world" and where we learn how to become participants in the creation and extension of God's "peaceable kingdom:"

It is thus in the cross that Christians see the climax of God's way with the world. In his cross we see decisively the one who, being all-powerful, becomes vulnerable even to being a victim of our refusal to accept his Lordship. Through that cross God renews his covenant with Israel; only now the covenant is with the "many." All are called to be his disciples through this one man's life, death and resurrection, for in this cross we find the very passion of God. We are therefore invited to drink this drink, and to be baptized with this baptism (Mark 10:39), and in doing so we believe that we become participants in God's very life. In short, we begin to know what it means to imitate God. (81)

"Imitating God" in this way is not "an end in itself;" it is rather God's divinely-designed means of making present in this world his "peaceable kingdom." The message of the cross is that "the kingdom of God is *present* insofar as his life reveals the effective power of God to create a transformed people capable of living peaceably in a violent world" (83). "Living peaceably" as Christians means embracing nonviolence and rejecting the temptation to coercion and control:

Through Jesus' life and teachings we see how the church came to understand that God's kingship and power consists not in coercion but in God's willingness to forgive and have mercy on us. God wills nothing less than that men and women should love their enemies and forgive one another; **thus we will be perfect as God is perfect.** Jesus challenged both the militaristic and ritualistic notions of what God's kingdom required—the former by denying the right of violence even if attacked, and the latter by his steadfast refusal to be separated from those "outside" (85; emphasis in original).

The resurrection—as historical fact, not as symbol or myth—is crucial for Hauerwas as well, since it gives us the confidence to forgive our enemies and the freedom to act in the certainty that it is God, not me or we, who is really "in control" of human history.

²² Donald Mickie and David Rhoads, *Mark As Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 109.

Hauerwas is sensitive to the fact that this way of understanding Jesus' life and work may seem strange to those familiar with more traditional theological vocabulary and categories, and may also strike some as dangerously moralistic or legalistic: "Has not the talk of peace and the necessity of our becoming peaceful members of God's kingdom come perilously close to turning the gospel into a moral ideal rather than the good news of salvation?" Quite specifically, "what are we to make of such a classical text as Romans 3:21-26?" (92). Although Hauerwas does not specifically cite or reference Yoder's work in responding to these questions, his answer is essentially the same as that given by Yoder in chapter 11 of *The Politics of Jesus* ("Justification by Grace Through Faith"). Like Yoder, Hauerwas expresses concern that Paul's emphasis on justification "has sometimes been interpreted in a manner that amounts to a denial of the ethical. What is important is not that we are good or bad, that we do the right or wrong thing, but that we have faith." It is clear from Paul's epistles, says Hauerwas, that faith is "fundamentally a moral response and transformation." "Faith for Paul is not some mystical transformation of the individual; rather it is to be initiated into a kingdom. Faith is not belief in certain propositions," it is rather *faithfulness* to a person and his radically new way of life. Faith is "simply fidelity to Jesus, the initiator of God's kingdom of peace" (92-93).

Furthermore, the new life to which Jesus calls us "is fundamentally a social life. We are 'in Christ' insofar as we are part of that community pledged to be faithful to this life as the initiator of the kingdom of peace" (93). "Justification," therefore, "is only another way of talking about sanctification, since it requires our transformation by initiation into the new community made possible by Jesus' death and resurrection" (94).

Whether one prefers the term “justification” or “sanctification,” both are meant to describe a journey, a process of communal discipleship by which we learn and “unlearn” our tendency toward violence: “Through the story of Jesus I can increasingly learn to be what I have become, a participant in God’s community of peace and justice. Only by growing into that story do I learn how much violence I have stored in my soul, a violence which is not about to vanish overnight, but which I must continually work to recognize and lay down” (94). This requires skills learned from others and practiced together with others, which is part of the reason why “the question of the nature and form of the church is the center of any attempt to develop Christian ethics” (95). To this next “central” subject, therefore, we now turn.

A Political and Ecclesial Peace: The Church As Social Ethic

“The first word we as Christians have to say to the world about war is ‘church.’ In other words, we do not so much have an alternative ethic to the world’s way of war—we are the alternative.”²³ This statement of Hauerwas from the epilogue to Ramsey’s book *Speak Up for Just War or Pacifism* both anticipates and serves as the foundation for our discussion in the next and final section of Hauerwas’s views regarding the church’s necessary and “peaceable” witness to the world. We begin with it here to underscore the point that, for Hauerwas, one simply cannot separate “what the church says or does” from “what the church is.” As is true for Christians as individuals, the *character* of a community counts as much or more than its specific actions, positions, or decisions. Thus it would be a mistake to think that we could present in this section a general or

²³ *Speak Up*, 429.

theoretical discussion of Hauerwas's views on the "peaceable nature of the church," and then turn in the next section to a practical discussion of the church's witness to the world. Even if this were possible, it would inevitably involve a serious distortion of Hauerwas's understanding of the church, and would run directly contrary to his "famous and oft-repeated programmatic statement:" "the church does not have a social ethic; the church is a social ethic."²⁴

The division between these two last sections, therefore, should be seen merely as a division of emphasis or focus. In this section we seek to set forth in broad strokes Hauerwas's view of the church as a "peaceable polis," as a social and political alternative to the world's way of ordering and organizing itself through coercion and violence. In the next section we will focus specifically on questions, challenges and misunderstandings that often arise regarding Hauerwas's understanding of the church's role as "witness" in and to society and Hauerwas's responses to those questions and challenges.

One of Reinhold Niebuhr's primary criticisms of most forms of pacifism in his day was that they stemmed from a false optimism about humankind rooted more in the Renaissance than in Scripture. This led, in turn, to a false optimism about human history itself, a false hope about the possibility of ushering in God's kingdom on earth by human efforts. However, says Niebuhr:

The New Testament does not... envisage a simple triumph of good or evil in history. It sees human history involved in the contradictions of sin to the end. This is why it sees no simple resolution of the problem of history. It believes that the Kingdom of God will finally resolve the contradictions of history; but for it the Kingdom of God is no simple historical possibility. The grace of God for man

²⁴ Introduction to "Ten Theses" in *HR*, 111.

and the Kingdom of God for history are both divine realities and not human possibilities.²⁵

From Niebuhr's perspective, the problem of sin is even more evident and intractable on the social level than it is on the individual level, as the title of his classic work *Moral Man and Immoral Society* conveys.

Individual men may be moral in the sense that they are able to consider interests other than their own in determining problems of conduct, and are capable, on occasion, of preferring the advantages of others to their own. They are endowed by nature with a measure of sympathy and consideration for their kind, the breadth of which may be extended by an astute social pedagogy....But all these achievements are more difficult, if not impossible, for human societies and social groups. In every human group there is less reason to guide and check impulse, less capacity for self-transcendence, less ability to comprehend the needs of others and therefore more unrestrained egoism than the individuals, who compose the group, reveal in their personal relationships.²⁶

Niebuhr's work is therefore directed against those "moralists, both religious and secular,"

...who imagine that the egoism of individuals is being progressively checked by the development of rationality or the growth of a religiously inspired goodwill and that nothing but the continuance of this process is necessary to establish social harmony between all the human societies and collectives....They do not recognize that when collective power, whether in the form of imperialism or class domination, exploits weakness, it can never be dislodged unless power is raised against it.²⁷

This regrettable need for the use of power—even violence—to maintain some degree of order and justice stems from a realistic assessment of man's sinful condition, especially as manifested in the social realm and in the political order:

To look at human communities from the perspective of the Kingdom of God is to know that there is a sinful element in all the expedients which the political order uses to establish justice. That is why even the seemingly most stable justice degenerates periodically into either tyranny or anarchy. But it must also be recognized that it is not possible to eliminate the sinful element in the political expedients. They are, in the words of St. Augustine, both the consequence of, and the remedy for, sin. If they are the remedy for sin, the ideal of love is not merely

²⁵ "Why the Christian Church Is Not Pacifist," 307.

²⁶ *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), xi-xii.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, xii.

a principle of indiscriminate criticism upon all approximations of justice. It is also a principle of discriminate criticism between forms of justice.²⁸

Both Yoder and Hauerwas commend Niebuhr for the seriousness with which he approaches and addresses the problem of sin, both on an individual and even (as pertains to the structures of the world) on a communal level. From their perspective, however, Niebuhr's greatest deficiency is his failure to recognize the significance and uniqueness of the *church* as a real, historical, social, political, and *moral* community within the world bearing witness, here and now, to the very presence of the Kingdom of God, the "peaceable kingdom." Yoder writes:

This omission is highly significant for understanding what is wrong with Niebuhr's social ethics. For the body of Christ differs from other social bodies in that it is not less moral than its individual members. If being a perfectly loyal American, a freemason, or a bourgeois, identifies a man with that group egoism in such a way as to make him less loving than he would be as an individual, the contrary is true of being a member of Christ. Thus the thesis of *Moral Man and Immoral Society* falls down in the crucial case, the only one which is really decisive for Christian ethics.²⁹

This is critical also for the Christian's view of history as a whole, since "in the Bible, the bearer of the meaning of history is not the United States of America, nor Western Christendom, but a divine-human society, the church, the body of Christ."³⁰

The reason Niebuhr sees Jesus' ethic of love as an "impossible possibility," says Hauerwas, is that (unlike Yoder) he separates Jesus' radical ethic from the radically unique community that gives historical expression to that ethic. "Yoder does not need to follow Niebuhr's withdrawal from Jesus, because, unlike Niebuhr, he does not separate

²⁸ "Why the Christian Church Is Not Pacifist," 308.

²⁹ *Reinhold Niebuhr and Christian Pacifism*, 21.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

Jesus from the church. For Yoder, contrary to Niebuhr, a society exists that is more moral than the individual.” It is this very society, the church, that makes a radical commitment to nonviolence both necessary and a practical possibility:

When we speak of the pacifism of the messianic *community*, we move the focus of ethical concern from the individual asking himself about right and wrong in his concern from his own integrity, to the human community experiencing in its life a foretaste of God’s kingdom. The pacifistic experience is communal in that it is not a life alone for heroic personalities but for a society. It is communal in that it is lived by a brotherhood of men and woman who instruct one another, forgive one another, bear one another’s burdens, reinforce one another’s witness.³¹

As Hauerwas makes clear in his exposition of the church as “The Servant Community” (chapter six in *The Peaceable Kingdom*), the story of Scripture plays a crucial and fundamental role in the peaceable life and witness of the church. On the one hand, says Hauerwas, “the Bible without the community, without expounders, and interpreters, and hearers, is a dead book.” On the other hand, “Scripture has authority in the church” and “stands over the community exerting a critical function....Scripture is the means the church uses to constantly test its memory,” to remember, re-tell, and re-live the story of Israel, Christ and the community of believers (98). Hauerwas anticipates and appreciates the frustration of those who were hoping to find in this chapter—subtitled “Christian Social Ethics”—specific “answers for” or “positions on” on troubling social and political problems.

This chapter is supposed to be about Christians’ social responsibility in the world, but it does not seem we have been addressing that. What does this emphasis on the church tell us about what we should be doing in third-world countries? Or what we ought to be doing in this country to ensure social justice? What should the Christian’s stance be about the women’s liberation movement? What should be our response to war? These are the kinds of questions that are most often thought to comprise social ethics, not questions about the place of Scripture in the church’s life. (99)

³¹ *The Original Revolution* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1971), 121.

From Hauerwas's perspective, however, these are precisely the wrong questions to ask, since they invariably lead to attempts, based on "natural law" reasoning and strategizing, to do the very things that the church is *not* called to do (i.e., "control history" and "police society"), and in so doing to use or condone coercive means that the church of Jesus Christ must not use or condone.

I am in fact challenging the very idea that Christian social ethics is primarily an attempt to make the world more peaceable or just. Put starkly, the first social ethical task of the church is to be the church—the servant community. Such a claim may sound self-serving until we remember that what makes the church the church is its faithful manifestation of the peaceable kingdom in the world. As such the church does not have a social ethic; the church is a social ethic. (99)

The church's primary responsibility to the world is not to change the world but to help the world see itself for what it really is. By being the kind of community God has called it to be—a community that cares for the weak and helpless, forgives offenders and enemies, and refuses to use or condone violence of any kind—"the church helps the world understand what it means to be the world."

How could the world ever recognize the arbitrariness of the 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. (100)

Thus the scandal of the church's disunity is a most painful one for Hauerwas—particularly disunity that reflects the sinful divisions of the very world to which it is called to witness, divisions based on such things as race, class and nationality. Therefore, Hauerwas repeatedly hammers home the point that:

...the first social task of the church—the people capable of remembering and telling the story of God we find in Jesus—is to be the church and thus help the world understand itself as world. That world, to be sure, is God's world, God's good creation, which is all the more distorted by sin because it is still bounded by

God's goodness. For the church to be the church, therefore, is not anti-world, but rather an attempt to show what the world is meant to be as God's good creation. (100)

Because God's work and presence are not limited to the church (the church does not "possess" God), we should not be surprised to find that, at times, "people who are not Christians manifest God's peace better than we ourselves." In fact,

It is to be hoped that such people may provide the conditions for our ability to cooperate with others for securing justice in the world. Such cooperation, however, is not based on "natural law" legitimization of a generally shared "natural morality." Rather it is a testimony to the fact that God's kingdom is wide indeed. As the church we have no right to determine the boundaries of God's kingdom, for it is our happy task to acknowledge God's power to make his kingdom present in the most surprising places and ways. (101)

In view of Hauerwas' convictions about the crucial role played by the church in helping the world to see itself truthfully, he is particularly sensitive about the charge that his church-centered ethic is in any way "sectarian" or "utopian:"

...calling for the church to be the church is not a formula for a withdrawal ethic; nor is it a self-righteous attempt to flee from the world's problems; rather it is a call for the church to be a community which tries to develop the resources to stand within the world witnessing to the peaceable kingdom and thus rightly understanding the world. The gospel is a political gospel. Christians are engaged in politics, but it is a politics of the kingdom that reveals the insufficiency of all politics based on coercion and falsehood and finds the true source of power in servanthood rather than dominion. (102)

Thus, faith, hope, and love—and perhaps above all, patience—are the cardinal virtues needed by the church as it pursues its task of making God's peaceable kingdom visible to the world.

The church must learn time and time again that its task is not to *make* the world the kingdom, but to be faithful to the kingdom by showing to the world what it means to be a community of peace. Thus we are required to be patient and never lose hope...hope in the God who has promised that our faithfulness to the kingdom will be of use in God's care for the world. Thus our hope is not in this world, or in humankind's goodness, or in some sense that everything always works out for the best, but in God and God's faithful caring for the world. (104)

This is what Hauerwas means by “living out of control”—refusing to resort to strategies for solving the world’s problems through means (coercion, violence, war) that contradict the nature of God’s kingdom, and choosing instead to trust that “God will use our faithfulness to make his kingdom a reality in the world” (105). This does not mean that there is no place for planning and “strategizing” to promote causes like justice and peace, but Christians must resist and reject any strategizing that involves “the self-deception that justice can be achieved through a power and a violence that seeks to assure its efficacy” (105). In short, “to live out of control means that we do not assume that our task as Christians is to make history come out right.” “The task of the Christian people is not to seek to control history, but to be faithful to the mode of life of the peaceable kingdom” (106).

Although Christians can never participate in violence, they are called to resist those who are violent or who support the use of violence. Hauerwas therefore categorically rejects Niebuhr’s assertion that there is no essential difference between violent and nonviolent resistance, and that true biblical pacifism involves absolute nonresistance: “Those who are violent, who are also our neighbors, must be resisted, but resisted on our own terms, because not to resist is to abandon them to sin and injustice.”

Such resistance may appear to the world as foolish and ineffective for it may involve something so small as refusing to pay a telephone tax to support a war, but that does not mean that it is not resistance. Such resistance at least makes it clear that Christian social witness can never take place in a manner that excludes the possibility of miracles. (106)

The book *Resident Aliens*, co-authored by Hauerwas and William Willimon in 1989, was a popular attempt to expose the “Constantinian” mindset of the mainline church in America and present Hauerwas’s and Willimon’s vision for restoring the

church to its true and original character and mission. In 1996 Hauerwas and Willimon prepared a sequel to *Resident Aliens* titled *Where Resident Aliens Live: Exercises for Christian Practice*. They explain the purpose of the book:

This book signifies our response to those who wondered, “Where is this church of which you speak?” The heart of the present book is found in the examples we use. These examples are meant to serve as reminders that the church has not been forsaken by God. The church is still visible, if we take the trouble to look for it in the right places. We still have practices in place, in your church and ours, which can be resources for faithful renewal. But it is crucial that they be understood as practices and not simply “beliefs.” Finally, it is a matter of truth, and the truth is that the gospel is known only through practices such as preaching, baptism, eucharist—in short, *worship*.³²

In *The Peaceable Kingdom*, these practices are described as “The ‘Marks’ of the Church.” They make the church visible: “There is no ideal church, no invisible church, no mystically existing universal church more real than the concrete church with parking lots and potluck dinners” (107). While these threefold marks do not “guarantee the existence of the church,” they are “the means that God has given us to help us along the way:”

The church is known where the sacraments are celebrated, the word is preached, and upright lives are encouraged and lived. Certainly some churches emphasize one of these “marks” more than others, but that does not mean that they are deficient in some decisive manner. What is important is not that each particular body of Christians does all of these things, but that these “marks” are exhibited by all Christians everywhere. (107)

Baptism initiates believers into God’s story and Christ’s peaceable kingdom. The eucharist “is the eschatological meal of God’s continuing presence that makes possible a peaceable people”(108). These sacraments, for Hauerwas, are not “motives or causes for effective social work on the part of Christian people;” rather, “these liturgies *are* our effective social work. For if the church *is* rather than has a social ethic, these actions are

³² *Where Resident Aliens Live* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 18.

our most important social witness. It is in baptism and eucharist that we see most clearly the marks of God's kingdom in the world," the real and possible possibility of people living together peaceably. The preaching and teaching of God's Word is just as essential, since these are the means by which we "extend hospitality to God's kingdom by inviting the stranger to share our story," and to share with us his story. "Without the constant challenge of the stranger—who often, interestingly enough, is but one side of ourselves—we are tempted to lose the power of Jesus' story because we have so conventionalized it" (109).

None of these marks, however, would suffice "if the church was not also called to be a holy people—that is, a people who are capable of maintaining the life of charity, hospitality and justice"(109). Nonviolence is frequently identified by Hauerwas as *the* central and fundamental practice and virtue of the church in its striving to emulate the holiness of Jesus: "Jesus makes nonviolent resistance not only a possibility but a reality for those who are called to be his disciples. We are called to follow him to the cross."³³ Christian pacifism, therefore, is not merely a political or even theological "position," but "it denotes a set of convictions and corresponding practices of a particular kind of people."³⁴ Ultimately, the church is known by the character of those who constitute it, "and if we lack that character, the world rightly draws the conclusion that the God we worship is in fact a false God" (109). For Hauerwas, therefore, the church's commitment to nonviolence is tantamount to its worship of and confession of the one true God before the world. God is a God of peace; and when the church actively supports or passively condones any use of violence, it bears witness to a false god and betrays its worship of a

³³ "Can A Pacifist Think About War?" 119.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 120.

false god—most often and most likely, the false god of the state with its uncompromising demands for loyalty and its illusory promises of freedom, safety and security.

A Disturbing Peace: The Activist Pacifism of the Church As *Polis*

The first thing that needs to be said (or reaffirmed) about Hauerwas's view of the church's pacifist witness in and to society is that he rejects any notion that the pacifist ethic he espouses is a "withdrawal" ethic, a quietist or "passivist" pacifism. Not only does Hauerwas repeatedly and passionately deny that this is his position, he continually resists and rejects what he sees as persistent attempts by others to *make* this his position. Nothing is as maddening to Hauerwas as the charge—based primarily, from his perspective, on some version of the Niebuhrian compliment discussed earlier—that a consistent *Christian* pacifism is necessarily equivalent to "sectarianism" or "tribalism" or "ghettoism" or any number of other "isms" used by those who disagree with his position to dismiss it as socially and politically irrelevant and irresponsible. In *Resident Aliens*, it is H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture* (rather than Reinhold Niebuhr's collection of anti-pacifist writings) that gets the brunt of Hauerwas's attack:

It was Niebuhr who taught us to be suspicious of this kind of talk as "sectarian." The church should be willing to suppress its peculiarities in order to participate responsibly in the culture. One again, this is the same culture that gave us Hiroshima. Ours sounds like an unduly harsh judgment on the thought of a great Christian like Niebuhr—a man who would have abhorred the violence of Hiroshima, a man who tried to find in his theology a place to affirm the unique witness of the church. Yet the problem remains with the structure of his categories—the temptation to believe that Christians are in an all-or-nothing relationship to the culture—that we must responsibly choose to be "all," or irresponsibly choose to be sectarian nothing.³⁵

Hauerwas's response to this charge is worth quoting at length:

³⁵ *Resident Aliens* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989) [RA], 41.

When the church confronts the world with a political alternative the world would not otherwise know, is this being “sectarian”? The early Anabaptists had no desire to withdraw from the world, nor do we. They were murdered by Calvinist, Lutheran and Roman Catholic societies because they attempted to be the church. Their withdrawal came in an attempt to prevent people opposed to them (most of whom also call themselves Christian), from killing their children. The Anabaptists did not withdraw. They were driven out.

The worst that the Constantinian church can say, in its last gasp for life in a post-Constantinian situation, is that what we are calling for here is something that sounds suspiciously “tribal.” If we are going to live in a world of the bomb, say the Constantinians, we Christians must be willing to suppress our peculiarities, join hands with whoever will join hands with us, and work for peace and justice. Under this argument, to the extent that Christians (or Jews, or Muslims) refuse to take the modern state more seriously than they take the peculiarities as Christians (or Jews, or Muslims), they are accused of being “tribal,” hindrances to the creation of a new world order based on international cooperation....

We reject the charge of tribalism, particularly from those whose theologies serve to buttress the most nefarious brand of tribalism of all—the omnipotent state. The church is the one political entity in our culture that is global, transnational, transcultural. Tribalism is not the church determined to serve God rather than Caesar. Tribalism is the United States of America, which sets up artificial boundaries and defends them with murderous intensity. And the tribalism of nations occurs most viciously in the absence of a church able to say and to show, in its life together, that God, not nations, rules the world.

We must never forget that it was modern, liberal democracy, in fighting to preserve itself, that resorted to the bomb in Hiroshima and the firebombing of Dresden, not to mention Vietnam. This is the political system that must be preserved in order for Christians to be politically responsible?³⁶

It seems natural and fair to ask at this point (whether one is a Lutheran or not!),

“But what does this *mean*?” What does this mean in *practical* terms for the church’s witness to society? Does it mean, for example, that Christians can *never*, under any circumstances, condone the use of coercion or violence in defense of national security or in the interest of national or international political values like justice, freedom, peace or human rights? What are the practical implications of this position for a biblical

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

understanding of Christian citizenship? Is it possible for the church to support and espouse patriotism of any kind? In what sorts of activities in the secular and political realm *can* Christians be involved without compromising their witness for Christ and the church?

Hauerwas's standard answer to such questions is, once again, that they are precisely the wrong questions. They are not the kinds of questions Christians properly formed by God's story in the Scriptures and rightly schooled in God's peaceable community, the church, will be asking. Christians who ask such questions simply expose themselves, more often than not, as those who have been formed more by the world's story than by God's story and by the Constantinian church's assumption that "what really counts" in the world of Christian ethics is "How am I to decide what I must do?" In the realm of traditional "church and society" ethics this question becomes, "How am I to decide what I must do to make the world a better place to live?" In the foreword to *The Peaceable Kingdom*, David Burrell anticipates such questions at the outset and summarizes Hauerwas's enigmatic "answer:"

Who will help me decide what to do? And if ethicists are too busy building coherent systems to do so, at least Christian ethicists will respect our need for "concrete guidance in making and justifying a decision." Yet Stanley Hauerwas eschews such a responsibility from the outset. Or does he? Is it rather that the one who puts me through rigorous paces, helping me to *think out* my life as a Christian in our fragmented and violent world—that such a one is training me, as well as anyone can, to take the small steps which will culminate in large decisions? And if that's not the way it works, it won't work at all, for decisions are not so much the sorts of things we do (or make) as they are more nearly made for us, yet in the end they make us by shaping our subsequent lives.

So Hauerwas has long challenged our propensity to link ethics with "difficult decisions." Instead, he reminds us, what we can do is to help create a context more conducive to our deciding one way or another. Church promises to be that context: the social institution seeking to embody a specific configuration of virtues in its members. Christian ethicists can say what that configuration ought

to look like and why. So their arguments will direct us to the sort of lives to which we would aspire, and the work that ought characteristically be ours. In this roundabout yet organic way, then, these ethicists will most certainly have helped us decide what to do—with our lives. Such is the art of Hauerwas's extended argument. (ix)

From Hauerwas's perspective, attempting to give "specific answers" to "specific questions" can actually become (and often is) subversive to the true cause of Christian ethics. It too often and easily shortcuts in an unhealthy way the organic process of thinking through one's life and being formed and shaped in that life by God's story in the context of the church. "Again, it is not rules so much as practices which will guide us here: practices embodied in a community and justified through the continuing efforts of such a group to live up to its convictions" (x). Nor is the world generally helped by ecclesial attempts to explain to it "what it must do" in this or that situation, or to persuade or coerce it to adopt specific "actions" or "decisions." "The primary task of those who would make Jesus' story theirs is to stand within that world—their world—witnessing to a peaceable Kingdom which reflects the right understanding of that very world" (x).

"It may be objected," says Hauerwas, "that all this still remains very abstract."

Even if it is true that the church itself is a social ethic, surely it must also have a social ethic that reaches out in strategic terms in the societies in which it finds itself. That is most certainly the case, but a social ethic in this latter sense cannot be done in the abstract. For there is no universal social strategy of the church that applies equally to diverse social circumstances. Indeed, different circumstances and social contexts bring different needs and strategies. (111)

Hauerwas warns constantly against so-called "Christian theories of government" that simplistically view one form of government as inherently superior to another on biblical grounds, with the presumption that—therefore—Christians have a God-given duty to promote, defend and support this particular "God-pleasing" form of government.

The contemporary church has too often assumed that we must naturally favor “democratic” societies because such societies have institutionalized the freedom of religion through legal recognition of the freedom of conscience. As Christians we should be particularly sensitive to the misleading assumption that democracies are intrinsically more just because they provide more freedom than other kinds of societies. (111)

If his program for reforming Christian ethics seems abstract, says Hauerwas, it is not nearly as abstract as political ideals such as freedom and justice, which are used—especially in democratic societies—to mask endless self-serving attempts to coerce people and control resources, and are used at the same time as a “rallying cry” for Christian loyalty to an “ideal” form of government.

Once “justice” is made a criterion of Christian social strategy, it can too easily take on a meaning and life of its own that is not informed by the Christian’s fundamental convictions. It can, for example, be used to justify the Christian’s resort to violence to secure a more “relative justice.” But then we must ask if this is in fact the justice we are to seek as Christians. (112-113)

Once again, the issue of violence surfaces here as a, if not the, central concern of Hauerwas’s attempt to provide an “alternative ethic” for the church—or, better, to present the church as “alternative ethic” to the world. “When freedom and equality are made ideal abstractions,” observes Hauerwas, “they become the justification for violence, since if these values are absent or insufficiently institutionalized some conclude they must be forced into existence.”

As [Enda] McDonagh points out, “most political orders are established by violence and certainly use violence to maintain themselves.” This is not without ethical justification, since, as McDonagh suggests, the state’s hegemony of violence is at least in principle rooted in the just war rationale. The state uses violence to restrain those who have no respect for the lives and rights of other people in that society. Thus it seems the state can claim to use violence as the necessary means to preserve freedom and justice. And by further inference of this reasoning, when freedom and justice are missing the Christian can resort to violence so that they may be achieved. (114)

Hauerwas admits that this position must be taken seriously and he acknowledges the compelling nature of its logic. At the very least, he says, this position “certainly makes it clear that the question of violence is the central issue for any Christian social ethic.”

Can Christians ever be justified in resorting to arms to do “some good?” Are Christians not unjust if they allow another person to be injured or killed if they might prevent that by the use of violence? Indeed should not Christians call on the power of the state to employ its coercive force to secure more relative forms of justice? Such action would not be a question of using violence to be “in control,” but simply to prevent a worse evil. (114)

Hauerwas claims to have “sympathy” with this perspective and admits that “it certainly cannot be discounted as a possibility for Christians.” And yet, he says:

...the problem with these attempts to commit the Christian to limited use of violence is that they too often distort the character of our alternatives. Violence used in the name of justice, or freedom, or equality is seldom simply a matter of justice—it is a matter of the power of some over others. Moreover, when violence is justified in principle as a necessary strategy for securing justice, it stills the imaginative search for nonviolent ways of resistance to injustice. For true justice never comes through violence, nor can it be based on violence. It can only be based on truth, which has no need to resort to violence to secure its own existence. Such a justice comes at best fitfully to nation states, for by nature we are people who fear disorder and violence and thus we prefer order (even if the order is built on the lies inspired by our hates, fears, and resentments) to truth. The Church, therefore, as a community based on God’s kingdom of truth cannot help but make all rulers tremble, especially when those rulers have become “the people.” (114-115)

It is clear that Hauerwas wants to remain in dialogue with Christian just-war thinkers: “just because Christians are committed to the practice of nonviolence does not mean that the conversation is at an end.... Nonviolent and just war Christians alike, as well as those committed to subjecting violence to some moral reflection, cannot avoid providing some account of what peace, as well as war, might look like.”³⁷

³⁷ “Can a Pacifist Think About War?” 123.

Many use the radical nature of [my] stance to disqualify the pacifist from political involvement. We are dismissed as hopelessly naïve or idealistic. Such would be the case if pacifism were a theory about society and/or state power. But as I have tried to make clear, it is not a theory but rather the form of life incumbent on those who would worship Jesus as the Son of God. Given that stance, I can see no reason why Christians cannot try to serve in the many activities in societies and states that do not involve violence.³⁸

Hauerwas can even say that he does not see that there is such a “deep difference between adherence to just war and pacifism.”

After all, just war theory surely requires its adherents to contemplate the possibility that they will find themselves in deep tension with the warmaking policies of their governments. The criteria that war be declared by “legitimate authority” does not in itself entail any account of what constitutes legitimacy.... I suspect that those who employ just war thinking as Christians are able to do so with integrity exactly to the extent that they assume a position of resistance to the state not unlike that of their pacifist sister and brother.³⁹

His main concern is that adherents to the just war tradition be completely *honest* and *consistent* in the use and application of just war principles. One may get the impression, however, that for Hauerwas “complete honesty” would necessarily involve an admission of the glaring systemic deficiencies and the inherent inconsistencies within the just war theory itself, thus compelling any truly honest just war thinker to embrace a pacifist outlook. This suspicion seems especially justifiable in view of Hauerwas’s presupposition that not only pacifism but also “any account of just war in the Christian tradition owes its intelligibility to the presumption of the practice of Christian nonviolence in the church.”⁴⁰ One is reminded here of Yoder’s comment that Reinhold Niebuhr himself would certainly have embraced Christian pacifism

...if it were not for his un-Biblical assumption of responsibility for policing society and for preserving Western civilization. This way in which a presupposition as to what is to be defended leads him pragmatically to militarist

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 134.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 122.

conclusions is a further reminder, valid for Niebuhr as well as for ourselves, that militarists and pacifists alike share the risk of identifying the kingdom of God with a particular social order, a particular strategy, or a particular peace.⁴¹

At this point, questions arise about Hauerwas's (Yoder-based) understanding of the just war tradition itself and its alleged "pacifist presuppositions;" this will require further attention later on. It should be noted, however, that Hauerwas often saves his harshest criticism for fellow pacifists who ground their position in pragmatic, "preservationist" hopes and strategies:

Christians, we have been told recently, should work for peace. But what good is a peace movement that works for peace for the same idolatrous reasons we build bombs—namely, the anxious self-interested protection of our world as it is? Christians are free to work for peace in a nonviolent, hopeful way because we already know something about the end. We do not argue that the bomb is the worst thing humanity can do to itself. We have already done the worst thing we could do when we hung God's Son on a cross. We do not argue that we must do something about the bomb or else we shall obliterate our civilization, because God has already obliterated our civilization in the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We do not argue against the bomb under the supposition that our millions we now spend for bombs will then be spent on food for the hungry. Apparently, peace sustained by the necessarily larger, non-nuclear armies will be more expensive than nuclear peace is now. The world of nations has no means of being at peace other than means that are always violent, or at least potentially violent. Nor do we argue for peace because, if we do not get peace, we have no hope. Our hope is based not on Caesar's missiles or Caesar's treaties, but on the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth. People often work for peace out of the same anxieties and perverted views of reality that lead people to build bombs.⁴²

In view of our discussion in this section, it is not difficult to understand Joseph Allen's comment that "the relation of Hauerwas's witnessing argument to the pragmatic argument is not fully clear."⁴³ No one familiar with Hauerwas's work could possibly describe him as a (professing) "pragmatic pacifist"—he strongly criticizes pacifist efforts

⁴¹ *Reinhold Niebuhr and Christian Pacifism*, 23.

⁴² *RA*, 89-90.

⁴³ Allen, 22.

that are based on actual or hoped-for “results” or “effectiveness.” There is an unmistakable eschatological character to Hauerwas’s pacifism: a consistent emphasis on trust in the power and mercy of God “that sustains the vast depths of the universe” to bring about, in God’s own way and time, the fullness of his “peaceable kingdom.” The church does what it does, therefore, “not because it is effective, but simply because it is true” (151). At the same time, the faithful church has no choice but to do what God has called it to do, and the witness it is called to give is by no means a silent, passive or nonresistant witness. In fact, “the peace Christians desire, pray for, and receive cannot help but create instability in a world based on the assumption that violence is our ultimate weapon against disorder. Such a peace may often appear ‘to do nothing’ exactly because it so radically challenges the presuppositions of our social order” (144). The church’s task, in a word, is to worship the true God who controls all of history. In so doing it challenges and exposes all the false gods of the world—and of the church—who seek to assume such control for themselves.

Yoderian-Hauerwasian Christological and Ecclesial Presuppositions

The overview provided above makes it clear that Hauerwas’s pacifism is rooted in specifically *theological* convictions and concerns. As the very title of this dissertation indicates, however, it is not sufficient to describe Hauerwas’ pacifism merely as theological in nature and orientation. Rather, the pacifism of Stanley Hauerwas is a “Christological and ecclesial pacifism”—it is rooted in particular Christological and ecclesial presuppositions. Indeed, from the perspective of Hauerwas and Yoder, this is what makes the “pacifism of the Messianic community” unique. As Yoder puts it, “this is the only position for which the *person* of Jesus Christ is indispensable. It is the only

one of these positions [of the twenty-five types of “religious pacifism” summarized in his book *Nevertheless*] which would lose its substance if Jesus were not Christ and its foundation if Jesus Christ were not Lord.”⁴⁴ In the final section of this chapter, therefore, we seek to identify more explicitly and systematically the specific Christological and ecclesial presuppositions underlying Hauerwas’s pacifism.

As we have discussed, Hauerwas (by his own admission and grateful testimony) was converted to pacifism by Yoder’s work—particularly by his provocative yet compelling account of the revolutionary work of Christ and the radical, non-conformist nature and calling of Christ’s church. “No one has helped us see better than Yoder,” says Hauerwas, “why questions of the truthfulness of Christian convictions are inseparable from the witness that the church is, as well as why that witness must be nonviolent.”⁴⁵ Nowhere in Yoder’s writings are his Christological and ecclesial assumptions spelled out so clearly and confessionally as in his foundational theological work *The Politics of Jesus*, to which Hauerwas frequently refers and which he repeatedly cites in his own writings on war and peace. The following summary of “Yoderian-Hauerwasian Christological and Ecclesial Presuppositions” draws rather extensively, therefore, on this formative work of Yoder’s, while Hauerwas’s commitment to these presuppositions is documented and demonstrated primarily (once again) on the basis of his most systematic pacifist work, *The Peaceable Kingdom*. These presuppositions are summarized below under five headings: the meaning and purpose of Christ’s life, suffering and death on the cross; the significance of Christ’s cross for Christian faith and life; the relationship

⁴⁴ *Nevertheless*, 125.

⁴⁵ *Grain*, 219.

between Christology and ecclesiology; the mission of the church in and to the world; and Christ's cross and resurrection as the meaning of history (Christology and eschatology).

The Meaning and Purpose of Christ's Life, Suffering, and Death on the Cross

Although Yoder and Hauerwas unambiguously affirm both the divinity and humanity of Christ, they frequently raise questions about the value of (past and present) doctrinal debates and formulations that focus on the ontological nature of Christ's divinity and its relationship to his humanity. They also emphasize that they are not primarily concerned with what they regard as abstract, theoretical, systematic explanations of the work of Christ as "Savior" and "Redeemer" (e.g., atonement theories), which tend to form the bulk of traditional Christian teaching under the locus of "Christology." Unfortunately, says Hauerwas,

Christian ethics has tended to make "Christology" rather than Jesus its starting point. His relevance is seen as resting in more substantive claims about the incarnation. Christian ethics then often begins with some broadly drawn theological claims about the significance of God becoming man, but the life of the man who God made his representative is ignored or used selectively. ...Or even Jesus' death and resurrection are secondary to claims concerning Jesus as very God and very man—for it is God taking on himself our nature that saves, rather than the life of this man Jesus.⁴⁶

For Yoder and Hauerwas, a proper approach to Christology means giving primary attention to the actual, historical *story* of Christ and his life and death as it is conveyed in Scripture (especially in the Gospels), and coming to terms with the significance of that story for our lives and for the life of the church. The Christology of the early church, says Hauerwas,

...did not consist first in claims about Jesus' ontological status, though such claims were made; their Christology was not limited to assessing the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection, though certainly these were attributed great

⁴⁶ PK, 72.

significance; rather their “Christology,” if it can be called that, showed the story of Jesus as absolutely essential for depicting the kind of kingdom they now thought possible through his life, death, and resurrection.⁴⁷

No account of the work of Christ, of course, makes sense apart from a specific understanding and explanation of the *purpose* of Christ’s coming—the fundamental “problem” of human existence that Christ came to earth to resolve or address. In other words, implicit in every Christology is a particular understanding of “sin” or the “fall.” In the writings of Yoder and Hauerwas, sin is not viewed primarily (as is the case with most traditional Christologies, including Lutheran Christology) as separation or alienation from God, the failure to keep God’s law, or the inability to have true fear of God or faith in God’s grace and goodness.⁴⁸ Rather, “the lostness of man consists of his subjection to the rebellious powers of a fallen world”⁴⁹ which claim a sovereignty and authority that they do not possess, and which exercise control over human beings by falsely convincing them of their need to “be in control” through complicity in violence and coercion with the fallen structures of God’s (originally good) creation.⁵⁰ Says

Hauerwas:

Our sin—our fundamental sin—is the assumption that we are the creators of the history through which we acquire and possess our character. Sin is the form our character takes as a result of our fear that we will be ‘nobody’ if we lose control of our lives. Moreover, our need to be in control is the basis for the violence of our lives.⁵¹

The primary, central and essential reason for Christ’s coming, therefore, was not to “propitiate God’s wrath against sinners” by his “sacrificial death on the cross,” but to

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 73-74.

⁴⁸ Cf., e.g., *AC* II.

⁴⁹ *PJ*, 147.

⁵⁰ Yoder’s understanding of “the powers” is based primarily on Hendrik Berkhof’s book *Christ and the Powers*, which Yoder translated (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1962).

⁵¹ *PK*, 47.

confront the tragic results of sin as manifested in the rebellious “powers” and the control they exercise over us and among us in and through the fallen structures of this world. “Victory over the powers constitutes the work of Christ.”⁵² Christ’s cross is a victory in the sense that it “is the confirmation that he was free from the rebellious pretensions of the creaturely condition.” His work is unique: “Here we have to do for the first time with a man who is not the slave of any power, of any law or custom, community or institution, value or theory. Not even to save his own life will he let himself be made a slave of these Powers.”⁵³

Jesus broke the power of the powers by confronting and rejecting the ultimate temptation: the temptation of the crusade, the arrogant, faithless use of power, coercion and violence to defend, promote, maintain or establish the “kingdom of God.” Nonviolence and non-resistance, therefore, are at the very heart of the meaning and significance of the work of Christ on the cross. In his death, Christ was not concerned to meet the demands of some “doctrine of atonement,” but to show that “God’s will for God’s man in this world is that he should renounce legitimate defense.”⁵⁴

It is thus in the cross that Christians see the climax of God’s way with the world. In his cross we see decisively the one who, being all-powerful, becomes vulnerable even to being a victim of our refusal to accept his Lordship. Through that cross God renews his covenant with Israel; only now the covenant is with the “many.” All are called to be his disciples through this one man’s life, death and resurrection, for in this cross we find the very passion of God. We are therefore invited to drink this drink, and to be baptized with this baptism (Mark 10:39), and in doing so we believe that we become participants in God’s very life. In short, we begin to know what it means to imitate God.⁵⁵

⁵² *PJ*, 150.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁵⁵ *PK*, 81.

The Significance of Christ's Cross for Christian Faith and Life

It follows from the central meaning and purpose of Christ's suffering and death that, for Yoder and Hauerwas, "the central theme of Christology [is] that Jesus' suffering is the law of his disciples' life."⁵⁶ Christians are called to "imitate Jesus," not by attempting to mimic every aspect of his life and personality, but by being faithful to his central and climactic act of resistance and non-resistance on the cross. "Only at one point, only on one subject—but then consistently, universally—is Jesus our example: in his cross."⁵⁷ The cross is "the price of his social nonconformity"—and ours. We must be willing to die rather than to succumb to the threefold temptation of "quietism, 'establishment responsibility,' or [the greatest temptation of all] the crusade"—the use of violence in subservience to the world's fallen structures.⁵⁸ "The cross," says Hauerwas, "is Jesus' ultimate dispossession through which God has conquered the world." Because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross, "we believe that forgiveness and love are alternatives to the coercion the world thinks necessary for our existence."⁵⁹ The kingdom of God is present, therefore, "insofar as [Jesus'] life reveals the effective power of God to create a transformed people capable of living peaceably in a violent world."⁶⁰ In his book *With the Grain of the Universe*, Hauerwas quotes the following words from Yoder's work *The Original Revolution* as offering the quintessential summary of the essential meaning of Christ's person and work and its implications for a radically pacifist Christian witness:

Christ is *agape*; self-giving, nonresistant love. At the cross this nonresistance, including the refusal to use political means of self-defense, found its ultimate revelation in the uncomplaining and forgiving death of the innocent at the hands

⁵⁶ *PJ*, 178.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁵⁹ *PK*, 87.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

of the guilty. This death reveals how God deals with evil; here is the only valid starting point for Christian pacifism or nonresistance. The cross is the extreme demonstration that *agape* seeks neither effectiveness nor justice, and is willing to suffer any loss or seeming defeat for the sake of obedience.⁶¹

The Relationship between Christology and Ecclesiology

Since sin is primarily a *social* and *political* problem and reality—a reality that is irreparably ingrained into the fallen structures of this world due to their captivity to the rebellious powers—the work of Christ in exposing and undoing those powers on the cross also has profound and necessary social and political implications. What this means for Yoder and Hauerwas is that Christology and ecclesiology are inseparable. We repeat once again Hauerwas’s affirmation of Yoder’s dual assertion that “questions of the truthfulness of Christian convictions are inseparable from the witness that the church is,” and that “that witness must be nonviolent.”⁶²

Jesus came not just to “save sinners” or to “call people to repentance” or to make it possible for people to be restored to a “right relationship with God;” he came to inaugurate, through the cross, “a vision of an order of social human relations more universal than the Pax Romana:” the healing, forgiving, non-violent community of the church.⁶³ Jesus was “not just a sacrificial lamb preparing for his immolation,” he was “the bearer of a new possibility of human, social, and therefore political relationships. His baptism is the inauguration and his cross is the culmination of that new regime in which his disciples are called to share.”⁶⁴ Christ’s death on the cross is “the punishment

⁶¹ *Grain*, 219; cf. *The Original Revolution*, 59.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 219.

⁶³ *PJ*, 148.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 62-63.

of a man who threatens society by creating a new kind of community leading a radically new kind of life.”⁶⁵

Yoder puts it this way in the final sentence of *The Politics of Jesus*, which succinctly summarizes the central thesis of the book and the entire rationale for “the pacifism of the Messianic community” to which he and Hauerwas are uncompromisingly committed: “A social style characterized by the creation of a new community and the rejection of violence of any kind is the theme of New Testament proclamation from beginning to end, from right to left. The cross of Christ is the model of Christian social efficacy, the power of God for those who believe.”⁶⁶ When Hauerwas says, therefore, that “the gospel is a political gospel,” he has in mind the *church as polis*: a radically distinct and “deviant” social and political entity on earth. “Christians are engaged in politics, but it is the politics of the kingdom that reveals the insufficiency of all politics based on coercion and falsehood and finds the true source of power in servanthood rather than dominion.”⁶⁷

The Mission of the Church in and to the World

The mission of the church, therefore, is not to ignore the problems of this world by focusing narrowly on converting sinners and preparing them for entry into eternal life in heaven (conversionist quietism), nor is it to focus on transforming the world by assuming responsibility for the structures of the world (Constantinian activism). Rather, the purpose of the church is to bear witness to the non-violent love of Jesus in and to the world by modeling this love in every aspect of its communal life. The church is to serve

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 250.

⁶⁷ *PK*, 102.

as a real, historical, social, political “contrasting model” within the world of how God intends and empowers people to live in relationship with one another. Thus, “the very existence of the church is her primary task. It is in itself a proclamation of the Lordship of Christ to the powers from whose dominion the church has begun to be liberated.”⁶⁸

By being that kind of community we see that the church helps the world understand what it means to be the world. For the world has no way of knowing it is world without the church pointing to the reality of God’s kingdom. How could the world ever recognize the arbitrariness of the 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.⁶⁹

The world still remains God’s creation, though its fallenness is so deeply ingrained into the existing social and political structures and its subjection to the powers is so complete that Yoder can say that “we have no access to the good creation of God.”

Man and his world are fallen, and in this the powers have their own share. They are no longer active only as mediators of the saving creative purpose of God; now we find them seeking to separate us from the love of God (Rom. 8:38); we find them ruling over the lives of those who live far from the love of God (Eph. 2:2); we find them holding man in servitude to their rules (Col. 2:2); we find them holding men subject under their tutelage (Gal. 4:3). These structures which were supposed to be our servants have become our masters and our guardians.⁷⁰

In his wisdom and sovereignty, God is still able to use the fallen structures of this world for his purposes, and it is part of the church’s responsibility to “discern definitively” how he is doing this.⁷¹ One thing Christians *can* know for sure, however (by virtue of Christ’s definitive work on the cross), is that they can never “serve God” or “love their neighbor” through the use of violence at the behest of the “powers that be.”⁷² For this very reason,

⁶⁸ *PJ*, 153.

⁶⁹ *PK*, 100.

⁷⁰ *PJ*, 143.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 212.

Christians need to be especially on guard against temptations to “serve the structures of creation” (rather than serving God) through the use of violence, whether that temptation comes through some form of “fascism” or (much more likely for American Christians) through some form of “Western totalitarianism”—both of which seek to control history for their own self-centered ends.⁷³ “Christ renounced the claim to govern history. The universal testimony of Scripture is that Christians are those who follow Christ at just this point.”⁷⁴ This is what Hauerwas means when he says—in thesis six of his “Ten Theses for Reforming Christian Social Ethics”—that “Christian social ethics can only be done from the perspective of those who do not seek to control national or world history but who are content to live ‘out of control:’”

To do ethics from the perspective of those “out of control” means Christians must find the means to make it clear to both the oppressed and the oppressor that the cross determines the meaning of history. Christians should thus provide imaginative alternatives for social policy as they are released from the “necessities” of those that would control the world in the name of security.⁷⁵

Christ’s Cross and Resurrection As the Meaning of History (Christology and Eschatology)

Christ’s resurrection is the confirmation that the non-violent way of the cross, as weak and foolish as it seems, is God’s divinely appointed way of dealing with the violent and power-hungry structures of this world. “Between the absolute *agape* which lets itself be crucified, and effectiveness (which it is assumed will usually need to be violent), the resurrection forbids us to choose, for in the light of resurrection crucified *agape* is not folly (as it seems to the Hellenizers to be) and weakness (as the Judaizers believe) but the

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 241.

⁷⁵ *HR*, 113.

wisdom and power of God (1 Cor. 1:22-25).”⁷⁶ It is the resurrection, therefore, that gives us the confidence to “live out of control” and to resist the temptation to assume a god-like responsibility for the world in an effort to “make things turn out right.”

The task of the Christian people is not to seek to control history, but to be faithful to the mode of life of the peaceable kingdom. Such a people can never lose hope in the reality of that kingdom, but they surely also must learn to be patient. For they must often endure injustice that might appear to be quickly eliminated through violence. Moreover they can never acquiesce in the injustice, for to do so would only leave the neighbor to his or her own devices. Those who are violent, who are also our neighbors, must be resisted, but resisted on our own terms, because not to resist is to abandon them to sin and injustice.⁷⁷

For Yoder and Hauerwas, therefore, Christ’s cross and resurrection are “the meaning of history”—and the relationship between the two (they repeatedly stress) is not one of cause and effect. Pragmatic concerns about effectiveness were not at the heart of Christ’s non-violent resistance of the powers, nor are they at the heart of the church’s cross-centered mission and calling. The church is not to assume responsibility for “managing society” any more than Christ assumed this responsibility. The church’s only responsibility is to be faithful to Christ and to the non-violent way of the cross, and to wait patiently and trustingly on God, the Lord of history (including the history that took place at Calvary!), who promises to “make things turn out right” in his own time and way. Although it is difficult to find in either the writings of Yoder or Hauerwas an explicit discussion of the “last things” in the sense that this *locus* of theology has been traditionally understood (e.g., the parousia, the final judgment, heaven and hell, etc.), a strong eschatological current runs through their Christology and ecclesiology in the form of a strong emphasis on the importance of *hope* in the God who is not only the God of the past and the present but also of the future.

⁷⁶ *PJ*, 114.

In light of the summary provided above, it is important to understand that many familiar-sounding theological terms are given new meanings by Yoder and Hauerwas. For example, justification is defined not as being “set right with God” but as being “set right in and for relationships with others.”⁷⁸ “Faith” is defined not as “trust in God’s grace and forgiveness” but primarily as “faithfulness” to God’s call to live peaceably with others on the basis of what Christ has done.⁷⁹ (“Faith” in the sense of “trust” typically refers to faith in God’s providential care and power as “controller” of history.) The Gospel is “the Good News that my enemy and I are united, through no merit or work of our own, in a new humanity that forbids henceforth my ever taking his life in my hands.”⁸⁰

Both Yoder and Hauerwas claim that they do not wish to reject completely what they refer to as the “traditional” elements of Christology, ecclesiology and cosmology, such as “Jesus as sacrifice, God as creator, faith as subjectivity.”⁸¹ Instead, as Yoder puts it, the goal is to correct the “one-sided” nature of traditional treatments of these topics, and to “defend the New Testament against the exclusion of the ‘messianic’ element,”⁸² which is its central theme from beginning to end, and which is rightly understood only in the light of the revolutionary yet non-violent social and political mission and message of Jesus as summarized above. Following our summary (in the next chapter) of the “peaceable witness” of Martin Luther—including the Christological and ecclesial presuppositions underlying Luther’s approach to the issue of war and peace—we will

⁷⁷ *PK*, 106.

⁷⁸ *PJ*, 225.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 231-232.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 232.

⁸² *Ibid.*

address the question of the compatibility of Yoder and Hauerwas's presuppositions with those of traditional Lutheran theology, and the implications of the answer to this question for the possibility of meaningful dialog.

Chapter Three

The Peaceable Witness of Martin Luther

Introduction

John Howard Yoder's book *When War is Unjust: Being Honest in Just-War Thinking* is dedicated "in gratitude for the witness of" five "Martins," two of whom are Lutheran: Luther himself, "theologian who called soldiers to refuse to serve in unjust wars," and Martin Niemöller, "spokesman of the 'Confessing Church' in resistance to Nazification."¹ The book is published by a Lutheran publishing house (Augsburg) and its introduction is written by a Lutheran, Charles P. Lutz (former director of the Office of Church and Society for the American Lutheran Church). Lutz begins his introduction as follows:

John Howard Yoder has done a good deed for all of us who are part of the just-war tradition. The essence of his contribution is a simple challenge. As one who stands outside that tradition (but knows it as well as its best inside theorists), Yoder is saying: *If you want me to take you seriously, show me that you take your tradition seriously.* And it is certainly beyond doubt that those communities which subscribe to the just-war ethic have done little to (a) teach it to their people, (b) apply it in public policy discussions, (c) follow its leading when it leads to a conflict with political authority. So the first point I make in this introduction is one of gratitude to Dr. Yoder, for helping us to see afresh the implications of the just-war tradition and for challenging us who claim it to live in it more faithfully.²

Lutz continues by acknowledging and bemoaning contemporary Lutheranism's sad "record of neglect" in this regard: the lack of serious debate regarding the application of the just war theory to modern wars, the lack of sustained support for policy issues like selective conscientious objection, the spotty record of denominational studies and

¹ John Howard Yoder, *When War Is Unjust: Being Honest in Just-War Thinking* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 2.

² *Ibid.*, 5.

statements conceived in moments of military crisis but soon forgotten and discarded.

“We have not learned how to sustain a concern for our ethical tradition on war and peace during the times between global crises,” says Lutz. “We have yet to commit ourselves to consistent peace education among our children, youth, and adults at all times and places in the church’s nurturing ministry.”³ He expresses deep gratitude, therefore, for Yoder’s effort to assist those within the just war tradition who desire to be taken seriously and to take their own tradition more seriously.

In order for honest and meaningful dialogue to take place between Lutherans committed to taking the just war tradition seriously and pacifists like Yoder and Hauerwas, there needs to be a clear and common understanding of the essential characteristics, convictions and presuppositions of the positions on *both* sides. In the previous chapter, we attempted to present as fairly and objectively as possible the key features of Hauerwas’s pacifism. In this chapter, we will attempt to present the Lutheran perspective on war and peace. Immediately, however, we are presented with a number of difficulties and challenges.

The first is the relative paucity of material on this topic in the Lutheran Confessions as representative of “official” Lutheran theology. Article XVI of the Augsburg Confession affirms the concept of “just war,” but nowhere in this article or in the Confessions as a whole is this concept defined or discussed in any detail. Moreover, relatively few contemporary Lutheran theologians have written extensively on the topic of war and peace, and those who have (e.g., Jean Bethke Elshtain) do not typically draw explicitly or extensively from the Lutheran theological tradition in doing so.

³ *Ibid.*, 7.

A second problem is that when Lutheran theologians do attempt in a more modest way to approach the problem of war and peace from a Lutheran perspective, there is seldom agreement about what that perspective is. As Gottfried Niemeier writes:

The records of church history show that Christians have assumed highly divergent attitudes with reference to the problems connected with war, all the way from total condemnation to the highest glorification of war and the soldier. This wide divergence is due to theological differences concerning the Scriptures and their interpretation, particularly the commandments of God and the Sermon on the Mount, also concerning the meaning of Law and Gospel, the nature of the state and its functions, and the manner of realizing a Christian existence within the orders of this world. These divergences, however, do not by any means coincide with confessional boundary lines but are often found within the same confession or denomination. Within Lutheranism it is particularly the difference in the interpretation of the doctrine of the two kingdoms that has led to quite contrary positions on the problem of war.⁴

A good example of these “quite contrary positions” stemming from different interpretations of the content and application of the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms can be found in the LCUSA-sponsored book *Peace and the Just War Tradition: Lutheran Perspectives in the Nuclear Age*. In the introduction to this book Carter Lindberg asks:

Do we as Lutherans... have anything to contribute positively to this most pressing issue of the nuclear age—peace and just war theory? Obviously, the Lutheran Council in the USA and the contributors to this volume think so. But the reader will soon note that the following essays are not unanimous on a range of issues, including the viability of the just war theory itself in an age of nuclear weapons.⁵

“The fact that they do not equally appreciate the tradition nor always agree,” says Lindberg, “should encourage our own reflections.”⁶ But such reflections are meaningful as “Lutheran reflections” only to the extent that they take seriously the

⁴ Gottfried Niemeier, “War” in *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, vol. 3, ed. Julius Bodensieck (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965), 2456.

⁵ *PJW*, 10.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

Lutheran theological tradition—which means, at the very least, engaging seriously the implications of the clear teaching (however limited) of the Lutheran Confessions and the more extensive writings of Martin Luther himself on this issue.

It is somewhat disconcerting to note that of the six essays in *Peace and the Just War Tradition*, several make no mention at all of Luther or the Lutheran Confessions, and only one—Gilbert Meilaender’s “Whether (in This Nuclear Age) Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved”—draws substantively on the work of Luther in re-evaluating the validity and usefulness of the just war tradition in today’s political and military context. Many Lutheran theologians today would no doubt affirm Eckehart Lorenz’s observation (cited by Paul Jersild in his essay “On the Viability of the Just War Theory”) that “there is a new ‘Lutheran peace ethic’ emerging in our time” that holds that—despite the teaching of Luther and the Lutheran Confessions—“war is no longer an acceptable way of defending our rights and our freedoms” and the just war theory, therefore, is no longer a viable set of criteria for justifying any particular war.⁷ Ironically, as illustrated by his repeated commendations of Luther in *When War is Unjust* (and elsewhere), the Anabaptist pacifist Yoder seems to be more optimistic than many Lutheran theologians about the possibility of finding in the writings of Luther helpful resources for reviving the just war tradition and applying it in an authentic and consistent way.

In spite of the skepticism evident in many Lutheran circles today regarding the usefulness and applicability of Luther’s observations on war and peace, we share Yoder’s optimism that Luther’s insights on this topic still have relevance for the problems and challenges we face today. Indeed, insofar as Luther’s insights on war and peace consist

⁷ *Ibid.*, 76-77.

of theological truths rooted in God's Word, it is difficult to see how those who take God's Word seriously can ignore them or simply dismiss them as irrelevant. Unlike the Lutheran Confessions, furthermore, Luther's writings do contain a rather extensive treatment of issues related to war and peace, and Luther (like Hauerwas) addresses these issues from a distinctively *theological* perspective. Also like Hauerwas, his treatment of this topic is less systematic than it is occasional and practical: Luther addresses the issue of war and peace primarily in treatises written in response to specific historical and theological questions and problems arising out of the context of the "real world" and church in which he lived and worked. For these reasons, it seems justifiable and potentially fruitful to focus on the writings of Luther himself on the topic of war and peace, and to draw on his views in the attempt (in part two of our study) to engage in conversation with Hauerwas on this topic. For the sake of historical context and completeness, however, we first offer a very brief summary of what the Lutheran Confessions have to say about public order, temporal government, and war.

The Lutheran Confessions on Public Order and Just War

Wilhelm Maurer says plainly: "The [Augsburg] Confession adopts the Augustinian doctrine of the just war."⁸ The pertinent article is XVI (on "Civil Affairs" or "Public Order and Secular Government") and reads as follows:

Concerning public order and secular government it is taught that all political authority, orderly government, laws, and good order in the world are created and instituted by God and that Christians may without sin exercise political authority; be princes and judges; pass sentences and administer justice according to imperial and other existing laws; punish evildoers with the sword; wage just wars; serve as soldiers; buy and sell; take required oaths; possess property; be married; etc.

⁸ Wilhelm Maurer, *Historical Commentary on the Augsburg Confession*, trans. H. George Anderson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 132.

Condemned here are the Anabaptists who teach that none of the things indicated above is Christian.

Also condemned are those who teach that Christian perfection means physically leaving house and home, spouse and child, and refraining from the above-mentioned activities. In fact, the only true perfection is true fear of God and true faith in God. For the gospel teaches an internal, eternal reality and righteousness of the heart, not an external, temporal one. The gospel does not overthrow secular government, public order, and marriage but instead intends that a person keep all this as a true order of God and demonstrate in these walks of life Christian love and true good works, according to each person's calling. Christians, therefore, are obliged to be subject to political authority and to obey its commands and laws in all that may be done without sin. But if a command of the political authority cannot be followed without sin, one must obey God rather than any human beings (Acts 5 [:29]).⁹

As George Forell notes, the argument in this article "is directed against two fronts:"

On the one hand, it opposes the perfectionism of the Anabaptists, who withdrew into the wilderness and created their own isolated communities to avoid sin. On the other hand, it rejects the stance of the monk who abandons participation in the secular world and hopes to please God with his vows of obedience, chastity and poverty.¹⁰

Only the Anabaptists are explicitly condemned, however, which may explain (at least in part) why this article was accepted "with pleasure" and "without qualification" by the Roman Confutation.¹¹ In the Apology, therefore, Melanchthon not only expounds more fully the theological basis for this article—namely, Luther's distinction between the "two realms"—but also reminds the authors of the Confutation *why* Luther felt the need to write so extensively on this topic:

This entire topic on the distinction between Christ's kingdom and the civil realm has been helpfully explained in the writings of our theologians. Christ's kingdom is spiritual, that is, it is the heart's knowledge of God, fear of God, faith in God, and the beginning of eternal righteousness and eternal life. At the same time, it permits us to make outward use of legitimate political ordinances of whatever

⁹ AC XVI, 1-7.

¹⁰ George W. Forell, *The Augsburg Confession: A Contemporary Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1968), 69.

¹¹ Ap XVI, 1; see also fn. 406 in BC, 231.

nation in which we live, just as it permits us to make use of medicine or architecture or food, drink, and air. Neither does the gospel introduce new laws for the civil realm. Instead, it commands us to obey the present laws, whether they have been formulated by pagans or by others, and urges us to practice love through this obedience...Our people have written extensively on these matters, because the monks had spread many pernicious ideas throughout the church. They called it an evangelical order to hold property in common, and they called it an evangelical counsel not to own property and not to go to court. These notions seriously obscure the gospel and the spiritual kingdom and are dangerous to public matters. For the gospel does not destroy the state or the household but rather approves them, and it orders us to obey them as divine ordinances not only on account of the punishment but also “because of conscience” [Rom. 13:5].¹²

While the Gospel forbids “private redress” and personal vengeance, public redress—including just war—is not prohibited but is commended, even commanded by God:

Public redress, which is made through the office of the judge, is not forbidden but is commanded and is a work of God according to Paul in Romans 13. Now the different kinds of public redress include judicial decisions, punishment, wars, and military service. How poorly many writers understood these matters is evident from their erroneous view that the gospel is something external, a new and monastic form of government. They failed to see that the gospel brings eternal righteousness to hearts while outwardly approving the civil realm.¹³

While the topic of secular government is addressed elsewhere in the Confessions, the specific issue of “just war” is not. And unfortunately, “neither the AC nor the Apology gives any help in defining the just war as over against an unjust one.”¹⁴ Typically, therefore, commentators on the Lutheran Confessions turn to the more extensive writings of Luther himself on this topic to explore in more detail the Lutheran understanding of “just war” in the Reformation period—and (as indicated above) we will imitate their example.

The summary of Luther’s views presented below draws primarily on treatises written by Luther between the years 1523 and 1529 in response to several very real yet

¹² *Ap XVI*, 2-5.

¹³ *Ap XVI*, 7-8.

different “war and peace” questions and situations: the foundational theological essay *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed* (1523);¹⁵ the three treatises written by Luther in connection with the peasant’s revolt of 1525 (*Admonition to Peace: A Reply to the Twelve Articles of the Peasants in Swabia; Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants; An Open Letter on the Harsh Book Against the Peasants*);¹⁶ Luther’s 1526 essay on *Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved*;¹⁷ and the 1529 treatise *On War Against the Turk*.¹⁸ Other essays, such as Luther’s *Exposition of Psalm 82*¹⁹ and his *Treatise on Good Works*,²⁰ will also be utilized along the way.

War and Peace As a Theological Issue

The first thing that needs to be said about Luther’s writings on just and unjust war is that “Luther approaches the problem primarily as a theologian.”²¹ He is concerned not with social or political theory or with military strategy or with abstract ethical reasoning based on human reason and natural law but with the question of what God, in his Word, has to say about war and peace in the civil realm. Frederic Cleve writes:

Luther makes frequent statements about violence and non-violence, but their interpretation becomes difficult unless the precise theological impact of their context is taken into account. The theological contexts in which these statements occur cover a wide variety of important theological issues. Among these we find Luther’s view of the human being, God’s struggle against the devil, the question of the human being’s conscience and eternal salvation, the interpretation of God’s

¹⁴ Leif Grane, *The Augsburg Confession: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Rasmussen (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1959), 169.

¹⁵ *LW* 45, 75-130.

¹⁶ *LW* 46, 3-86.

¹⁷ *LW* 46, 87-138.

¹⁸ *LW* 46, 155-206.

¹⁹ *LW* 13, 38-72.

²⁰ *LW* 44, 15-114.

²¹ Frederic Cleve, “Violent Rebellion: Luther’s Point of View and Its Application in a Finnish Crisis,” in *Justice Through Violence: Ethical Criteria for the Legitimate Use of Force*, ed. Eckehart Lorenz (Geneva: Department of Studies, Lutheran World Federation, 1984), 80.

commandments and sacred institutions, justification and the doctrine of the two kingdoms.²²

Cleve's list could easily be expanded to include other key theological themes: Luther's doctrine of vocation, the two (or three) kinds of righteousness, the theology of the cross, the hidden and revealed God, the doctrine of creation, Luther's ecclesiology, his view of history and eschatology—and even more could be added. Obviously, it is impossible even to begin to do full justice to all (or even any one) of these related issues here, though all of them need to be kept in view in considering Luther's writings on war and peace.

While it would be counter-productive (and worse, academically dishonest) to avoid or downplay aspects of Luther's theology that are fundamentally at odds with Hauerwas's theological orientation (e.g., Luther's understanding of the two realms and his doctrine of justification), our goal in this section is to highlight essential themes in Luther's writings on war and peace that appear to offer real potential for meaningful interaction and conversation with Hauerwas on this topic. It seems rather pointless to expound at length, for example, on all of the nuances and complexities of Luther's understanding of the two realms (and its various interpretations) only to reach the rather obvious conclusion that "Luther and Hauerwas clearly disagree" on this issue. As part of a Lutheran appraisal of Hauerwas' pacifism in part two of our study, we will discuss some of the contributions that Lutherans seem well-positioned to make—on the basis of unique and/or significant aspects of Luther's theology—in seeking to present a "peaceable witness" to the world. What we are primarily interested in discovering at this point is whether—despite the significant theological disagreements that exist between Lutherans and Hauerwasians on any number of substantive theological issues—there are

²² *Ibid.*

common issues of concern and conviction that might support and sustain meaningful and mutually beneficial theological conversation on the topic of war and peace. Can those committed to taking seriously Luther's witness concerning war and peace genuinely learn and benefit from Hauerwas's pacifist witness, and vice-versa? The very fact that Luther, like Hauerwas, approaches the issue of war and peace from a specifically Christian and genuinely theological perspective seems to hold out at least some hope for giving an affirmative answer to this question. In the summary that follows, therefore, we highlight theological themes that are common to and central for the thinking of both Luther and Hauerwas on the issue of war and peace, without in any way seeking to downplay their differing approaches to and understandings of the specific content of these themes.

Luther's Witness to the "Whole Truth" of Holy Scripture

To approach an issue theologically, for Luther, meant above all to approach it on the basis of what God himself has to say about it in the pages of Holy Scripture. In addressing questions of war and peace, "Luther was bound to the Scriptures and did not teach on the basis of his own willful speculation or in terms of what the political authorities wanted him to say."²³ In fact, according to Wilhelm Maurer, in seeking to give faithful witness to Scripture's teaching regarding war and peace, Luther and the Lutheran confessors were actually running quite radically *against* the popular, scholarly and even political grain of the times:

The age of the Reformation was filled with the clamor of war. Even if the military entanglements never reached the magnitude of destruction peculiar to modern mass warfare, life was still dominated by fear of their horrors. Erasmus had repeatedly asserted that war in any case was immoral because it was inhumane; it was widely believed—at least theoretically—that a Christian prince

²³ Paul Althaus, *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 43.

should avoid war under all circumstances. The age was basically not warlike, despite the number and horror of its wars. The Anabaptists to which CA 16 refers were only expressing the tendency of their time when they rejected all war and refused any participation in it. The Augustana, with its talk about just wars, went against this tendency of the time. It obviously thought it possible to evaluate individually the wars that swept through the world in those days.²⁴

Maurer's comments may help to explain why, in an era that is undoubtedly perceived by many today as glorifying or at least easily rationalizing war, significant political figures like Duke John of Saxony and Assa von Kram could be so deeply and sincerely troubled about these issues.²⁵ They also provide a helpful context for considering Luther's "boasting" that "not since the time of the apostles have the temporal sword and temporal government been so clearly described or so highly praised as by me."²⁶ And yet, says Luther, the "thanks that I have earned by it are to have my doctrine called seditious and condemned as resistance to rulers"—due to his perceived instigation of the Peasants' War.²⁷ It is clear from a reading of any of Luther's treatises on war and peace in the 1520's that he is hardly following anyone's "party line." Let the chips fall where they may, says Luther, I have no choice but to bear witness faithfully to what the Scriptures teach regarding these matters. Because it is based on God's Word alone, "what I teach and write will still be true, even though the whole world were to burst. If anyone who wants to be peculiar, I, too, shall be peculiar, and we shall see who is right in the end."²⁸

At the heart of Duke John of Saxony's request for Luther's treatise on "Temporal Authority" was a genuine exegetical conundrum: "You are perturbed over Christ's injunction in Matthew 5 [39, 25, 40], 'Do not resist evil, but make friends with your

²⁴ Maurer, 133.

²⁵ See *LW* 45, 77-81 and *LW* 46, 89-94.

²⁶ *Whether Soldiers*, 95.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *An Open Letter*, 85.

accuser;’ and Romans 12 [:19], ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’”²⁹ Here is a politician who obviously takes Scripture seriously—like prince Volusian of old, who used these very texts against St. Augustine, charging “that Christian teaching permits the wicked to do evil, and is incompatible with the temporal sword.”³⁰ Perhaps the simplest response to this conundrum would have been for Luther to idealize or “spiritualize” these words of Christ and Paul: to suggest that in view of the pressing and pragmatic political realities currently existing, as well as the reality of sin (within ourselves and in the world), it is impossible to take them seriously or literally. But this, says Luther, is pure, damnable sophistry:

The sophists in the universities have also been perplexed by these texts, because they could not reconcile the two things. In order not to make heathen of the princes, they taught that Christ did not command these things but merely offered them as advice or counsel to those who would be perfect. So Christ had to become a liar and be in error in order that the princes might come off with honor, for they could not exalt the princes without degrading Christ—wretched, blind sophists that they are.³¹

One can hardly accuse Luther of not taking Scripture seriously. His solution, instead, is to let “Scripture interpret Scripture.” These passages from Matthew 5 and Romans 12 certainly cannot contradict equally clear passages in Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2, where God speaks plainly about the divinely-instituted authority of civil government and the sword. This leads to the conclusion that “God has ordained two governments: the spiritual, by which the Holy Spirit produces Christians and righteous people under Christ; and the temporal, which restrains the un-Christian and wicked so that—no thanks to them—they are obliged to keep still and to maintain an outward peace.”³² For Luther,

²⁹ *Temporal Authority*, 81.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

³² *Ibid.*, 91.

however, the concept of the “two governments” was not merely a clever way of trying to harmonize two apparently contradictory sets of texts; much less was it an attempt to develop a “theory of government” or “theory of statecraft” which could stand alone apart from the Scriptures. The doctrine of the two realms was the only possible way (he believed) of explaining and taking seriously the full and truthful testimony of Holy Scripture in all its variety, wholeness, and Christ-centeredness.³³

Luther did not base his doctrine of the two kingdoms or the two governments on his own speculative thinking. He felt that in this matter too his position was wholly determined by Scripture. He distinguishes two types of statements. One type is characterized by Jesus’ statements in the Sermon on the Mount and the apostles’ statements about the “law of Christ”: the disciples of Jesus never use force, do not resist evil, do not avenge themselves, but under all circumstances serve one another in love. These statements of the gospel appear to reject completely the state and the activity of the political authorities. But there is a second type of statement. The same Scripture contains the apostolic affirmation of the state and, as in Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2:13-14, admonishes us to obey the authorities. In addition there are the statements of the Old Testament which institute and establish the “sword” which, as in Genesis 9:6 or Exodus 21:14, 22ff., includes the death penalty. There is also the conversation between John the Baptist and the soldiers (Luke 3:14) in which John obviously does not in any way condemn the soldiers’ station in life but rather recognizes it. Finally, Luther read the Old Testament descriptions of God telling his people to prepare for battle and leading them to war; and he was aware that “all the saints have wielded the sword from the beginning of the world.”³⁴

³³ For a helpful summary of the both the complexities and the “wholeness” of Luther’s doctrine of the two kingdoms, see Kenneth Hagen, “Luther’s Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms” in *God and Caesar Revisited*, ed. John R. Stephenson (Luther Academy Conference Papers Number 1, Spring 1995), 15-29. In answering the question whether Luther actually had a *doctrine* of the two kingdoms, Hagen says: “I am willing to say yes not only because it is such a commonplace in the literature but also because I think Luther had one doctrine with several nuances and complementary configurations depending on the historical (and polemical) situation. I see no problem with the term ‘two’ kingdoms while there were actually four or six. Predominately there were two kingdoms and two governments, namely, two different schemes, two configurations in one overall framework. The point here is that for Luther it all hung together.” The other essays in this volume are also very helpful as background for and explication of Luther’s doctrine of the two realms. Recent scholarship is fairly consistent in using the language of the “two kingdoms” to refer to Luther’s distinction between “God’s kingdom” and “the devil’s kingdom,” while using the terms “the two realms” or “the two governments” to refer to Luther’s distinction between the gracious rule of Christ in the hearts and lives of believers and (on the other hand) God’s rule of power, law and human reason through human authorities and earthly government (which is *not* co-extensive with “the kingdom of Satan”). For the sake of clarity, we will attempt to be as consistent as possible in following this usage of terms, but because Luther’s own terminology (and the terminology of Luther-scholars) is often not consistent in this regard, complete consistency will not always be possible.

³⁴ Althaus, 43-44.

Those (like the “enthusiasts”) who insisted that passages like Matthew 5 require Christians to abstain from *all* use of force are—contrary to appearances—actually not taking Scripture seriously enough, since they ignore, downplay or “spiritualize” other passages of Scripture that run counter to this interpretation.³⁵

At the heart of Scripture’s testimony, of course, is the story of Christ, and even in addressing the seemingly secular issues of war and peace Luther is constantly (even primarily) concerned to bear witness to the true nature of Scripture’s account of Christ and his own unique “office,” “vocation,” and “kingdom:”

Christ pursued his own office and vocation, but he did not thereby reject any other. It was not incumbent upon him to bear the sword, for he was to exercise only that function by which his kingdom is governed and which properly serves his kingdom. Now, it is not essential to his kingdom that he be a married man, a cobbler, tailor, farmer, prince or hangman, or constable; neither is the temporal sword or law essential to it, but only God’s Word and Spirit.... This was and had to be Christ’s peculiar function as the Supreme King in this kingdom.³⁶

We will discuss in more detail below Luther’s witness to Christ in the context of his discussion of war and peace; the point here is simply that this is a crucial part of his witness to Scripture as a whole. We consider now Luther’s views on Scripture’s witness regarding the divinely-instituted *purpose* of the sword entrusted to temporal government, which is—as ironic as it may seem—the cultivation and preservation of *peace*.³⁷

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁶ *Temporal Authority*, 100-101.

³⁷ It might be helpful to note already at this point that “peace” and “peacemaking” as discussed by Luther in his treatises on war and peace do not have exactly the same meaning or connotation as they do in the writings of Hauerwas. As is made clear below, “peace” for Luther in this specific context refers primarily to external order and the absence (or restraint) of armed conflict or tyranny in the civil realm, while for Hauerwas peace is a manifestation of the presence of Christ himself in the life of the Christian community. As we have seen, however, for Hauerwas the peace embodied in the life of the church also has definite implications for “peacemaking” outside the specific confines of the church. By the same token, for Luther (as we will see) there is a definite connection between “peacemaking” in the civil realm and the “peace-prizing” duties and responsibilities of Christians and the Christian community—although this connection, like the concept of “peace” itself, is not understood by Luther and Hauerwas in precisely the same way. We will discuss this issue in more detail in our appraisal of Hauerwas’s pacifism in part two of the study.

Luther's Witness to God's Gift of Temporal Peace

Everything Luther says about war—if it is to be understood properly—must be viewed in the context of Luther's convictions regarding the incalculable value of God's gift of temporal peace. In his exposition of Psalm 82, Luther can hardly find words sufficient to praise the virtues and benefits of peace: "It is from peace that we have our bodies and lives, wives and children, houses and homes, all our members—hands, feet, eyes—all our health and liberty; and within these walls of peace we sit secure. 'Where peace is,'" quotes Luther, "'there is half a heaven.'"³⁸ "Peace," writes Luther elsewhere, is "the greatest of earthly goods, in which all other temporal goods are comprised."³⁹

When Luther praises the institution of temporal government and the office of rulers and princes within the civil realm (as he does often, and in quite exalted terms), he does so not on the basis of any naiveté regarding the personal goodness or morality of earthly rulers (quite the contrary!), nor with the intention of legitimizing any particular form or manifestation of earthly government. He does so because of his conviction that, according to Scripture, "it is precisely because God wills to create and preserve peace among men that he has instituted governments."⁴⁰ "For where there is no government," says Luther, "or where government is not held in honor, there can be no peace."⁴¹ And without peace—however uncertain, unstable, and imperfect it may be on this side of heaven—there can be no life. "It is certain...that temporal authority is a creation and ordinance of God, and that for us men in this life it is a necessary office and estate which

³⁸ *Exposition of Psalm 82*, LW 13, 55; according to the footnote, "This proverbial expression, which also appears in Walther von der Vogelweide (d. ca. 1230), is approximately equivalent to the English "sheer heaven" or to the colloquial expression "out of this world."

³⁹ *A Sermon on Keeping Children in School*, LW 46, 226.

⁴⁰ Althaus, 114-115.

we can no more dispense with than we can dispense with life itself, since without such an office this life cannot continue.”⁴²

Peacemaking is one of the chief duties and virtues of an earthly ruler. So exalted is this duty and virtue that Scripture, on account of it, goes so far as to call earthly princes “gods.” “They wear golden crowns, too, that it may be known that they are appointed by God to be gods, and have not come into their office of their own accord, but are to be His assistants.”⁴³

Now, who can recount all the benefits that come from this...virtue? One would first have to tell what the benefits of peace are, and what harm the absence of peace does. But who on earth is so eloquent and so wise that he would undertake to recount the whole of both of these things? For all the good that peace can do, God does for us through these gods; and all the harm that lack of peace can do, God keeps from us by means of these gods.⁴⁴

Establishing and preserving peace—and avoiding war—is a ruler’s greatest responsibility, challenge, and accomplishment:

It is indeed a splendid and needful thing to build strong cities and castles against one’s enemies; but that is nothing when compared with the work of a prince who builds a stronghold of peace, that is loves peace and administers it. Even the Romans, the greatest warriors on earth, had a saying that to make war without necessity was to go fishing with a golden net; if it was lost, the fishing could not pay for it; if it caught anything, the cost was too much greater than the profit. One must not begin a war or work for it; it comes unbidden all too soon. One must keep peace as long as one can, even though one must buy it with all the money that would be spent on war or won by the war. Victory never makes up for what is lost by war.⁴⁵

If peace is the greatest earthly good and virtue, it follows that for Luther war is the greatest earthly plague and curse. If peace is “half a heaven,” war is “half a hell.”

⁴¹ *Exposition of Psalm 82*, 44-45.

⁴² *A Sermon on Keeping Children in School*, 238.

⁴³ *Exposition of Psalm 82*, 55.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

[T]hough you had all the money and wealth of the Turk but were not at peace, all your wealth would do you so little good that you could not have a happy bite of bread or a quiet drink of water. If things went well, there would be care, fear, and danger all around; if things were worse, there would be only blood and fire and robbery and every kind of calamity. Thus lack of peace may be counted half a hell, or hell's prelude and beginning.⁴⁶

In war, the innocent invariably suffer more than the guilty: "What have the many women and children done," Luther asks the war-mongering prince, "to deserve being made widows and orphans in order that you may avenge yourself on a worthless tongue or an evil hand which has injured you?"⁴⁷ To wise and sensible princes Luther says: "Take my advice, dear lords: stay out of war."⁴⁸ Do not "for the sake of one man's head plunge country and people into want and full the land with widows and orphans;" do not "follow the advice of those counselors and fire-eaters who would stir and incite [you] to start a war, saying, 'What, must we suffer such insult and injustice?'"⁴⁹ Princes should follow the example, suggests Luther, of Duke Frederick of Saxony:

He had so many reasons to start a war that if some mad prince who loved war had been in his position, he would have started ten wars. But Frederick did not draw his sword. He always responded with reasonable words and almost gave the impression that he was afraid and was running away from a fight. He let the others boast and threaten and yet he held his ground against them. When he was asked why he let them threaten him so, he replied: "I shall not start anything...." He saw that the others were foolish and that he could be indulgent with them.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁴⁷ *Temporal Authority*, 124.

⁴⁸ *On War Against the Turk*, 121.

⁴⁹ *Temporal Authority*, 124.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 119-120.

Although Luther's treatise in response to the Peasants' War ("Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants") is renowned for its harshness, it should be remembered that it was preceded by a fervent "Admonition to Peace," and that all three of Luther's treatises written in the context of this war reflect his convictions regarding the inestimable value of peace. Luther recognized that fair and just rulers were few and far between, and he offered no aid and comfort to tyrants. But he insisted that "a wicked tyrant is more tolerable than a bad war"⁵¹ and counseled "flight rather than fight" to those faced with a necessary choice between the two.⁵² Luther's early opposition to the war against the Turks, expressed in his *Explanations of the Ninety-Five Theses*,⁵³ was considered seditious by his opponents, and even in his 1529 treatise *On War Against the Turk* he insisted: "I shall never advise a heathen or a Turk, let alone a Christian, to attack another or begin war. That is nothing else than advising bloodshed and destruction, and it brings no good fortune in the end."⁵⁴

More often than not, treatments of Luther's perspective on war and peace (whether by critics, advocates or "neutral" commentators) begin with and focus on Luther's defense of war rather than his passion for peace. But it is only in the context of the latter that the former can properly and meaningfully be understood. There is no hint whatsoever of a glorification of war in Luther's writings, nor is there any glossing over the horrors of war. There is, however, a sober realism—rooted in both Scripture and experience—regarding life in a fallen world filled with sinful human beings, most of whom refuse to acknowledge God as their Creator and Redeemer. In such a world people

⁵¹ *Whether Soldiers*, 109.

⁵² *Admonition to Peace*, 37.

⁵³ See *On War Against the Turk*, 158. Cf. *LW* 31, 91-92.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 165.

often behave more like wild beasts than like human beings, and, in Luther's own words, "it is the function and honor of worldly government to make men out of wild beasts and to prevent men from becoming wild beasts."⁵⁵

For the very fact that the sword has been instituted by God to punish the evil, protect the good, and preserve peace [Rom. 13:1-4; 1 Pet. 2:13-14] is powerful and sufficient proof that war and killing along with all the things that accompany wartime and martial law have been instituted by God. What else is war but the punishment of wrong and evil? Why does anyone go to war, except because he desires peace and obedience?⁵⁶

When Luther boasts, therefore, of being the first since St. Augustine to engage in such unabashed "glorification of temporal government," it is crucial to distinguish—with Augustine—"glorification of government" from "glorification of war:"

Though Augustine holds that war is fundamentally legitimate and defends soldiering as a service which may be pleasing to God, he specifically guards against the perversion of this thesis into a glorification of war. Peace is not sought in order that war may come; on the contrary, war serves the one purpose of making peace possible. Hence peace is always the goal that we must seek. War is never the true goal of the will but only a "necessity" with which the will finds itself unwillingly associated.⁵⁷

It is for this reason, too, that Luther affirms and stringently applies the Augustinian-based criteria for restraining and limiting war as far as possible in its pursuit of peace.

Luther on the Limitations of War As an Instrument of Peace

In his contemporary re-assessment of Luther's 1527 treatise *Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved*, Gilbert Meilaender notes that the very title of this treatise "suggests a

⁵⁵ *A Sermon on Keeping Children in School*, 237.

⁵⁶ *Whether Soldiers*, 95.

⁵⁷ Helmut Thielicke, *Theological Ethics Volume II: Politics*, trans. and ed. William Lazareth (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1952), 458.

Christian presumption against waging war, a burden of proof resting on any Christian who would propose to serve as a soldier.”⁵⁸ A similar point could be made about Luther’s earlier and theologically foundational treatise *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed*. The very title of this work makes it clear that there are *limits* to the power given by God to civil government—divine restraints on the “sword” entrusted by God to earthly rulers. The main point of the treatise on *Temporal Authority* is that “the temporal government has laws which extend no further than to life and property and external affairs on earth, for God cannot and will not permit anyone but himself to rule over the soul.” Therefore, “where the temporal authority presumes to prescribe laws for the soul, it encroaches upon God’s government and only misleads souls and destroys them.”⁵⁹ Even heresy, says Luther, is not the business of civil government:

Heresy can never be restrained by force. One will have to tackle the problem in some other way....Here God’s Word must do the fighting. If it does not succeed, certainly the temporal power will not succeed either, even if it were to drench the world in blood. Heresy is a spiritual matter which you cannot hack to pieces with iron, consume with fire, or drown in water. God’s Word alone avails here....⁶⁰

In the third part of *Temporal Authority*, and in *Whether Soldiers, Too, May Be Saved*, Luther extends his treatment of the limitations of the authority of civil government by taking up the question of restraints placed by God upon the sword even *within* its proper sphere. War is justifiable, says Luther, as a divine instrument of peace—but it is by no means *always* justifiable, nor does it *always* serve the purpose for which God

⁵⁸ *PJW*, 89.

⁵⁹ *Temporal Authority*, 105.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 114.

intended it. In taking up this issue Luther develops what Meilaender calls “a very simple version of the just war tradition:”

The task of civil government, even when it wages war, is to maintain peace. Indeed, “every lord and prince is bound to protect his people and preserve peace for them. That is his office; that is why he has the sword” [*Whether Soldiers*, 121]. This suggests that war should be waged only under certain circumstances—which Luther articulates mainly in terms of being “forced to fight.”⁶¹

Luther’s counsel in this regard reflects the first and primary concern of the just war tradition, that of “justifiable cause:” only a defensive war can possibly serve the cause of peace. “Let this be, then, the first thing to be said in this matter: No war is just... unless one has such a good reason for fighting and such a good conscience that he can say, ‘My neighbor compels me and forces me to fight, though I would rather avoid it.’”⁶² Wars without justifiable cause Luther describes as “wars of desire” and “wars of the devil.” Necessary defensive wars are “human disasters,” which we should do everything in our power to avert. When unavoidable, however, we should implore God to work through such wars to serve the cause of peace.⁶³

The just war criterion of legitimate authority is reflected in Luther’s conviction that rebellion against an overlord is always wrong. Even in the case of tyrants (e.g., the abuses cited in defense of the Peasants’ War) it is better “to suffer wrong for God’s sake”⁶⁴ or even to flee than to “be disobedient and destroy God’s ordinance.”⁶⁵ As those entrusted by God with proper authority, overlords have the right to quench rebellion when necessary. Here too, however—in the greater interest of peace—rulers should

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁶² *Whether Soldiers*, 121.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Temporal Authority*, 124-125.

⁶⁵ *Whether Soldiers*, 104-105.

exercise great restraint and show mercy whenever possible. If “the antagonist is your equal...or of a foreign government,” says Luther, “you should first offer him justice and peace” before plunging headlong into war.⁶⁶ Here the consideration of “last resort” comes into play: Luther repeatedly advises rulers to engage in negotiation with their enemies as a means of averting war, even if this involves making significant sacrifices in power and property in order to avoid the disaster of war. The consideration of “proportionality” (the good ends achieved must outweigh the damage done by the means) surfaces frequently in both treatises: Luther warns rulers not to “step on the dish while picking up the spoon,”⁶⁷ an analogy comparable to that of the “golden net” that exceeds the value of the fish.⁶⁸

The concern of “right intention” is also crucial for Luther: in going to war “you must not consider your personal interests and how you may remain lord, but those of your subjects to whom you owe help and protection.”⁶⁹ War against the Turks, if initiated, is not to be grounded in religious or ideological ideals: Luther absolutely rejects any application of the just war theory that would support the notion of a crusade: “I do not advise men to wage war against the Turk ...because of false belief or evil life, but because of the murder and destruction which he does.”⁷⁰ Nor is nationalism, in some jingoistic sense, an appropriate motivation for war: we should not and cannot “expect any miracle or special grace of God for Germany,” says Luther; all we can do is repent,

⁶⁶ *Temporal Authority*, 125.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁶⁸ *Treatise on Good Works*, LW 44, 94.

⁶⁹ *Temporal Authority*, 125.

⁷⁰ *On War Against the Turk*, 198.

pray and honor God and leave it to him to bless or chastise according to his will and wisdom.⁷¹

Although *jus in bello* considerations are not as clearly or formally spelled out in Luther's writings as the various *jus ad bellum* criteria summarized above, it is clear that for Luther just conduct in the midst of war is as important as just reasons for going to war.

Even though you are absolutely certain that you are not starting a war but being forced into one, you should still fear God and remember him. You should not march out to war saying, "Ah, now I have been forced to fight and have good cause for going to war." You ought not to think that that justifies anything you do and plunge headlong into battle.⁷²

Two concerns are evident here: first, an awareness of the need to "place limits on the means by which we seek good ends,"⁷³ reflected in historic just war criteria of discrimination, proportionality, and limited objectives; second, a caution against assuming that even a just war will automatically be blessed by God on the basis of the justice of the cause. God always remains God; he, not any ruler, army or government, controls the course of history. His will in temporal matters always remains hidden and inscrutable. Even a war that appears to us to be just must be entrusted to God's judgment and the outcome left in his hands.

It is indeed true that you have a really good reason to go to war and defend yourself, but that does not give you God's guarantee that you will win. Indeed, such confidence may result in your defeat—even though you have a just cause for fighting the war—for God cannot endure such pride and confidence except in a man who humbles himself before him and fears him.⁷⁴

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 184-185.

⁷² *Whether Soldiers*, 123.

⁷³ *PJW*, 90.

⁷⁴ *Whether Soldiers*, 123.

Wise rulers should fear God and entrust their cause to him. Christian soldiers should console themselves with the knowledge that they are being obedient to his command to submit to governing authorities (Romans 13), “so that we are sure we are pleasing his divine will and are doing right, whenever we do the will and pleasure of the ruler.”⁷⁵

Just how seriously does Luther take these criteria as *divine* requirements (not just “helpful guidelines” or “natural or reasonable considerations”) for engaging in a conflict that serves *God’s* purpose of preserving and protecting temporal peace? The answer to this question can be discerned from his admonitions to those confronted with real-life choices in these matters. In the case of an unjust war, participation is out of the question, regardless of the consequences:

What if a prince is in the wrong? Are his people bound to follow him then too? Answer: No, for it is no one’s duty to do wrong; we must obey God (who desires the right) rather than men [Acts 5:29].⁷⁶

But if, as often happens, the temporal power and authorities, or whatever they call themselves, would compel a subject to do something contrary to the command of God, or hinder him from doing what God commands, obedience ends and the obligation ceases....[It is] as if a prince desired to go to war, and his cause was clearly unrighteous; we should neither follow or help such a prince, because God had commanded us not to kill our neighbor or do him a wrong. Likewise, if the prince were to order us to bear false witness, steal, lie or deceive, and the like. In such cases we should indeed give up our property and honor, our life and limb, so that God’s commandments remain.⁷⁷

Soldiers, says Luther, are not the only ones to confront such challenges and choices: “In every other occupation we are also exposed to the danger that the rulers will compel us to act wrongly; but since God will have us leave even father and mother for his sake, we

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁷⁶ *Temporal Authority*, 125.

⁷⁷ *Treatise on Good Works*, 100.

must certainly leave lords for his sake.”⁷⁸ Better to die, if necessary, than knowingly disobey God: to sin against God and one’s conscience is neither right nor safe.

But there is, of course, another side to this coin. If the war is just, participation is not an option: obedience to rulers in such cases is obedience to God, and disobedience to rulers is disobedience to God. In the case of a just war

...subjects are duty bound to follow, and to devote their life and property, for in such a case one must risk his goods and himself for the sake of others. In a war of this sort it is both Christian and an act of love to kill the enemy without hesitation, to plunder and burn and injure him by every method of warfare until he is conquered (except that one must beware of sin, and not violate wives and virgins). And when victory has been achieved, one should offer mercy and peace to those who surrender and humble themselves.⁷⁹

As paradoxical as it seems, participation in a war that is truly just is actually a work of love, since it serves God’s purpose of peace:

[W]hen I think of a soldier fulfilling his office by punishing the wicked, killing the wicked, and creating so much misery, it seems an un-Christian work completely contrary to Christian love. But when I think of how it protects the good and keeps and preserves wife and child, house and farm, property, and honor and peace, then I see how precious and godly this work is; and I observe that it amputates a leg or a hand, so that the whole body may not perish. For if the sword were not on guard to preserve peace, everything in the world would be ruined because of a lack of peace. Therefore, such a war is only a very brief lack of peace that prevents an everlasting and immeasurable lack of peace, a small misfortune that prevents a great misfortune.⁸⁰

War, when just, is actually God’s work and activity, not ours:

...God honors the sword so highly that he says he himself has instituted it [Rom. 13:1] and does not want men to say or think that they have invented it or instituted it. For the hand that wields this sword and kills with it is not man’s hand, but God’s; and it is not man, but God, who hangs, tortures, beheads, kills, and fights. All these are God’s works and judgments.⁸¹

⁷⁸ *Whether Soldiers*, 130-131.

⁷⁹ *Temporal Authority*, 125.

⁸⁰ *Whether Soldiers*, 96.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

To judge just war justly, therefore, we must keep our eyes fixed on God and on his goal and purpose for war, not on our limited and “childish” standards of judgment:

To sum up, we must, in thinking about a soldier’s office, not concentrate on the killing, burning, striking, hitting, seizing, etc. This is what children with their limited and restricted vision see they regard a doctor as a sawbones who amputates, but does not see that he does this only to save the whole body. So too, we must look at the office of the soldier, or the sword, with the eyes of an adult and see why this office slays and acts so cruelly. Then it will prove itself to be an office which, in itself, is godly and as needful and useful to the world as eating or drinking or any other work.⁸²

In this context, it is important to emphasize several additional points. First, although Luther is speaking here primarily to Christian princes and soldiers who may be troubled in conscience about their participation in the brutal work of war, Luther does not mean to say that a just war is conceivable only in the context of a Christian nation or under the authority of a Christian prince. “The emperor’s sword,” says Luther, “has nothing to do with the faith; it belongs to physical, worldly things.”⁸³ “The emperor is not the head of Christendom or defender of the gospel or of the faith;” in fact, “they are usually the worst enemies of Christendom and the faith.”⁸⁴ A Christian prince, Luther says over and over again, is a “rare bird.” “Luther is under no illusions regarding the moral quality of the authorities,” says Grane. “On the contrary, he believes that the greatest number of princes are godless tyrants. This, however, changes nothing regarding the authorities’ office.”⁸⁵ The God-given duty of rulers is simply to govern and protect their subjects: “This would be their duty whether they themselves were Christians or

⁸² *Ibid.*, 97.

⁸³ *On War Against the Turk*, 186.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁸⁵ Grane, 172.

not.”⁸⁶ And the duty of subjects is to obey their rulers—as long as they can do so without disobeying God. Thus for Luther:

The question about the justness of a war thus concerns a monarch’s military subordinates and not just the monarch himself. Each must make his own decision. Here again the judgment about whether a war is just is made personal; there is no blind obedience. But all this presupposes that the individual soldier is set within a previously existing ethic of orders that is by no means exclusively Christian in its expression. It is, however, to be practiced by a Christian when it can be done with a good conscience. Everything done in that way is justified by the divine demand for obedience.⁸⁷

To nail home the point, Luther can even say in the context of the “just war” to quash the unjust rebellion of the peasants: “I am called a clergyman and am a minister, but even if I served a Turk and saw my lord in danger, I would forget my spiritual office and stab and hew as long as my heart beat. If I were slain in so doing, I should go straight to heaven.”⁸⁸ Service in a just war is service to God for the sake of peace, regardless of the personal faith of the ruler or the moral or political characteristics of the temporal authority to which one is bound to submit.

Yet a second question remains. What if a soldier is not sure whether a particular war is or is not just? What if he is uncertain whether his ruler is in the right or in the wrong? “So long as they do not know,” says Luther, “and cannot with all possible diligence find out, they may obey him without peril to their souls... and leave the matter to God.”⁸⁹ God does not hold us accountable for what we do not and cannot know. What is important in such cases is the certainty that we are seeking to be obedient to God: “Since we know that our prince is in the right in this case, or at least do not know

⁸⁶ *On War Against the Turk*, 186.

⁸⁷ Maurer, 142.

⁸⁸ *Open Letter*, 81.

⁸⁹ *Temporal Authority*, 126.

otherwise, we are therefore sure and certain that in serving and obeying him we are serving God.”⁹⁰ Finally, says Luther, “we have to face the fact that it is impossible to establish hard and fast rules” for determining in some absolute sense whether a particular war is or is not just.⁹¹ To take the just war criteria seriously—as Luther clearly does—is not to suggest that judgments in this regard can be made without difficulty, disagreement or ambiguity: “There are so many cases and so many exceptions to any rule that it is very difficult or even impossible to decide everything accurately and equitably.... If we do not make exceptions and strictly follow the law we do the greatest injustice of all.”⁹² Those who argue that just war considerations are useful only if all ambiguity can be removed are discounting the possibility that it can be useful at all. This view, however, argues Luther, actually undermines the cause of peace.

Luther’s Witness Concerning War and Peace As a Witness to Christ

“For in my heart,” writes Luther in his 1535 preface to his lectures on Galatians, “there rules this one doctrine, namely, faith in Christ [*fides Christi*]. From it, through it, and to it all my theological thought flows and returns day and night.”⁹³ If this is true, and if—as we have argued—Luther’s discourses on war and peace are also part of his “theological thought,” then there must be an intimate connection between Luther’s witness to Christ and his witness to war and peace. And indeed, even a cursory reading of Luther’s treatises on war and peace will show that they are incomprehensible apart from Luther’s convictions about the significance and uniqueness of Christ’s person and

⁹⁰ *Whether Soldiers*, 132-133.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Lectures on Galatians, LW 27*, 145.

work, even if (in accordance with his primary and specific intent) Luther does not spell out in detail in these treatises all of the features and presuppositions inherent in his Christology and ecclesiology.

First, it is important to emphasize once again in this connection that Luther's treatises on war and peace are written primarily for professing *Christians* or for those genuinely interested in the "Christian point of view" regarding these matters. Luther has no interest in developing arguments based on reason or natural law that will be acceptable or comprehensible to those who reject Scripture's teaching concerning the radical nature of Christ's person, work and words, and he has no illusions (therefore) about how his writings will be received by the vast majority of readers. Since "a Christian is a rare bird,"⁹⁴ no one should be surprised (says Luther) that his teaching on war and peace, like his teaching on the Gospel itself, is twisted, distorted, misunderstood and met with widespread scorn and ridicule. Those who cannot comprehend the Gospel will not comprehend this teaching either; those who will not receive Christ will not receive Christ's teaching regarding war and peace. This is the primary reason, says Luther, that his writings on the peasants' war were misunderstood: he was writing not as a political advisor for rulers in general or as a political commentator for the masses, but he was writing as a Christian pastor, teacher and counselor for Christian rulers and subjects whose consciences were bound by the word of the Lord Christ:

I earnestly ask you, and everyone, to read my book fairly, and not run through it so hurriedly. Then you will see that I was advising only Christian and pious rulers, as befits a Christian preacher. I say it again and for the third time. I was writing only for rulers who might wish to deal in a Christian or otherwise honest way with their people, to instruct their consciences concerning this matter to the effect that they ought to take immediate action against the bands of rebels both innocent and guilty. And if they struck the guilty, they were not to let their

⁹⁴ *Admonition to Peace*, 29.

consciences trouble them, since they were by the very act confessing that they were bound to do their duty to God. Afterward, however, if they won, they were to show grace, not only to those whom they considered innocent, but also to the guilty as well.

But these furious, raving, senseless tyrants, who even after the battle cannot get their fill of blood, and in all their lives scarcely ask a question about Christ—these I did not undertake to instruct. It makes no difference to these bloody dogs whether they slay the guilty or innocent, whether they please God or the devil. They have the sword, but they use it to vent their lust and self-will. I leave them to the guidance of their master, the devil, who is indeed leading them.⁹⁵

The underlying concern in all of Luther's treatises on war and peace is a faith-based desire to take completely seriously the *words* and the *will* of the one and only Son of God and Savior of the world. Needless to say, those without true faith in Christ would hardly be troubled by the central question that motivated these treatises—namely, how we can commit ourselves to live in full obedience to radical demands of the One who redeemed us from sin, death and hell while also living in faithful obedience to what His Word says about the duties and responsibilities of Christian citizens in the secular realm. Christ's words in the Sermon on the Mount (about nonresistance, loving one's enemies, etc.) dare not be "explained away" (as they were—in different ways—by both the "sophists" and the peasants): this makes a liar out of the Son of God himself, with dire consequences. Christ "is unwilling to have the least word of [his] set aside, and condemns to hell those who do not love their enemies."⁹⁶ But these words of Christ must not be separated from—or elevated above—the equally binding words of Christ given elsewhere in Scripture:

...for there stands our Master, Christ, and subjects us, along with our bodies and our property, to the emperor and the law of this world, when he says, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" [Luke 20:25]. Paul, too, speaking in Romans 12 [13:1] to all baptized Christians, says, "Let every person be subject to the

⁹⁵ *Open Letter*, 84.

⁹⁶ *Temporal Authority*, 88.

governing authorities.” And Peter says, “Be subject to every ordinance of man” [1 Pet. 2:13]. We are bound to live according to this teaching of Christ, as the Father commands from heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son, listen to him” [Matt. 7:5].⁹⁷

As indicated earlier, the determination to take *both* of these “teachings of Christ” completely seriously led Luther to his articulation of Scripture’s teaching regarding the two governments, at the heart of which is a concern to preserve the purity and integrity of Scripture’s teaching concerning the Gospel of Christ and the kingdom of Christ. All the ink Luther expends in writing about the “kingdom of this world” is spilled for the sake of clarifying the true nature of the kingdom that Jesus described as “not of this world:”

Those who belong to the kingdom of God are all the true believers who are in Christ and under Christ, for Christ is King and Lord in the kingdom of God...For this reason he came into the world, that he might begin God’s kingdom and establish it in the world. Therefore he says before Pilate, “My kingdom is not of the world”...In the gospel he continually refers to the kingdom of God...He also calls the gospel a gospel of the kingdom of God; because it teaches, governs, and upholds God’s kingdom.⁹⁸

Both the peasants with their “Gospel-motivated” rebellion and the papists with their proposed crusade against the Turks were attacking the Gospel by distorting the true nature and purpose of Christ’s kingdom. As for the peasants: “You take God’s name in vain when you pretend to be seeking divine right, and under the pretense of his name work contrary to divine right.”⁹⁹ “Because you neither call upon God nor patiently endure, but rather help yourselves by your own power and make yourselves your own god and savior, God cannot and must not be your God and Savior.”¹⁰⁰ Worst of all is the

⁹⁷ *Against the Peasants*, 51.

⁹⁸ *Temporal Authority*, 88.

⁹⁹ *Admonition to Peace*, 25.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

claim that waging war against oppressive rulers is condoned, even demanded, by the Gospel:

Your declaration that you teach and live according to the gospel is not true. Not one of the articles teaches anything of the gospel. Rather, everything is aimed at obtaining freedom for your person and for your property. To sum it up, everything is concerned with worldly and temporal matters. You want power and wealth so that you will not suffer injustice. The gospel, however, does not become involved in the affairs of this world, but speaks of our life in the world in terms of suffering, injustice, the cross, patience, and contempt for this life and temporal wealth... You are only trying to give your unevangelical and un-Christian enterprise an evangelical appearance; and you do not see that in doing so you are bringing shame upon the holy gospel of Christ, and making it a cover for wickedness.... If you want to keep on doing these things, then use another name and do not ask anyone to call you or think of you as Christians. There is no other possibility.¹⁰¹

By confusing the two kingdoms the peasants “would put wrath into God’s kingdom and mercy into the world’s kingdom; and that is the same as putting the devil in heaven and God in hell.”¹⁰² Such false teaching Luther is determined to condemn and expose until his last breath.

Equally erroneous and condemnable, in Luther’s view, is the idea that war against the Turks is to be undertaken and defended “in the name of Christ.” “This is absolutely contrary to Christ’s doctrine and name,” says Luther. “This is the greatest of all sins and is one that no Turk commits, for Christ’s name is used for sin and shame and thus dishonored.”¹⁰³ At stake here is the very nature of the “proper office” of Christ and of those who bear his name:

Why should Christ or his people have anything to do with the sword, and kill men’s bodies, when he declared that he has come to save the world, not to kill people [John 3:17]? His work is to deal with the gospel and to redeem men from sin and death by his Spirit to help them from this world to everlasting life.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁰² *Open Letter*, 70.

¹⁰³ *On War Against the Turk*, 165.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 166.

Luther is quick to answer the anticipated objection:

I say this not because I would teach that worldly rulers ought not be Christians, or that a Christian cannot bear the sword and serve God in the temporal government. Would to God that they were all Christians...! But what I want to do is to keep a distinction between the callings and offices, so that everyone can see to what God has called him and fulfill the duties of his office faithfully and sincerely in the service of God.¹⁰⁵

Ironically, only by “excluding” Christ and the Gospel from the temporal kingdom can one hope to serve Christ and the Gospel within the temporal kingdom by performing acts of love on behalf of one’s neighbor in the civil and social realm. War itself, when justified and necessary to serve the cause of peace, can be such an act of love.

Since a true Christian lives and labors on earth not for himself alone but for his neighbor, he does by the very nature of his spirit even what he himself has no need of, but is needful and useful to his neighbor. Because the sword is most beneficial and necessary for the whole world in order to preserve peace, punish sin, and restrain the wicked, the Christian submits most willingly to the rule of the sword, pays his taxes, honors those in authority, serves, helps, and does all he can to assist the governing authority, that it may continue to function and be held in honor and fear.¹⁰⁶

Serving as a judge, lord, prince, constable, hangman, or soldier “is something which you do not need, but which is very beneficial and essential for the whole world and for your neighbor...the world cannot and dare not dispense with it.”¹⁰⁷

In this way the two propositions are brought into harmony with one another: at one and the same time you satisfy God’s kingdom inwardly and the kingdom of the world outwardly. You suffer evil and injustice, and yet at the same time you punish evil and injustice; you do not resist evil, and yet at the same time you do resist it. In the one case, you consider yourself and what is yours; in the other, you consider your neighbor and what is his. In what concerns you and yours, you govern yourself by the gospel and suffer injustice toward yourself as a true Christian; in what concerns the person or property of others, you govern yourself

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Temporal Authority*, 94.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 95.

according to love and tolerate no injustice toward your neighbor. The gospel does not forbid this; in fact, in other places it actually commands it.¹⁰⁸

Whether we are called to suffer injustice or to fight against injustice in accordance with God's word and will in the civil realm, therefore, we do so in obedience to Christ, in Christ-like love for our neighbor, and as faithful witnesses to the true nature of Christ's kingdom.

There is clearly a tension here between the Christ-like love in our hearts for all people and the actual activities in which we may find it necessary to engage in order to defend one neighbor against another. But as Paul Althaus explains, this tension exists in the very nature and activity of God himself:

The tension between our personal attitude and our objective activity for the sake of justice, between love in our hearts and the severity of our administration of justice, is great indeed. However, the Christian must not be destroyed by this tension anymore than God himself is. For, as Luther shows, the same deep tension is found in God himself. God administers justice but is at the same time nothing else than love itself. God must use force against those who rebel against him, and yet his heart burns with love for them. God's love appears in our evil world also in the broken form of his wrath—as his “strange work.” Thus the ethical paradox in which the Christian finds himself when he administers his office justly is no more difficult to bear than the theological paradox of God's own activity. Indeed, Luther feels that the first paradox is based on the second. This clearly shows that his solution of the Christian in political office is not based on a compromise. The basis of Luther's solution lies deep in his knowledge of God.¹⁰⁹

When one plumbs the depths of the knowledge of God, one encounters mysteries that must simply be confessed, not fully understood—such as the economy of offices and activities within the Godhead itself. According to Luther, the same God who instituted the kingdom of grace in Christ also instituted the secular kingdom with its swords,

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁰⁹ Althaus, 77.

offices, laws, judgments, and wars. In terms of his unique salvific work and office, however, Christ (says Althaus)

...does not participate in this secular kingdom. God—and not Christ—institutes it. It is therefore certainly God’s kingdom but it is not Christ’s kingdom. Christ is concerned only with the spiritual kingdom. He concerns himself about secular government as little as about God’s working in nature—as about storms, for example. At this point Luther clearly distinguishes between the activity of God and the activity of Christ. Not everything that God institutes and works comes from Christ. But Christ, although his kingdom is only the spiritual government, has very explicitly confirmed that this other secular government is also God’s will and order.¹¹⁰

Thus Luther can say that “God himself is the founder, lord, master, protector, and rewarder of both kinds of righteousness”—the righteousness of faith corresponding to the spiritual government ruled by Christ through his Word of grace and forgiveness, and the temporal righteousness that corresponds to the civil government ruled by earthly authorities through reason, law and the sword.¹¹¹

Despite the radical differences between these two kinds of righteousnesses and their corresponding realms, they are unified with respect to their common (divine) origin. On the basis of this unity, Luther can actually speak of the secular government as a “picture” or “mask” of the heavenly kingdom of Christ. “God wants the government of the world to be a symbol of true salvation and of his kingdom of heaven, like a pantomime or a mask.”¹¹² Althaus says:

Thus there is an analogy between secular government and the lordship of Christ, between Christ the Lord and secular lords. In both instances to be a lord means to

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 46-47.

¹¹¹ *LW* 46, 100. Luther’s understanding of the “two (sometimes three) kinds of righteousness” is itself a complex one, especially since this distinction can refer to different theological realities in different contexts. In Luther’s treatises on war and peace, the contrast is typically between the civil righteousness compelled by the law or sword (thus applicable particularly to non-Christians) and the “spiritual” or “eternal” righteousness enjoyed by Christians as a gift of God’s grace through faith in Christ. We will discuss this topic in more detail in part two of our study; for a more extensive treatment, see chapter four of the Biermann dissertation cited earlier.

¹¹² *Exposition of Psalm 101*, *LW* 13, 197.

be a “helping power.” When lordship is properly understood and practiced, *lord* is a pleasant, friendly term even in the world. . . . Therefore is the lords of this world wish to be used as helpers and if their subjects wish to use them as such, *trust* must be as much a part of the relationship between lords and subjects as it is a part of our relationship to Christ. The fact that someone is my lord means that I may rely on him; there is a correspondence between the lordship of Christ and that of the lords of this world, even though it is only a relative one. Thus Luther establishes a very close relationship between our ethical relationship to political authorities and our relationship to God. Both have a common characteristic.¹¹³

This explains Luther’s conviction that *Christian* princes, though rare, have a greater opportunity and responsibility to rule well and justly in the secular realm: they are (or should be!) in a better position to “translate” the realities of Christ’s lordship into the (relatively corresponding) realities that exist in temporal government. There is even a parallel between the “wrath of God” exhibited in both kingdoms in different ways—but always in the service of God’s mercy. “The political authorities cannot repudiate the use of wrath anymore than the parents of a family or the preacher in his pulpit can do so. And just as parents and preachers use ‘necessary wrath’ as a means of love, so it is also a means of God’s love when used by political authorities.”¹¹⁴ Luther says: “Although the severity and wrath of the world’s kingdom seems unmerciful, nevertheless, when we see it rightly, it is not the least of God’s mercies.”¹¹⁵

For Luther, of course, the lordship of Christ in the kingdom of grace and faith must always be seen and understood “in the context of the theology of the cross. It is still hidden under the ‘form of this world.’”¹¹⁶ “The kingdom of Christ,” says Luther, “is and remains a secret kingdom, concealed from this world, maintained in Word and faith until

¹¹³ Althaus, 55.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹¹⁵ *Open Letter*, 71. See chapter 6 in part two for a much more extensive discussion of Luther’s view of “God’s merciful wrath” in both realms.

¹¹⁶ Althaus, 80.

the time of its revelation.”¹¹⁷ The secular kingdom is ruled and shaped not by Word and faith but by human reason and law—but this does not mean that it is not subject to God’s rule and will. “Reason is obliged to shape the orders in order to fulfill God’s strict demands”—set forth in his Word and incumbent also on followers of Christ—“that life be preserved.”¹¹⁸ The devil rages in *both* governments and seeks to attack and destroy God’s gracious work in each—Luther is certainly well-versed in Scripture’s teaching regarding the “powers” of this world and of the demonic kingdom. The way to do battle against the devil until the time of the coming of Christ is to maintain the proper distinction between the two governments and to recognize, honor, and support God’s unique and distinctive work in each—all for the ultimate purpose of serving and extending the peaceable kingdom of Christ.

A crucial part of recognizing God’s work in the temporal realm, therefore, is recognizing that it, too, is often (and in certain respects, always) hidden and inscrutable. Just as in Christ’s kingdom God’s wrath—his “alien work”—ultimately serves the “proper work” of leading sinners to the mercy-seat of Christ, so also in the temporal realm God’s wrath often serves his merciful purposes of providing and preserving temporal blessing, order and peace. This recognition is especially important for Christians troubled by the harsh and seemingly unloving aspects of their earthly vocations. As Wingren points out:

Even hard and severe measures may be commanded by God. Man is a “mask of God.” But God is wrath as well as love, hence man may present himself as both demanding and giving in relation to others. At one time he may be a mask for God’s goodness, at another for his severity. He is only doing obediently what he is bidden to do. Living in vocation is so constituted that it includes both gentleness and severity....Both the love of God and the wrath of God step forth in

¹¹⁷ *Exposition of Psalm 117*, LW 14, 30.

¹¹⁸ Althaus, 80.

visible form on earth in the fact that the exercise of vocation comprises this ambivalence.¹¹⁹

The hiddenness of God's work and purposes in this regard requires, on the part of the Christian, not only the faithful exercise of his vocation but also the exercise of faith:

God's wrath is an instrument of his love. To be sure, there can never be a clearly evident relation between divine wrath and love, but when cross and suffering come upon man he has to believe that God's love is concealed in his wrath. He will be able to see the connection only after death. As an officeholder he is often in a situation where he has to bring cross and suffering upon others; that is, he has to serve as a point through which God's stern law and punitive wrath break through. The reaction is like that which occurs when a man himself is smitten by God's wrath; reason cannot see how this wrath can be an instrument of God's love. Then man is usually unwilling to give himself to an office in which he must bring suffering on others, as, for instance, in military service or judicial action, in the work of a soldier or an agent of justice. Faith, however, is willing to serve in this way, for it has learned that God's love is veiled under law. Faith trusts that the mandate of a man's vocation leads to something good; behind all stations and offices stands the Creator, who is none other than the God of the gospel. So even severe action is something which a Christian can freely will, certain about God's command.¹²⁰

The Church in Luther's Witness Concerning War and Peace

A superficial reading of Luther's treatises on *Temporal Authority* and *Whether Soldiers, Too, May Be Saved* may result in the conclusion that Luther is dealing here primarily with questions of individual Christian ethics—that he is offering a theological framework for individual Christians (whether soldiers, princes, pastors, or peasants) to make God-pleasing decisions about participating in or supporting specific activities in which the use of force or violence is involved. A more thoughtful reading of these treatises will reveal, however, that Luther is concerned with much more than individual decisions made by individual Christians in particular situations. He is deeply—if not

¹¹⁹ Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 232. Cf. Althaus, 45.

¹²⁰ Wingren, 211. Cf. Althaus, 56.

primarily—concerned to clarify the true nature of the church in the face of false understandings of it that threatened to do great damage to its unique and irreplaceable mission on earth.

Both the “papists” and the “radical reformers” of Luther’s day fell into the trap of identifying Christ’s church with an external institution or assembly—an “association of external ties and rites like other civic organizations”¹²¹—rather than as “the assembly of saints in which the gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly.”¹²² This led to inevitable misunderstandings regarding the church’s relationship to civil government and about the use of the sword by the church or by members of the church.

Luther’s first concern in *Temporal Authority*, therefore, is to clarify the true nature of the church by distinguishing it from the world on the basis of faith in Christ (or lack thereof): “We must divide the children of Adam and all mankind into two classes, the first belonging to the kingdom of God, the second to the kingdom of the world.”¹²³ The first consists only of “real Christians,” “true believers,” who—as Christians—have no use or need for the sword.

...Christ did not wield the sword, or give it a place in his kingdom. For he is a king over Christians and rules by his Holy Spirit alone, without law. Although he sanctions the sword, he did not make use of it, for it serves no purpose in his kingdom....Christians, among themselves and by and for themselves, need no law or sword, since it is neither necessary nor useful for them.¹²⁴

However:

Since a true Christian lives and labors on earth not for himself alone but for his neighbor, he does by the very nature of his spirit even what he himself has no

¹²¹ *Ap VII/VIII*, 5.

¹²² *AC VII*, 1-2.

¹²³ *Temporal Authority*, 88.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 93-94.

need of, but is needful and useful for his neighbor. Because the sword is most beneficial and necessary for the whole world in order to preserve peace, punish sin, and restrain the wicked, the Christian submits most willingly to the rule of the sword, pays his taxes, honors those in authority, serves, helps, and does all he can to assist the governing authority, that it may continue to function and be held in honor and fear.¹²⁵

True Christians are few and far between: “the whole world is evil and...among thousands there is scarcely a true Christian.”¹²⁶ “The world and the masses are and always will be un-Christian, even if they are all baptized and Christian in name.”¹²⁷ Christ’s little flock, the church, is not called by God to rule over this fallen world by the law or by the Gospel:

[I]t is out of the question that there should be a common Christian government over the whole world, or indeed over a single country or any considerable body of people, for the wicked always outnumber the good. Hence, a man who would venture to govern an entire country or the world with the gospel would be like a shepherd who should put together in one fold wolves, lions, eagles, and sheep, and let them mingle freely with one another....The sheep would doubtless keep the peace and allow themselves to be fed and governed peacefully, but they would not live long, nor would one beast survive another.¹²⁸

For this reason, says Luther,

...one must carefully distinguish between these two governments. Both must be permitted to remain; the one to produce righteousness, the other to bring about external peace and prevent evil deeds. Neither one is sufficient in the world without the other. No one can become righteous in the sight of God by means of the temporal government, without Christ’s spiritual government. Christ’s government does not extend over all men; rather, Christians are always a minority in the midst of non-Christians.¹²⁹

The church is “spiritual,” but that does not mean that it is not real or locatable.

Christ rules over his church on earth by “God’s Word and Spirit,” and the church can be

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 91-92.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 92.

found wherever Christ's "spiritual rulers" are "busily occupied with the spiritual sword, the Word of God," through which Christ himself is at work "always bestowing God's Word and Spirit."¹³⁰ This is "the truly peaceful kingdom of Christ," the actual fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies such as Isaiah 2:4 and 11:9:

This is what the prophets mean in Psalm 110 [:3], "Your people will act of their free volition"; and in Isaiah 11 [:9], "They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain"; and again in Isaiah 2 [:4], "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and no one shall lift up the sword against another, neither shall they put their efforts into war anymore," etc. Whoever would extend the application of these and similar passages to wherever Christ's name is mentioned, would entirely pervert the Scripture; rather, they are spoken only of true Christians, who really do this among themselves.¹³¹

The peaceable witness of Christ's truly peaceful kingdom is especially crucial during times of war. One must not confuse Luther's affirmation of the offices of prince and soldier as God-pleasing vocations (vocations that Christians may also occupy "without sin") with Luther's insistence that the church as church has a radically different calling and is involved in a radically different conflict, a calling that is all the more crucial during times of political turbulence and military conflict. In a time of war, such as the possibly imminent war against the Turks, "Sir Christian"

...should be there first with his army... that is, [with] the pious, holy, precious body of Christians. They are the people who have the arms for this war and they know how to use them. If the Turk's god, the devil, is not beaten first, there is reason to fear that the Turk will not be so easy to beat. Now the devil is a spirit who cannot be beaten with armor, muskets, horses, and men, and God's wrath cannot be allayed by them....Christian weapons and power must do it.¹³²

It is important to recognize that in identifying the devil as the "Turk's god," Luther is in no way suggesting that God himself is clearly "on the side" of those battling

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 100-101.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹³² *On War Against the Turk*, 170.

the Turks (i.e., the emperor, the pope, Germany, etc.). The devil rules among the papacy, among the princes, and among the Germans in general just as surely and powerfully as he rules among the Turks. Luther expects no “miracle or special grace of God for Germany;”¹³³ in fact, the Turks may well be a “rod of God” to bring well-deserved judgment upon the pope, the emperor, and the nation of Germany for their many sins. But since this is a matter of God’s hidden will, “Sir Christian,” the church, is simply to go about the business God has given it to do—which means bearing witness, in the midst of a warring world, to the peaceful kingdom of Christ and fighting valiantly against the devil’s kingdom with the weapons provided by God himself (Eph. 6).

This fight must begin, says Luther, “with repentance, and we must reform our lives.”¹³⁴ This is not child’s play—it requires discipline, careful attention to God’s Word and daily practice and exhortation:

I know that to the scholars and saints who need no repentance this advice of mine will be laughable since they have long since passed beyond, nevertheless, I have not been willing to omit it for the sake of myself and of sinners like myself, who need both repentance and exhortation to repentance every day. In spite of it, we remain all too lazy and lax, and have not, with those ninety and nine just persons, got so far as they let themselves think they have.¹³⁵

Along with true repentance, the next weapon the church needs to employ in its fight against the devil is prayer:

After people have thus been taught and exhorted to confess their sin and amend their ways they should then be most diligently exhorted to prayer and shown that such prayer pleases God, that he has commanded it and promise to hear it, and that no one ought to think lightly of his own praying or have doubts about it, but with firm faith be sure that it will be heard.¹³⁶

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 172.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

The preaching of God’s Word is also essential—so essential, in fact, that “it rests entirely upon the preachers whether the people shall amend their ways and pray or not,” for where God’s Word is spoken, it is not without fruit.”¹³⁷ In sum, “Sir Christian,” the church,

...is not to fight physically with the Turk, as the pope and his followers teach; nor is he to resist the Turk with the fist, but he is to recognize the Turk as God’s rod and wrath which Christians must either suffer, if God visits their sins upon them, or fight against and drive away with repentance, tears, and prayer. Let whoever will despise this counsel despise it....¹³⁸

“They call me and my followers seditious,” says Luther,

...but when have I ever coveted the sword or urged men to take it, and not rather taught and kept peace and obedience, except when I have instructed and exhorted the regular temporal rulers to do their duty and maintain peace and justice? One knows the tree by its fruits [Matt. 7:16]. *I and my followers keep and teach peace....*¹³⁹

The church bears witness in and to the world, therefore, by doing the “peaceful work” God has given it to do: preaching, teaching, baptizing, gathering around the Lord’s Table to receive his gifts, worshipping, repenting, praying, living holy lives, and performing good works. It is not the church’s job, according to Luther, to “control history”—that is God’s business and it must be entrusted to him. Yet the church’s witness is not contradicted or compromised when Christians serve, in obedience to God himself, in offices and vocations that involve them in the justifiable use of force in the temporal realm. In doing so they serve both God and their neighbor by helping to preserve and protect the temporal peace so necessary for life in this world—and for the work of Christ’s kingdom. From Luther’s perspective,

The kingdom of Christ...could not exist in this world apart from the varied functioning of the secular government. The institution of marriage creates new members for Christendom; the political authorities create the peace which the

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 180; emphasis added.

congregation of Christ needs to carry out its task. Christendom does not have the resources to establish this peace. It has only the gospel. And we cannot rule the world according to the gospel in such a way that we could do without secular government and the state....Christians are always a minority; the power of evil continues to exist. And the Christian community will never finish its battle against evil. Rejecting political authority and expecting everything to come from the gospel “would be like loosing the ropes and chains of the savage wild beasts.”¹⁴⁰

On the other hand:

The secular government needs the spiritual government as much as the spiritual government needs the secular. For no society properly maintains law and order and continues to be blessed if it lacks that knowledge of God and his truth which the spiritual government provides. Only the proclamation of the word permits us to recognize properly and respect secular government and the various stations of society as God’s work and will. The office of preaching helps the authorities to preserve peace and order by instructing all stations concerning God’s will for them and by teaching “obedience, morals, discipline and honor.” The secular government by itself can indeed force people to behave well outwardly, but it cannot make the heart righteous. Where secular government works by itself, therefore, it produces only hypocrisy and outward obedience without the proper attitude of the heart to God.¹⁴¹

It is clear from his treatises *On War Against the Turk* that Luther is not opposed, in principle, to giving direct political and military advice to secular rulers. If those in authority should insist on fighting the Turks, says Luther, “my advice...is that we not insufficiently arm ourselves and send our poor Germans off to be slaughtered.”¹⁴² The Turks’ military strength is grossly underestimated by an overconfident emperor and nation, warns Luther. Almost anything would be better than “useless bloodshed:”

If we are not going to make an adequate, honest resistance that will have some reserve power, it would be far better not to begin a war, but to yield lands and people to the Turk in time, without useless bloodshed, rather than have him win anyhow in an easy battle and with shameful bloodshed.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Althaus, 60.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *On War Against the Turk*, 201.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 201-202.

But Luther offers this advice as an individual who is “not qualified to give instruction on this point,”¹⁴⁴ not as one who presumes to “speak for the church” or (much less!) to “speak for God” on this issue. His primary concern is to make it clear—and this on the basis of God’s Word—that “it is not right for the pope, who wants to be a Christian, and the highest and best Christian at that, to lead a church army, or army of Christians, for the church ought not to strive or fight with the sword.”¹⁴⁵ The very nature of Christ’s church as God’s “peaceable kingdom” is at stake here, and when God’s Word speaks Luther cannot remain silent. Luther’s closing words provide not only his clear witness before God and the world regarding this war and all wars like it, but they also serve as a reminder that certain aspects of the work of Christ himself are portrayed by Scripture in a way that contrasts quite sharply with its portrayal of the suffering, resignation and non-resistance displayed so wondrously on the cross. The consummation of the church’s redemption by the blood of Christ will not be accomplished apart from a bloody judgment on the Last Day:

With this I have saved my conscience. This book shall be my witness concerning the measure and manner in which I advise war against the Turk. If anyone wishes to proceed otherwise, let him do so, win or lose. I shall neither enjoy his victory nor pay for his defeat, but I shall be innocent of all the blood that will be shed in vain. I know that this book will not make the Turk a gracious lord to me should it come to his attention; nevertheless, I have wished to tell my Germans the truth, so far as I know it, and to give faithful counsel and service to the grateful and the ungrateful alike. If it helps, it helps; if it does not, then may our dear Lord Jesus Christ help and come down from heaven with the Last Judgment and strike down both Turk and pope, together with all tyrants and the godless, and deliver us from all sins and from all evil. Amen.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 201.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 168.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 204-205.

Luther's Christological and Ecclesial Presuppositions

Regarding Luther's attitude and approach to Holy Scripture Paul Althaus writes:

Luther does not ignore the manifold character of Holy Scripture. He notes the different styles with which the apostles wrote and also the different ways in which they taught. He knows that the rich content of the Bible includes laws, historical accounts, prayers, proclamation, prophecy, etc. However, taken theologically, and that means in terms of its essential theme, Luther sees the Bible as a great unity. It has only one content. That is Christ. "There is no doubt [insists Luther] that all the Scripture points to Christ alone." "Take Christ out of the Scriptures and what more will you find in them?" "All of Scripture everywhere deals only with Christ." Christ is the incarnate Word of God. Therefore the Bible can be the word of God only if its sole and entire content is Christ.¹⁴⁷

This observation by Althaus corresponds to Luther's claim (cited earlier) that, for him, "there rules this one doctrine, namely, faith in Christ. From it, through it, and to it all my theological thought flows and returns day and night."¹⁴⁸

For Luther, therefore—no less than for Yoder and Hauerwas—Scripture's teaching about Christ is (properly and theologically speaking) at the heart and center of Scripture's teaching about war and peace, even if this centrality is not always readily or obviously apparent (just as it is not always readily apparent in the case of many other important teachings of Scripture). One can hardly "remove Christ" from Luther's writings on war and peace and (cf. Yoder's comment in *Nevertheless*) "retain the substance" of Luther's approach to these issues.¹⁴⁹ As we have seen, for Yoder and Hauerwas "non-violent resistance" is inextricably bound to the essential meaning and message of the life and death of Christ, and the cross of Christ is the "one and only point" at which Christians (in and through their peaceable life together in the world) are called to imitate Christ. Luther, too (especially in his essays on the Peasants' War) frequently

¹⁴⁷ *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 74.

¹⁴⁸ *Lectures on Galatians, LW 27*, 145.

¹⁴⁹ See *Nevertheless*, 124.

emphasizes the fact that Christians are called by God to imitate Christ by facing and enduring suffering (even death) just as Jesus did. On the basis of his understanding of the two realms and Scripture's doctrine of vocation, however, Luther comes to different conclusions about whether or not a Christian may participate in violence under any circumstances and still remain faithful to the "messianic ethic" of Jesus. In the final section of this chapter, we seek to articulate more clearly and explicitly the Christological and ecclesial presuppositions underlying Luther's approach to issues of war and peace—presuppositions that are often more implicit than explicit in those writings themselves.

If *The Politics of Jesus* and *The Peaceable Kingdom* contain the clearest, simplest and most "confessional" presentation of Yoder and Hauerwas's Christological and ecclesial presuppositions, then the clearest, simplest and most confessional presentation of Luther's Christological and ecclesial presuppositions can be found in his catechetical writings. The basic Christological and ecclesial presuppositions underlying Luther's writings on war and peace during the mid-late 1520s are set forth straightforwardly, simply and systematically in these catechetical writings formulated during the same general time period (especially during the years 1528-1529). Just as Luther's writings on war and peace contain little explicit discussion of such topics as "the meaning and purpose of Christ's death on the cross" or "the relationship between Christology and ecclesiology," so also it is true that Luther's catechetical writings contain little explicit discussion of such questions as "the Christian attitude toward war and peace" or "the possibility of Christian support for and/or participation in acts of violence." But this does not mean that these catechetical writings are not relevant to the issue of war and peace—one could make the argument, in fact, that they are the best and most appropriate

starting point for a discussion of Luther's perspective on this issue. This is so not only because they set forth in a simple and straightforward way the foundational theological (Christocentric) presuppositions that undergird all of Luther's theology and ethics, but also because they do so in a way that demonstrates the unified, organic nature of his theological thought, demonstrating (for example) the relationship between the three articles of the Creed (i.e., God's work in creation, the redemptive work of Christ, and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit) and the relationship between the three articles of the Creed and the other "chief parts" of the Christian faith (e.g., the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, with all of their implications for such issues as Christian vocation and Christian obedience to earthly authorities; also Baptism, the Lord's Supper and Confession and Absolution, with all of their implications for ecclesiology and the life and mission of the church).

We noted earlier in our study Frederic Cleve's observation that Luther's writings on war and peace "cover a wide variety of important [and inter-related] theological issues," such as "Luther's view of the human being, God's struggle against the devil, the question of the human being's conscience and eternal salvation, the interpretation of God's commandments and sacred institutions, justification and the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms."¹⁵⁰ In a concise yet profound way, Luther's catechisms address each of these issues and offer insight into the inter-relationship between them, centered always around Scripture's teaching about Christ and the Gospel. Our intention in the final section of this chapter is not (of course) to address all of these topics in detail, but rather (for the purpose of comparison and contrast with the views of Yoder and Hauerwas) to make use

¹⁵⁰ Cleve, 80.

of Luther's catechisms (especially *The Large Catechism*) as a primary resource for summarizing the Christological and ecclesial presuppositions underlying his understanding of the nature and limits of earthly authority and the nature and limits of Christian duty and responsibility when it comes to the issue of war and peace. The summary that follows employs the same categories and headings as were used in chapter two in summarizing the views of Yoder and Hauerwas, and (at key points) compares and contrasts Luther's views with those of Yoder and Hauerwas. Both of these summaries will be useful in connection with our attempt in the next part of the study to offer a Lutheran appraisal of the Christological and ecclesial pacifism of Hauerwas.

The Meaning and Purpose of Christ's Life, Suffering, and Death on the Cross

Whenever and wherever in his writings on war and peace Luther refers to the "rule" or "Lordship" or "government" of Christ, the Christ of which Luther speaks is the Christ depicted as follows in *The Large Catechism*:

If anyone asks, "What do you believe in the second article [of the Creed] about Jesus Christ?" answer as briefly as possible, "I believe that Jesus Christ, true Son of God, has become my Lord." What is it "to become a lord?" It means that he has redeemed and released me from sin, from the devil, from death, and from all misfortune. Before this I had no lord or king, but was captive under the power of the devil. I was condemned to death and entangled in sin and blindness.¹⁵¹

Like Yoder and Hauerwas, therefore, Luther can (and often does) speak of the problem of sin as "captivity" to the rebellious "powers" of Satan and his minions, and he can and often does portray Christ as coming to "release" and "liberate" fallen humankind from the devil's dominion. The nature and consequences of Satan's power, however, are viewed by Luther in a way that is quite different from that of Yoder and Hauerwas.

¹⁵¹ LC II, 27.

For when we were created by God the Father and had received from him all kinds of good things, the devil came and led us into disobedience, sin, death, and all misfortune. As a result, we lay under God's wrath and displeasure, sentenced to eternal damnation, as we had merited and deserved it. There was no counsel, no help, no comfort for us until this only and eternal Son of God, in his unfathomable goodness, had mercy on us because of our misery and distress and came from heaven to help us.¹⁵²

For Luther, the primary problem brought about by humankind's fall into sin is not "subjection to the rebellious powers of a fallen world;" rather, it is a depraved and deformed human nature which is bound to live in "disobedience" to God, and which therefore merits "God's wrath and displeasure" and "eternal damnation." Yoder and Hauerwas, by contrast, rarely if ever speak of "God's wrath against disobedient sinners" as a (much less *the*) major problem of human existence, which has significant implications not only for their understanding of the nature of Christ's work on the cross but also for their understanding of God's work in the world.

Since (for Luther) the problem of sin is essentially a problem of rebellion against and alienation from a holy (yet loving) God, the essential nature and central purpose of Christ's saving work is seen as rendering "payment" or "satisfaction" for the sin of the world, vanquishing the threat of divine judgment, and restoring human beings to a right relationship with a just and righteous God based on his grace alone.

Let this be the summary of this article, that the little word "Lord" simply means the same as Redeemer, that is, he who has brought us back from the devil to God, from death to life, from sin to righteousness, and keeps us there. The remaining parts of this article simply serve to clarify and express how much and by what means this redemption was accomplished—that is, how much it cost Christ and what he paid and risked in order to win us and bring us under his dominion. That is to say, he became a human creature, conceived and born without sin, of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin, so that he might become Lord over sin; moreover, he suffered, died and was buried so that he might make satisfaction for me and pay what I owed, not with silver and gold but with his own precious blood.¹⁵³

¹⁵² LC II, 29-30.

¹⁵³ LC II, 31.

Those tyrants and jailers have now been routed, and their place has been taken by Jesus Christ, the Lord of life, righteousness, and every good and blessing. He has snatched us, poor lost creatures, from the jaws of hell, won us, made us free, and restored us to the Father's favor and grace. As his own possession he has taken us under his protection and shelter, in order that he may rule us by his righteousness, wisdom, power, life and blessedness.¹⁵⁴

This is the reason Christ came into the world: to establish his grace-based "rule of righteousness" by paying the debt of human sin and appeasing God's wrath against sinners by his sacrificial death on the cross. It is this understanding of the meaning and purpose of Christ's life and death that underlies Luther's view of the "kingdom of God" in *Temporal Authority* and in his other writings on war and peace:

Those who belong to the kingdom of God are all the true believers who are in Christ and under Christ, for Christ is King and Lord in the kingdom of God....For this reason he came into the world, that he might begin God's kingdom and establish it in the world. Therefore he says before Pilate, "My kingdom is not of the world".... In the gospel he continually refers to the kingdom of God....He also calls the gospel a gospel of the kingdom of God; because it teaches, governs, and upholds God's kingdom.¹⁵⁵

The Significance of Christ's Cross for Christian Faith and Life

For Luther, the central theme of Scripture's Christology is that "the work [of redemption] is finished and completed; Christ has acquired and won the treasure for us by his sufferings, death and resurrection."¹⁵⁶ Our response to the work of Christ on the cross, therefore, is not first of all to "imitate Christ" or to "follow his example," but rather to *trust* and *confess*: "*I believe* that Jesus Christ, true Son of God, has become my

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁵⁵ *Temporal Authority*, 88.

¹⁵⁶ *LC II*, 38.

Lord.”¹⁵⁷ In Luther’s understanding of “the significance of Christ’s cross for Christian faith *and* life,” *faith* clearly takes precedence:

I *believe* that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father in eternity, and also a true human being, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned human being. He has purchased and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.¹⁵⁸

This does not mean, however, that the redemptive work of Christ has no significance for the Christian *life*. On the contrary:

He has done all this in order that I may belong to him, *live* under him in his kingdom, and *serve* him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he is risen from the dead and lives and rules eternally.¹⁵⁹

In terms of sheer quantity, in fact, Luther devotes as much (or even more) attention in both catechisms to a discussion of what it means to “*live* under Christ in his kingdom, and *serve* him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness” as he does to the central issue of *faith* in Christ. In describing the kind of life that God demands and desires, Luther (at least in his catechetical writings) points us primarily to the Ten Commandments, which teach us how we are to “fear, love and trust” in God above all things and how we are to imitate Christ by serving our neighbor in love—namely, how “we are to be subordinate to, honor, and obey father and mother, masters, and all in authority, not on their own account but for God’s sake.”¹⁶⁰ For Luther, the divine requirement to honor and obey those in authority—rooted not only in the fourth but also ultimately in the first commandment—extends also (within certain Scriptural limits) to

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 27; emphasis added.

¹⁵⁸ *SC* II, 4; emphasis added.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*; emphasis added.

¹⁶⁰ *LC* I, 327.

the “governing authorities.” These commands, moreover, are sanctioned and repeated by Christ himself, our Savior, Lord, and Master:

...for there stands our Master, Christ, and subjects us, along with our bodies and our property, to the emperor and the law of this world, when he says, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” [Luke 20:25]. Paul, too, speaking in Romans 12 [13:1] to all baptized Christians, says, “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities.” And Peter says, “Be subject to every ordinance of man” [1 Pet. 2:13]. We are bound to live according to this teaching of Christ, as the Father commands from heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son, listen to him” [Matt. 7:5].¹⁶¹

The Ten Commandments, along with other clear passages of Scripture that require obedience to God and his earthly representatives,

...are not human trifles but the commandments of the most high Majesty, who watches over them with great earnestness, who is angry and punishes those who despise them, and, on the contrary, abundantly rewards those who keep them. Where people consider this and take it to heart, there will arise a spontaneous impulse and desire gladly to do God’s will.¹⁶²

“Each of us,” therefore, “is to make them a matter of daily practice in all circumstances, in all activities and dealings, as if they were written everywhere we look, even wherever we go or wherever we stand.”¹⁶³

One can hardly accuse Luther of not taking the issue of the Christian *life* seriously; he can even say that “we should prize and value [the Ten Commandments] above all other teachings as the greatest treasure God has given us.”¹⁶⁴ This remarkable sentence, however, immediately *precedes* his treatment of the Creed in *The Large Catechism*, which (says Luther) points us to Christ, teaches us about faith and imparts faith to us, and in this way gives us “help to do what the Ten Commandments require of

¹⁶¹ *Against the Peasants*, 51.

¹⁶² *LC II*, 331.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 332.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 333.

us.”¹⁶⁵ Moreover, this emphasis on the Christian life does not end with Luther’s treatment of the Creed; it continues in his treatment of the Lord’s Prayer, Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and Confession and Absolution, all of which (according to Luther) have significant implications for the individual *lives* of those who rest securely in God’s grace through *faith* in the cross of Christ—and for the corporate *life* of Christ’s “set apart” people, the church.

It is clear from Luther’s writings on war and peace, moreover, that living in submission to earthly authorities in obedience to God’s command may well involve the willingness to endure great suffering at the hands of tyrants or as the result of the need to disobey earthly laws that conflict with God’s law. To the peasants who were determined to defend their “Gospel-based rights” with the sword, Luther says:

Listen, then, dear Christians, to your Christian law! Your Supreme Lord Christ, whose name you bear, says in Matthew 6, “Do not resist one who is evil. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. If anyone wants to take your coat, let him have your cloak too. If anyone strikes you on one cheek, offer him the other too.” Do you hear this, O Christian association? How does your program stand in light of this law? You do not want to endure evil or suffering, but rather want to be free and to experience only goodness and justice. However, Christ says that we should not resist evil or injustice but always yield, suffer, and let things be taken from us. If you will not bear this law, then lay aside the name of Christian and claim another name that accords with your actions.¹⁶⁶

In this same context, Luther points directly to the example of Christ himself:

What did he do when they took his life on the cross and thereby took away from him the work of preaching for which God himself had sent him as a blessing for the souls of men? He did just what St. Peter says. He committed the whole matter to him who judges justly, and he endured this intolerable wrong [1 Pet. 2:23]. More than that, he prayed for his persecutors and said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” [Luke 23:34].¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁶⁶ *Admonition to Peace*, 28-29.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 30. See Luther’s sermonic commentary on the first and second letters of Peter (*LW* 30, 3-199) for a much more extensive treatment by Luther of the paradigmatic nature of Christ’s suffering and death.

“Christians,” says Luther,

...do not fight for themselves with sword and musket, but with the cross and suffering, just as Christ, our leader, does not bear a sword, but hangs on the cross. Your victory, therefore, does not consist in conquering and reigning, or in the use of force, but in defeat and weakness, as St. Paul says in II Corinthians 1 [10:4], “The weapons of our warfare are not material, but are the strength which comes from God,” and, “Power is made perfect in weakness” [II Cor. 12:9].¹⁶⁸

On the other hand (as we have also clearly seen in the writings of Luther), obedience to earthly authorities may also (under certain circumscribed circumstances) involve participation in justified violence—not in an effort to “defend Christ and the Gospel,” nor in an effort to defend one’s self, but as a way of defending one’s neighbor from unjustified violence through the performance of one’s God-given vocation within the scope of God’s rule in the secular realm.

The Relationship Between Christology and Ecclesiology

For Luther as for Hauerwas, there is a vital and inseparable link between Christology and ecclesiology, and in each case the nature of that link is inextricably tied to their distinct understandings of the nature of Christ’s “liberating” and “peace-creating” work. Yoder and Hauerwas emphasize that Jesus is “the bearer of a new possibility of human, social, and therefore political relationships.”¹⁶⁹ “The cross of Christ is the model of social efficacy, the power of God for those who believe.”¹⁷⁰ Because of his concern to challenge and correct serious distortions of the redemptive work of Christ present in the church of his day, Luther places primary emphasis on Christ’s cross as the means through which Christ “purchased and won” forgiveness for lost and condemned sinners,

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁶⁹ *PJ*, 62.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 250.

making it possible for us to be “declared righteous” and restored to a right (“peaceable”) relationship with God. For Luther too, however, this understanding of the cross has definite ecclesiological implications; the third article follows hard and fast upon the second:

Just as the Son obtains dominion by purchasing us through his birth, death, and resurrection, etc., so the Holy Spirit effects our being made holy through the following: the community of saints or the Christian church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. That is, he first leads us into his holy community, placing us in the church’s lap, where he preaches to us and brings us to Christ.¹⁷¹

The church, says Luther, is a “unique community in the world,” it is “the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God... through which he illuminates and inflames hearts so that they grasp and accept it, cling to it, and persevere in it.”¹⁷² Because faith in God’s (incarnate and written) Word is the constitutive element of membership in Christ’s church, however, its presence and existence in this world is always (like faith itself) “hidden” in significant ways. It is hidden in the sense that its true nature cannot be grasped by “human wisdom, understanding, and reason.”¹⁷³ But it is also hidden in the sense that it cannot be identified (even by Christians) with any particular earthly institution. This church that Luther describes as “called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, mind and understanding” and “united in love without sect or schism” truly exists, but its precise boundaries cannot be determined.¹⁷⁴ Therefore we must always confess: “I *believe* that there is on earth a little flock and community of pure saints under one head, Christ.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ *LC II*, 37.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

This “holy flock” or “pure community,” Luther emphasizes repeatedly, is holy in a twofold sense. It is holy (first and most importantly) because “God’s grace has been acquired by Christ, and holiness has been wrought by the Holy Spirit through God’s Word in the unity of the Christian church,” despite the fact that “we are never without sin because we carry our flesh around our neck.”¹⁷⁶ But it is also holy in the sense that through his Word and sacraments God “creates and increases holiness, causing it daily to grow and become strong in the faith and in its fruits, which the Spirit produces.”¹⁷⁷ “Although we have sin, the Holy Spirit sees to it that it does not harm us because we are a part of this Christian community. Here there is full forgiveness of sins, both in that God forgives us and that we forgive, bear with, and aid one another.”¹⁷⁸ Therefore, writes Luther, “we believe in him who daily brings us into this community through the Word, and imparts, increases and strengthens faith through the same Word and the forgiveness of sins.”¹⁷⁹

The Mission of the Church in and to the World

Like Yoder and Hauerwas, Luther views the church as a radically unique community within the world—there is no community like it. The constitutive element of its uniqueness is not, however (as for Yoder and Hauerwas), its “social style characterized by... the rejection of violence of any kind,” but rather its radically unique, faith-based understanding of the true nature of God and his attitude toward sinners revealed and hidden in the cross of Christ:

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

These three articles of the Creed, therefore, separate and distinguish us Christians from all other people on earth. All who are outside this Christian people, whether heathen, Turks, Jews, or false Christians and hypocrites—even though they believe in and worship only the one, true God—nevertheless do not know what his attitude is toward them. They cannot be confident of his love and blessing, and therefore they remain in eternal wrath and condemnation. For they do not have the Lord Christ, and besides, they are not illuminated and blessed by the gifts of the Holy Spirit.¹⁸⁰

The primary mission of the church, therefore, is to pray that God’s kingdom—his rule of grace through Christ in the church—would “come among us,” and to make faithful use of the divine means that God has entrusted to it so that this kingdom might be extended and enlarged throughout the world by the power of his Word and Spirit at work in his church.

We ask here [in the second petition of the Lord’s Prayer] that all this may be realized in us and that his name may be praised through God’s holy Word and Christian living. This we ask, both in order that we who have accepted it may remain faithful and grow daily in it and also in order that it may find approval and gain followers among other people and advance with power throughout the world. In this way many, led by the Holy Spirit, may come into the kingdom of grace and become partakers of redemption, so that we may all remain eternally in this kingdom that has now begun.¹⁸¹

As the church carries out this mission in faithfulness to God’s Word and will, it must expect to face (as did Jesus himself) suffering, opposition, and persecution at the hands of those help captive by the power of Satan, who is determined to thwart the spread of God’s Word and the extension of his kingdom on earth:

We who would be Christians must surely expect to have the devil with all his angels and the world as our enemies and must expect that they will inflict every possible misfortune and grief upon us. For where God’s Word is preached, accepted, or believed, and bears fruit, there the holy and precious cross will also not be far behind. And let no one think that we will have peace; rather, we must sacrifice all we have on earth—possessions, honor, house and farm, spouse and children, body and life.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁸¹ *LC III*, 52.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 65.

Here once again we refer to Luther's admonition to the peasants to be faithful to Christ's own example and teaching:

This is what Christ taught in Matthew 10 [:23]: "When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next." He does not say, "When they persecute you in one town, stay there and take over the town by force and rebel against the ruler of the town—all to the praise of the gospel."...[Furthermore] in II Corinthians 4 [I Cor. 4:11] Paul says that we are homeless. And if it does happen that a Christian must, for the sake of the gospel, constantly move from one place to another, and leave all his possessions behind him, or even if his situation is very uncertain and he has to move at any moment, he is only experiencing what is appropriate for a Christian. For because he will not suffer the gospel to be taken or kept from him, he has to let his city, town, property, and everything that he is and has be taken and kept from him.¹⁸³

"If you were Christians," says Luther, "you would stop threatening and resisting with fist and sword. Instead, you would continually abide by the Lord's Prayer and say, 'Thy will be done,' and, 'Deliver us from evil, Amen.'"¹⁸⁴

In commending our prayers for God's kingdom to come and his will to be done in *The Large Catechism*, Luther finds an analogy between God's spiritual government and earthly governments:

In a good government there is need not only for good builders and rulers, but also for defenders, protectors, and vigilant guardians. So here also; although we have prayed for what is most necessary—for the gospel, for faith, and for the Holy Spirit, that he may govern us who have been redeemed from the power of the devil—we must also pray that God cause his will to be done. If we try to hold these treasures fast, we will have to suffer an astonishing number of attacks and assaults from all who venture to hinder and thwart the fulfillment of the first two petitions.¹⁸⁵

This recognition of the relentless battle between God's kingdom and Satan's kingdom

¹⁸³ *Admonition to Peace*, 37.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁸⁵ *LC III.*, 61.

underlies Luther's comment in *On War Against the Turk* that in times of temporal peace as well as in times of earthly strife and conflict, "Sir Christian"

...should be there first with his army... that is, [with] the pious, holy, precious body of Christians. They are the people who have the arms for this war and they know how to use them. If the Turk's god, the devil, is not beaten first, there is reason to fear that the Turk will not be so easy to beat. Now the devil is a spirit who cannot be beaten with armor, muskets, horses, and men, and God's wrath cannot be allayed by them....Christian weapons and power must do it.¹⁸⁶

After the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer, however, comes a fourth petition. And this fourth petition ("Give us today our daily bread") also contains a vital insight into God's gracious way of ruling, ordering and preserving life in the world for the sake his church and of his entire creation. In view of the primary topic of our study, it is worth quoting Luther here at length (or, in his words, "briefly"):

To put it briefly, this petition includes everything that belongs to our entire life in this world, because it is only for its sake that we need daily bread. Now, our life requires not only food and clothing and other necessities for our body, but also peace and concord in our daily activities, associations, and situations of every sort with the people among whom we live and with whom we interact—in short, everything that pertains to the regulation of both our domestic and our civil or political affairs. For where these two spheres are interfered with and prevented from functioning as they should, there the necessities of life are also interfered with, and life itself cannot be maintained for any length of time. Indeed the greatest need of all is to pray for the civil authorities and the government, for it is chiefly through them that God provides us daily bread and all the comforts of this life. Although we have received from God all good things in abundance, we cannot retain any of them or enjoy them in security and happiness were he not to give us a stable peaceful government. For where dissension, strife, and war prevail, there daily bread is already taken away or at least reduced.¹⁸⁷

It is not sufficient, therefore, for the church simply to pray "Thy kingdom come" and "Thy will be done." Christ also instructs the church, in the fourth petition, to pray for

¹⁸⁶ *On War Against the Turk*, 170.

¹⁸⁷ *LC III*, 73-74.

civil government and earthly leaders, through which God himself works to bestow the blessings of peace, order and justice apart from which no person or institution on earth (including the church) can maintain its existence and carry out its work.

It would therefore be fitting if the coat of arms of every upright prince were emblazoned with a loaf of bread instead of a lion or a wreath of rue, or if a loaf of bread were stamped on coins, in order to remind both princes and subjects that it is through the princes' office that we enjoy protection and peace and that without them we could neither eat nor preserve the precious gift of bread. Therefore, rulers are also worthy of all honor, and we are to render to them what we should and what we are able, as to those through whom we enjoy all our possessions in peace and quietness, because otherwise we could not keep a penny. Moreover, we should pray for them, that through them God may bestow on us still more blessings and good things.¹⁸⁸

Specifically, says Luther,

...we may ask God both to endow with wisdom, strength, and prosperity the emperor, kings, and all estates, especially the princes of our land, all councilors, magistrates, and officials, so that they might govern well and be victorious over the Turks and all our enemies, and to grant to their subjects and the general populace to live together in obedience, peace and concord.¹⁸⁹

The reason that such prayers and such honor toward civil government are so necessary is that the devil is just as determined to interfere with this aspect of God's work as he is to frustrate God's rule in his kingdom of grace.

[E]specially is this petition directed against our chief enemy, the devil, whose whole purpose and desire it is to take away or interfere with all we have received from God. He is not satisfied to obstruct and overthrow the spiritual order, by deceiving souls with his lies and bringing them under his power, but he also prevents and impedes the establishment of any kind of government or honorable and peaceful relations on earth. This is why he causes so much contention, murder, sedition, and war...it pains him that anyone should receive even a mouthful of bread from God and eat it in peace. If it were in his power and our prayer to God did not restrain him, surely we would not have a straw in the field, a penny in the house, or even an hour more of life—especially those of us who have the Word of God and would like to be Christians.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 80-81.

Therefore, as Luther insists in his treatise on *Temporal Authority*, “one must carefully distinguish between these two governments. Both must be permitted to remain; the one to produce righteousness, the other to bring about external peace and prevent evil deeds.”¹⁹¹

Luther’s view that good government is also a good gift of God and that Christ’s church has a divine responsibility to assist in maintaining it through its prayers and through appropriate reverence and obedience also comes to clear expression in his explanation of the first article of the Creed. Here Luther lists “good government, peace, and security” as good gifts of God’s creation, despite the fact that they are often taken for granted and misused by sinful human beings in a fallen world.¹⁹² Not only does God give us these precious gifts, but he himself (often through human mediators and structures) “daily guards and defends us against every evil and misfortune, warding off all sorts of danger and disaster. All this he does out of pure love and goodness, without our merit, as a kind father who cares for us so that no evil may befall us.”¹⁹³

Hence, because everything we possess, and everything in heaven on earth besides, is daily given, sustained, and protected by God, it inevitably follows that we are in duty bound to love, praise, and thank him without ceasing, and, in short, to devote all these things to his service, as he has required and enjoined in the Ten Commandments.¹⁹⁴

As is clear from the summary provided in the earlier sections of this chapter, for Luther the divine commands that govern the life of the church in the world allow for (and at times even require) Christian participation in and support for the use of force and violence in certain situations, even as they forbid such participation and support in other

¹⁹¹ *Temporal Authority*, 92.

¹⁹² *LC II*, 16; cf. *LC II*, 21-22.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

situations. Ironically, the fifth commandment (“You are not to kill”) does not contradict but actually condones and supports the use of such violence, since the purpose of this commandment is to instruct us how we are to live in obedience to God and in service to our neighbor: “We are to fear and love God, so that we neither endanger nor harm the lives of our neighbors, but instead help and support them in all of life’s needs.”¹⁹⁵ War, tragically, forces the soldier to “help and support” his or her neighbor by defending him or her against unjustified or uninstigated attack by another neighbor in the context of the responsibility given by God to government and governing authorities to maintain order and peace.

We have now dealt [in the first four commandments] with both the spiritual and the civil government, that is, divine and parental authority and obedience. However, here we leave our own house and go out among our neighbors in order to learn how we should live among them, how people should conduct themselves among their neighbors. Therefore neither God nor the government is included in this commandment, nor is their right to take human life abrogated. God has delegated his authority to punish evildoers to the civil authorities in the parents’ place; in former times, as we read in Moses [Deut. 21:18-20], parents had to judge their children themselves and sentence them to death. Therefore what is forbidden here applies to individuals, not to the governmental officials.¹⁹⁶

According to Luther, this commandment forbids not only sinful acts of physical violence against our neighbor’s person or property, but (as Jesus teaches in Sermon on the Mount) even the harboring of anger or vengeance in our hearts. There is, however, a type of anger (and therefore also a kind of violence) that is not sinful:

This commandment is easy enough to understand, and it has often been treated because we hear Matthew 5 every year in the Gospel lesson, where Christ himself explains and summarizes it: We must not kill, either by hand, heart, or word, by signs or gestures, or by aiding and abetting. It forbids anger except, as we have said, to persons who function in God’s stead, that is, parents and governing authorities. Anger, reproof, and punishment are the prerogatives of God and his

¹⁹⁵ *SCI*, 10.

¹⁹⁶ *LC I*, 179-181.

representatives and are to be meted out to those who transgress this and the other commandments.¹⁹⁷

Ironically, therefore—in keeping with Luther’s argument—a person can actually be guilty of murder (and therefore of breaking the fifth commandment) by *refusing* to kill when called upon to do so in service to God and his or her neighbor in need.

[T]his commandment is violated not only when we do evil, but also when we have opportunity to do good to our neighbors and to prevent, protect, and save them from suffering bodily harm or injury, but fail to do so... [I]f you see anyone who is [innocently] condemned to death or in similar peril and do not save him although you have the means and ways to do so, you have killed him. It will be of no help for you to use the excuse that you did not assist their deaths by word or deed, for you have withheld your love from them and robbed them of the kindness by means of which their lives might have been saved.

Therefore God rightly calls all persons murderers who do not offer counsel or assistance to those in need and peril of body and life. He will pass a most terrible sentence upon them at the Last Day, as Christ himself declares [in Matthew 25: 42-43]... That is to say, “You would have permitted me and my family to die of hunger, thirst, and cold, to be torn to pieces by wild beats, to rot in prison or perish from want.”

What else is this but to call these people murderous and bloodthirsty? For although you have not actually committed all these crimes, as far as you are concerned, you have nevertheless permitted your neighbors to languish and perish in their misfortune.¹⁹⁸

In his writings on war and peace, Luther applies this logic specifically to the issue of justified war:

[A] prince and lord must remember that according to Romans 13 [:4] he is God’s minister and the servant of his wrath and that the sword has been given him to use against such people [i.e., those who threaten and destroy order and peace]. If he does not fulfill the duties of his office by punishing some and protecting others, he commits as great a sin before God as when someone who has not been given the sword commits murder. If he is able to punish and does not do it—even though he would have had to kill someone or shed blood—he becomes guilty of all the murder and evil that these people commit.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 182.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 189-192.

¹⁹⁹ *Against the Peasants*, 52-53.

At the same time, Luther strongly emphasizes the fact that the “kindness and love” commanded by God in the fifth commandment is to be “directed especially toward our enemies. For doing good to our friends is nothing but an ordinary virtue of pagans, as Christ says in Matthew 5 [46-47].”²⁰⁰ God himself urges us “to true, noble, exalted deeds, such as gentleness, patience, and, in short, love and kindness toward our enemies. He always wants to remind us to recall the First Commandment, that he is our God: that is, he wishes to help, comfort, and protect us, so that he may restrain our desire for revenge.”²⁰¹ Participation by *Christians* in justified violence in obedience to governmental authorities and in fulfillment of their God-given vocation(s), therefore, is (or at least ought never be) a matter of exacting “vengeance” on our “enemies.” Rather, it is (or at least ought always be) simply a matter of participating in God’s work of preserving earthly order and peace through temporal government and showing love to our neighbor by defending and protecting him or her against unprovoked harm and violence. In this way, too, we are “imitating Christ”—by faithfully fulfilling (as Christ himself did) the specific vocation that God has given us and by faithfully discerning God’s ability to accomplish his differing purposes in different ways in the two realms.

So plainly is God’s will revealed in the commandments, according to Luther, that even non-Christians can catch a glimpse of it by way of human reason and conscience; but only Christians (by virtue of faith in Christ) can comprehend God’s will with the “mind of Christ” enlightened by God’s grace, and only Christians can keep it with truly happy and joyful hearts, as those gifted and empowered by the Holy Spirit:

From this you see that the Creed is a very different teaching than the Ten Commandments. For the latter teach us what we ought to do, but the Creed tells

²⁰⁰ *LCI*, 194.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 195.

us what God does for us and gives to us. The Ten Commandments, moreover, are written in the hearts of all people, but no human wisdom is able to comprehend the Creed; it must be taught by the Holy Spirit alone. Therefore the Ten Commandments do not succeed in making us Christians, for God's wrath and displeasure still remain upon us because we cannot fulfill what God demands of us. But the Creed brings us grace and makes us righteous and acceptable to God. Through this knowledge we come to love and delight in all the commandments of God because we see here in the Creed how God gives himself completely to us, with all his gifts and power, to help us keep the Ten Commandments: the Father gives us all creation, Christ all his works, the Holy Spirit all his gifts.²⁰²

Christ's Cross and Resurrection As the Meaning of History (Christology and Eschatology)

As with Yoder and Hauerwas, so also for Luther Christology and ecclesiology are inseparable from eschatology. The holiness that is ours through faith in Christ and the holiness reflected in our lives by the work of God's Spirit both point us forward, in hope, to a "complete and perfect holiness" assured by the promise of Christ's resurrection.

"Meanwhile, because holiness has begun and is growing daily, we await the time when our flesh will be put to death, will be buried with all its uncleanness, and we will come forth gloriously and arise to complete and perfect holiness in a new, eternal life."²⁰³

"Then, when we pass from this life, in the blink of an eye [God] will perfect our holiness and will eternally preserve us in it."²⁰⁴ In the meantime, the third article—the article of the church and of the Spirit—"must always remain in force."

For creation is now behind us, and redemption has also taken place, but the Holy Spirit continues his work without ceasing until the Last Day, and for this purpose he has appointed a community on earth, through which he speaks and does all his work. For he has not yet gathered together all of this Christian community, nor has he completed the granting of forgiveness. Therefore we believe in him who daily brings us into this community through the Word, and imparts, increases, and strengthens faith throughout the same Word and the forgiveness of sins. Then when his work has been finished and we abide in it, having died to the world and

²⁰² *LC II*, 67-69.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 57-58.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

all misfortune, he will finally make us perfectly and eternally holy. Now we wait in faith for this to be accomplished through the Word.²⁰⁵

It is clear that for Luther, just as for Yoder and Hauerwas, the relationship between “cross and resurrection”—between the sufferings, failures, uncertainties and ambiguities of this life and the perfect holiness, joy and certainty of the life to come—is not a relationship of “cause and effect.” We do not “effect” the culmination of our Christ-centered hopes and dreams by our willing and obedient participation in the sufferings of Christ (regardless of what form this obedience may take). God is the author and controller of history, not sinful human beings. The Creator and Redeemer is also the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who will usher in the parousia in his own time and way. It is not the church’s responsibility to “make sure everything turns out all right,” whether on a governmental, international, cultural, societal or cosmological level. As long as we live in this world, emphasizes Luther, there will be sin, suffering, misfortune, calamity, strife and war—the devil will make sure of that. Our job is to trust God to do his job (in both the church and the world) and to do the work that God has given us to do: to trust in his grace in Christ Jesus, to receive the gifts that he makes available in and through his church and to serve him and one another in the church and in the world by keeping his holy commandments and by imitating the perfect example of Christ. Depending on one’s vocation and situation, such obedience may well include participation in certain acts of justified violence, carried out in obedience to governing authorities (who serve as God’s—highly imperfect!—earthly representatives) and out of love for one’s neighbor in need. On the other hand, it may well involve suffering violence at the hands of others, whether as a Christian (as a result of one’s faithfulness to

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 61-62.

the supreme command and example of Christ) or as a citizen (as a result of a justified or unjustified attack upon one's own nation). Because the cross and resurrection are the ultimate meaning of history; however, such obedience is always ultimately a matter of *faith*, not of *sight*—nor of *right* or of *might*. “Therefore we *believe in him* who daily brings us into this community through the Word, and *imparts, increases, and strengthens faith* through the same Word and the forgiveness of sin.”²⁰⁶

Therefore at the end [i.e., in the last petition of the Lord's prayer, “But deliver us from evil”] we sum it up by saying, “Dear Father, help us to get rid of all this misfortune.” Nevertheless, this petition includes all the evil that may befall us under the devil's kingdom: poverty, disgrace, death, and, in short, all the tragic misery and heartache, of which there is so incalculably much on earth. For because the devil is not only a liar but a murderer as well, he incessantly seeks our life and vents his anger by causing accidents and injury to our bodies. He crushes some and drives others to insanity; some he drowns in water, and many he hounds to suicide or other dreadful catastrophes. Therefore, there is nothing for us to do on earth but to pray without ceasing against this archenemy. For if God did not support us, we would not be safe from him for a single hour.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.

²⁰⁷ *LC III*, 114-116.

Summary and Conclusions

In chapter one we offered a historical survey of Christian attitudes toward war and peace. In chapters two and three, we attempted to summarize as objectively and accurately as possible the views of Hauerwas and Luther on war and peace. The primary purpose of these first three chapters was to fulfill the first two goals set forth in the introduction—namely, to explore and examine the nature and content of Hauerwas’ pacifist convictions and to do so in the light of historic and contemporary Christian perspectives on war and peace, particularly those that belong to the just war tradition and the specific form of that tradition exemplified in the writings of Luther. The first three chapters also provide us with the basic data necessary for attempting to fulfill the third stated purpose of this study, namely, “to examine the possibilities for meaningful, constructive, mutually beneficial dialog between ‘Hauerwasians’ and Lutherans on the issue of war and peace.” In the introduction we asked:

How do we respond as Lutherans to Hauerwas’s pacifist claims and his critique of the just war tradition? Despite his commitment to a radical pacifism rooted firmly in the theological tradition of the radical reformation, does he have anything valuable to say to us as Lutherans—particularly Lutherans in America—about the potential dangers or weaknesses of just war thinking, especially in today’s world? Is there anything that Hauerwas might learn from “the Lutheran perspective” on war and peace that could serve to challenge and sharpen his own thinking on this issue?¹

Despite the many common theological themes and concerns shared by Luther and Hauerwas (as identified in chapters two and three), it is clear from the foregoing summaries that Luther and Hauerwas take different positions on the proper Christian attitude toward war and peace and on the possibility of Christian support for and participation in certain acts of violence.

¹ Introduction, page 8.

As the very titles of Yoder's books *The Politics of Jesus* and *The Original Revolution* suggest, for Yoder (as for Hauerwas) Jesus was a social and political revolutionary—and a very specific kind of revolutionary at that. Jesus came to expose the deception and oppose the repression of the rebellious powers and the control they exercise over fearful, deluded people in and through the violent structures of a fallen creation. Jesus accomplished this divine mission by his perfect obedience to the Father's will—an obedience that led (inevitably and necessarily) to death on the cross (the “standard punishment for insurrection” and “social non-conformity”²). Implicit in the “politics of Jesus” espoused by Hauerwas and Yoder, moreover, is the conviction that “the central theme of Christology [is] that Jesus' suffering is the law of his disciples' life.”³ Yoder and Hauerwas, therefore, are here not concerned *primarily* with Jesus Christ as “Savior from sin” but as “the bearer of a new possibility of human, social, and therefore political relationships. His baptism is the inauguration and his cross is the culmination of that new regime in which his disciples are called to share.”⁴ This portrayal of Jesus is viewed and intended by Hauerwas and Yoder, of course, as a necessary corrective to traditional Christological approaches that (from their perspective) tend to ignore or downplay the social and political significance of Christ's life, suffering and death—and in many respects it can surely serve this helpful purpose.

Yoder and Hauerwas also place great emphasis on the nonviolent character of Christ's obedience, especially as this nonviolence was manifested in his nonresistant submission to death on the cross. According to Hauerwas and Yoder, the primary

² *PJ*, 45.

³ *Ibid.*, 178; emphasis added.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

temptation Jesus faced—and the primary temptation we continue to face as his followers—was the temptation to use “justified and legitimate violence” to seek to accomplish God’s purposes.⁵ By renouncing the use of legitimate violence at the crucial and climactic point of his obedience to God, Jesus—by virtue of the paradigmatic nature of his life and death—makes it clear that this is also God’s will for all those who seek to follow him. “For a Christian to be nonviolent,” therefore, “is... at the very heart of what it means to be a Christian.”⁶ Nonviolence “constitutes the heart of our worship of a crucified Messiah,” and is “incumbent on those who would worship Jesus as the Son of God.”⁷ For Hauerwas and Yoder, the story of Christ—in order to be conveyed and enacted honestly and faithfully in the (social and political) life and witness of the Christian community—must retain and maintain nonviolence as part of its central “story line,” since “the narrative into which Christians are inscribed means we cannot be anything other than nonviolent.”⁸

Luther, as we have seen, does not view or depict Christ primarily as a social and political revolutionary. According to Luther, Jesus is rightly viewed primarily as the sinless Savior and Redeemer who took upon himself the sin of the world so that the unrighteous might be declared righteous in God’s sight. Restored to a right relationship with God, Christians are then empowered by God’s Spirit to imitate Christ by living lives of holiness in obedience to God’s commandments and in service to their neighbor (which includes willingly participating in God’s “peaceable” work in both realms). They do so, however, knowing that “the work [of redemption] is finished and completed; Christ has

⁵ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁶ Hauerwas, “Faith Fires Back,” 12.

⁷ Hauerwas, “Remembering Yoder,” 15-16; “Can a Pacifist Think About War?” 134.

⁸ Hauerwas, “Whose ‘Just’ War,” 137.

acquired and won the treasure for us by his sufferings, death, and resurrection.”⁹ They also do so knowing that God’s work in both realms is often, and in some sense always, a “hidden” work requiring faith in God’s ability to use even the “strange work” of violence, wrath and judgment to accomplish his purposes.

This does not mean, however, that there is for Luther no “politics of Jesus”—i.e., that the life, death and resurrection of Jesus have no social and political or normative and paradigmatic significance for Christians or for the church. We noted earlier that:

Like Yoder and Hauerwas, Luther views the church as a radically unique community within the world—there is no community like it. *The constitutive element of its uniqueness is not, however (as for Yoder and Hauerwas), its “social style characterized by... the rejection of violence of any kind,” but rather its radically unique, faith-based understanding of the true nature of God and his attitude toward sinners revealed and hidden in the cross of Christ* (page 157 above; emphasis added).

At the same time, it is crucial to emphasize—and this is one of the ways in which the work of Yoder and Hauerwas can prove especially helpful to Lutherans—that for Luther this “faith-based understanding of the true nature of God and his attitude toward sinners revealed and hidden in the cross of Christ” also will—and must—produce a churchly response in the form of holy lives and peaceable practices patterned after the holy life and uncompromising obedience of Christ himself. It is clear from the writings of Luther that Christ is not to be viewed only as “Savior from sin.” He is also (as a direct and necessary *result* of his fully efficacious work as Savior) to be regarded as “King of kings and Lord of lords”—not only in some cosmic or spiritual or eschatological sense, but also in terms of his actual and concrete “Lordship” in the church and in the daily lives of all those who put their trust in him for salvation. Therefore, when Yoder (in *The Politics of Jesus*) criticizes “those other views” (including Lutheranism) that—according to Yoder—hold

⁹ LC II, 38.

that “because Jesus is seen as sacrifice he may not be seen as King, or that because he is seen as Word made flesh he cannot be seen as normative person,”¹⁰ he is undoubtedly justified in criticizing various distortions of Luther’s view that wrongly *separate* (at least effectually and functionally) the salvific work of Jesus from the “politics of Jesus.” His words do not ring true, however, as a valid criticism of the view of Luther himself. On the contrary, for Luther it is precisely *because* Christ can and must be viewed *primarily* as the divine “Word made flesh” and the perfect and fully sufficient sacrifice for the sin of the world that he not only may but also must be viewed as “King” and as “normative person”—the only perfect exemplar of Christian faith and life.

From a Lutheran perspective, the *life* of Christ is normative for us in that it is a life lived in perfect obedience to his heavenly Father and to the will of God clearly expressed in his law. Although we know that as sinners we will never be able to emulate perfectly Christ’s example, we look constantly to that example as the ultimate human demonstration of loyalty to God and selfless love for our neighbor (including our enemies). The *death* of Christ is paradigmatic for us in the sense that we are called “to participate in the sufferings of Christ” and to “bear our crosses” as a direct and inevitable result of our faithfulness to Christ and his cross. Like Scripture, Luther often points his readers to the sufferings of Christ as an example for them to follow. As noted in chapter three, Luther reminds the war-mongering peasants again and again that Christ’s cross serves as a constant reminder that we must be willing to suffer and even die for his sake rather than transgress his clear commands (such as participating in sinful or unjustified violence). The *resurrection* of Christ serves as an example for us of our need to *trust* in *God’s* promises and his power to bring good out of apparent evil, to depend on God to

¹⁰ *PJ*, 232.

“fight for us” and to conquer all of our enemies (including death), and to draw on the power of his Spirit—through our baptism into Christ’s death and resurrection—to live lives that manifest those virtues (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, etc.) so perfectly displayed in the life of Christ himself.

On the basis of the evidence provided in chapters two and three, therefore, we would maintain that Luther and Hauerwas (and Yoder) do not disagree about *whether* the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus are, in fact, normative and paradigmatic for the Christian life and the life of the church. They do disagree, however, about precisely *how* or *in what sense* this is the case. For Yoder and Hauerwas, nonviolence is consistently viewed and depicted as critical for a proper understanding of the paradigmatic nature and significance of Christ’s life, death and resurrection. The purpose of the cross, says Yoder, was to show that “God’s will for God’s man in this world is that he should renounce legitimate defense.”¹¹ “Christ *is* agape,” says Yoder—and the very definition of “agape” is “*nonresistant* love.” “The cross is the extreme demonstration that agape seeks neither effectiveness nor justice, and is willing to suffer any loss or seeming defeat for the sake of obedience.”¹² This is why, for both Yoder and Hauerwas, the church’s witness—if it is to be faithful to the crucified Christ—“*must* be nonviolent.”¹³ Nonviolence “constitutes the heart of our worship of a crucified Messiah,” and is “incumbent on those who would worship Jesus as the Son of God.”¹⁴ This is true even if and when it is the case that many Christians and Christian communities do not recognize the true significance of this central aspect of Christ’s person and work.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹² *The Original Revolution*, 59 (emphasis added); cf. *Grain*, 219.

¹³ *Grain*, 219 (emphasis added).

¹⁴ Hauerwas, “Remembering Yoder,” 15-16; “Can a Pacifist Think About War?” 134.

For Luther, Christ's refusal to resist the earthly authorities who sought to put him to death was certainly a necessary aspect of his obedience to the Father's will whereby he accomplished our salvation *and* provided the perfect human model for our sanctification. In depicting Christ's obedience, however, Luther tends to emphasize Christ's willingness to submit to the entire law and will of God (as summarized in the Ten Commandments), rather than focusing specifically on the non-violent and non-resistant aspects of Christ's obedience in connection with the events leading up to and culminating in his death on the cross. In describing the kind of *life* that God demands and desires of those who seek to follow Christ, therefore, Luther does not emphasize as frequently or centrally as do Yoder and Hauerwas the non-violent resistance exemplified by Christ on the cross. Rather, Luther typically points us to the Ten Commandments, which teach us how we are to "fear, love and trust" in God above all things and how we are to imitate Christ by serving our neighbor in love—including how "we are to be subordinate to, honor, and obey father and mother, masters, and all in authority, not on their own account but for God's sake."¹⁵

It is also important to emphasize, however, that in pointing us to these commandments Luther is not "pointing us away" from the life, death and resurrection of Christ as an example for us to follow. As a God-given summary and practical explication of the entire Law of God—summarized by Christ himself in the twofold command to love God with all of our being and our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-40)—these very commandments are a written reflection, expression, and description of the holy life of Christ himself. No one has ever loved God more completely or loved his neighbor more perfectly and selflessly (in the way required by these commandments) than our

¹⁵ *LC I*, 327.

Lord and Master Jesus Christ. Christians “imitate Christ,” therefore, not by focusing narrowly or even primarily on the non-violent aspects of his witness and example, but by focusing on his complete trust in and obedience to the will of the Father as summarized for us by God himself in the twofold “law of love” and in the Ten Commandments.

For Luther, such obedience—in imitation of Christ himself—may well involve (depending upon one’s vocation or specific situation) participation in divinely-approved violence as an act of love for one’s neighbor and an act of obedience to God’s authority as invested in earthly authorities. In such cases (according to Luther), it is actually *God himself* who is administering his wrath and executing his judgment in the civil realm through his human creatures, even as those who claim the name of Christ maintain absolute allegiance to God’s clear commands not to murder and to love their neighbors (including their enemies) as themselves. Such absolute obedience to God may also, at times, involve the absolute *refusal* to use violence in any and all ways and situations in which it cannot rightly be viewed or justified as an act of “divine judgment” which God performs through us as part of the faithful and neighbor-loving fulfillment of our God-given vocation(s). For Luther, too, “absolute obedience” to Christ trumps any and all human concerns for justice, freedom, or peace. But (once again) such “absolute obedience” to Christ does not rule out the possibility of Christian participation in or support for justified violence in the civil realm (where God also rules as King and Lord).

How, then, do we answer the questions raised at the very beginning of this study, namely: Is there any sense in which Hauerwas’s pacifism is compatible with just war thinking in the Christian tradition—specifically with Luther’s version of just war thinking? And if they are irreconcilable, does this mean that no meaningful dialog is

possible between Hauerwasian pacifists and Lutherans committed to the continuing viability of the just war traditions as articulated by Luther? In both cases, we affirm the answers already given (or least suggested) by Hauerwas. Hauerwas is right, we believe, when he insists that “you simply cannot mix just war and pacifism and have a consistent position.”¹⁶ While there may be certain types of (so-called) pacifism and (so-called) just war thinking that can be mixed because of their ambiguous, a-theological, and/or inconsistent presuppositions and conclusions, it is clearly the case that the Christological and ecclesial pacifism of Hauerwas and the just war thinking espoused by Luther on the basis of his own Christological and ecclesial assumptions cannot be mixed. There is finally no way to harmonize Hauerwas’s view that “nonviolence...is incumbent on all Christians who seek to live faithfully in the kingdom made possible by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus”¹⁷ with Luther’s admonition to Christian princes and soldiers:

Let whoever can stab, smite, slay. If you die in doing it, good for you! A more blessed death can never be yours, for you die while obeying the divine word and commandment in Romans 13, and in loving service of your neighbor, whom you are rescuing from the bonds of hell and of the devil....To this let every pious Christian say, “Amen!”¹⁸

In view of Hauerwas’s reference (above) to “all Christians” and Luther’s reference to “every Christian,” it may be appropriate to note at this point that numerous statements by both Hauerwas and Luther may at times seem to infer that those who disagree with their positions on war and peace ought not even be regarded as Christians. It is clear from the broader context in which these statements occur, however, that neither Hauerwas nor Luther holds this position. Luther certainly recognizes the possibility that Christians may hold positions that (from his perspective) are clearly at odds with the true

¹⁶ “A Church Capable,” *HR*, 444.

¹⁷ *PK*, xvi.

teaching of Scripture, and that they may be sincerely troubled in conscience about these issues when (in his view) they need and ought not be. This is, in fact, one of the primary reasons that Luther writes his treatises on war and peace: to instruct and offer pastoral counsel to sincere Christians confused, troubled and ill-informed regarding these issues. Similarly, despite Hauerwas's strong statements about pacifism as "constitutive" of Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy, and despite his strong and frequent denunciations of those who think and argue wrongly regarding the issue of war, Hauerwas is clearly willing to dialog with any and all of his "brothers and sisters in Christ" who are willing to discuss issues of war and peace on genuinely *theological* terms.

We share the conviction—implicitly and explicitly expressed in the writings of both Luther and Hauerwas—that substantive and meaningful theological conversation can and must take place between confessing Christians committed to differing positions on the issue of pacifism and just war, even where fundamental presuppositions may differ. The honest admission and recognition of differing presuppositions and conclusions does not "close off" dialog; in fact, it provides the basis on which meaningful dialog can take place. In the second part of our study, therefore, we offer a Lutheran appraisal of Hauerwas's pacifism and a proposal for dialog that seeks to take both positions (and their presuppositions) seriously by affirming valid Hauerwasian insights and concerns, presenting a Lutheran response to these concerns that also seeks to highlight authentically Lutheran insights and contributions to the problem of war and peace, and identifying various issues raised by Hauerwas that (from a Lutheran perspective) both require and merit further clarification, exploration and discussion.

¹⁸ *Against the Peasants*, 54-55.

PART TWO

**THE PACIFISM OF STANLEY HAUERWAS:
A LUTHERAN APPRAISAL AND PROPOSAL**

Introduction:

How Not to Respond to the Pacifism of Stanley Hauerwas

In his essay “Whether (in This Nuclear Age) Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved,” Gilbert Meilaender offers counsel on “How *Not* to Argue Against Nuclear Weapons.” He warns both against cultural temptations (such as those inspired by Jonathan Schell’s “survivalist” view) and against theological temptations (especially those inherent in the “realism” or “pessimism” of the Lutheran tradition) that—ironically—underwrite similarly unhelpful ways of “retreating from the responsibility to think morally about the public realm” when it comes to the issue of nuclear weapons.¹ Without exploring the details of this argument here, it may be helpful—as a way of making clear the basic assumptions on which this appraisal and proposal is based—to imitate Meilaender’s approach by beginning part two of our study with a discussion of “How Not to Respond to the Pacifism of Stanley Hauerwas.”

On the one hand, Lutherans committed to taking the just war tradition seriously need to guard against the temptation of the Niebuhrian compliment when responding to the pacifism of Hauerwas. Most Lutherans are understandably attracted to aspects of

¹ *PJWT*, 91ff.

Niebuhr's theology and his "public theology:" in his book *The Paradoxical Vision*, Robert Benne argues that Niebuhr "was clearly a practitioner of the paradoxical vision" that most closely conforms to the dualities of Lutheran theology, and that Niebuhr "was the best proponent in modern religious history of the doctrine of the twofold reign of God."² Yet even those who are sympathetic to elements of Niebuhr's "Christian realism" (as is Hauerwas himself!) must acknowledge that Hauerwas is justified in his rejection of the Niebuhrian compliment, which praises the purity, consistency and integrity of the sort of radical pacifism represented by Yoder and Hauerwas but at the same time attempts to dismiss it as politically and practically irrelevant due to its intrinsically "sectarian" character. Responding to Hauerwas's pacifism in this way—as do the editors of *First Things* in the exchange referred to in the introduction—is unfair and unhelpful, especially in view of Hauerwas's repeated (and convincing) denials of the charge of sectarianism. To respond to Hauerwas by attempting to silence him or by dismissing his challenges to just war thinking as "irrelevant" because of his (admittedly radical) pacifist convictions is to suggest that Hauerwas's views need not be taken seriously by those who do not share his convictions or their underlying presuppositions. This approach only results in impoverishing the discussion (on all sides) of a very serious issue.

On the other hand, Lutherans committed to taking the just war tradition seriously need to guard against the temptation of succumbing too quickly or easily to what might be called the "Yoderian compliment." Yoder, as we have seen, expresses respect for "honest and serious" just war thinkers and a sincere interest in dialoging with them. Such "honesty," however, seems at times to imply that just war thinkers must accept Yoder's characterization of the just war tradition as rooted in a "presumption against violence"

defined on the basis of pacifist assumptions, as well as an admission that just war thinking is, by its very nature, morally inferior to pacifism. In other words, as long as just war thinkers are willing to join in Niebuhr's confession that their position is "less consistent with the radical claims of Christ" than Yoder's Christological and ecclesial pacifism, then their views can be respected and taken seriously, and meaningful dialog can take place. As noted earlier, Luther himself is highly praised by Yoder for his uncompromising stance against participation in an unjust war, even though (from Yoder's perspective) Luther's "dualistic" ethic left room for a unbiblical and unjustifiable "double standard" when it came to Christ's commands regarding nonviolence and loving one's enemy. As we will discuss in more detail below, the willingness of some Lutherans to accept this Yoderian compliment leads them also to accept certain Yoderian-Hauerwasian characterizations and presuppositions that do not fully or accurately reflect the just war tradition nor the thinking of Luther on this issue. Other Lutherans, skeptical of the continuing usefulness or validity of the just war tradition, end up embracing a semi-pacifist position that (ironically) is subject to even harsher criticism and condemnation by Hauerwas.

A truly honest, serious, fruitful and faithful Lutheran response to Hauerwas's pacifism, therefore, involves resisting both the Niebuhrian compliment and the Yoderian compliment, and needs to include (we would suggest) the following four elements: 1) An honest acknowledgement of the differing theological (especially Christological and ecclesial) presuppositions underlying Luther and Hauerwas's perspectives on just war and other war and peace issues; 2) An honest affirmation of valid Hauerwasian insights, concerns, and criticisms on issues relating to war and peace, especially those that may be

² Robert Benne, *The Paradoxical Vision* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 146-147.

particularly applicable to (American) Lutherans; 3) An honest re-appraisal of the Lutheran witness to war and peace that seeks to identify—in view of Hauerwas’s valid concerns yet also on the basis of the “peaceable witness” of Martin Luther—the authentic and significant contributions that Lutherans can make in responding (both theologically and practically) to the tragic reality of war in today’s world; 4) An honest critique of aspects of Hauerwas’s views that (from a Lutheran perspective) appear to require and to merit further clarification, exploration and discussion.

In this second part of our study, therefore, we will revisit (in a somewhat modified and simplified form) the basic thematic elements of Hauerwas’s Christological and ecclesial pacifism outlined and discussed in chapter two of part one, namely: the particularist nature of Christian ethics, the narrative character of Christian ethics, the problem of violence and the politics of Jesus, and the witness of the church in and to society. As we revisit each of these themes in light of the data gathered in part one, we will seek to identify in each case 1) valid Hauerwasian insights and concerns; 2) a Lutheran response to these concerns that highlights both challenges that Lutherans face and contributions that Lutherans may be able to make as they seem to offer an authentically Lutheran “peaceable witness” to the world; and 3) issues raised by Yoder and Hauerwas that need further clarification and exploration. It is our hope that this Lutheran appraisal of the pacifism of Stanley Hauerwas may also serve as a modest proposal for honest and meaningful dialog between Hauerwasians and Lutherans on issues of war and peace.

Chapter Four

War, Peace and the Particularist Nature of Christian Ethics

Valid Hauerwasian Insights and Concerns: Thinking Theologically about War and Peace

In an exchange with Paul J. Griffiths in the April 2002 issue of *First Things*, George Weigel traces the history of what he calls “a new ‘default position’ in contemporary Catholic commentary on war and peace,” a position he describes as “a functional pacifism that mistakenly imagines itself an authentic development of the just war tradition.”¹ This position, suggests Weigel, originated in activist circles during the Vietnam War, but has now migrated to the Catholic hierarchy itself, significantly influencing official statements and pronouncements at the highest levels of the church (such as the Catholic bishops’ 1983 pastoral letter, “The Challenge of Peace”). In a *Wall Street Journal* article published shortly before the 2003 war in Iraq, William McGurn offers evidence that supports Weigel’s thesis, citing Pope John Paul II’s comments to military chaplains that “the ‘vast contemporary movement in favor of peace’ is evidence that ‘war as an instrument for resolving conflicts’ has been repudiated by the ‘conscience of the majority of humanity.’” Also noted is a recent interview with Archbishop Renato Martino, head of the Pontifical Council for Peace and Justice, in which he was asked if he believed that “there is no such thing as a just war anymore”—to which he gave the unequivocal answer: “Absolutely.”²

¹ *FT* 122 (April 2002), 33-36.

² “War No More? Rome Suggests an Answer,” *Wall Street Journal* (March 28, 2003), W15.

This “functional pacifism” is increasingly evident in many mainline Protestant denominations as well, including those that historically have supported the basic principles and presuppositions of the just war theory. It is clearly the “majority position” in contemporary Lutheranism—at least on an official and academic level—as reflected in the statements of church body leaders, essays by theologians, and resolutions adopted by church bodies and ecumenical organizations (such as the Lutheran World Federation).³ As James Childs notes, “Many contemporary Lutheran theologians such as Helmut Thielecke have rejected just war theory as absurd or at least inadequate in a nuclear age.”⁴ Paul Jersild argues that the only legitimate use of the just war theory today is to contribute toward “making clear the total unacceptableness of nuclear warfare,” a position typically termed “nuclear pacifism.”⁵ George Brand insists that discussion of possible contemporary applications of “traditional just war theory are best confined to university seminars, where they can do no political damage”—the just war theory, in other words, has become obsolete in view of the realities of modern warfare.⁶ At the same time, each of these theologians implicitly or explicitly calls upon the church to reclaim its “duty to play an active and creative role in politics in this country,” “to

³ For recent official statements on war and peace by the LWF, its officials, and its member churches, see www.lwf.org and www.elca.org. For a historical overview, see “Peace and Politics” in the book by Christa R. Klein with Christian D. von Dehsen, *Politics and Policy: The Genesis and Theology of Social Statements in the Lutheran Church in America* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989). See also Hütter’s essay “Be Honest in Just War Thinking!” for references to various historical Lutheran statements on war and peace. With reference to the current state of affairs in Lutheran academia, Robert Benne writes, “The recent war with the Saddam Hussein regime has provided many opportunities to struggle with the question: should I just fume in silence amid all these liberal opinions about the war or should I challenge those liberals and argue the case for the Bush administration’s policies?...[G]iven the fact that the overwhelming majority of Lutheran academics are politically liberal, conservatives like myself find themselves fuming and asking that question quite often.” *Dialog* 42:3 (Fall 2003), 193.

⁴ *PJWT*, 57-58; see Thielecke, *Theological Ethics* v. 2, 419-540.

⁵ *PJWT*, 86.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 52.

maintain its ‘prophetic voice,’” and to recognize its responsibility to keep the world “safe” from war.⁷

Ironically, however, it is just these kinds of statements and positions that are most harshly and frequently criticized by Hauerwas as capitulating to Constantinian notions about the nature and function of the church in the world and to non-Christian (or at least “a-Christian”) conceptions of the nature and function of pacifism. In his Epilogue to Paul Ramsey’s book *Speak Up for Just War or Pacifism*, for example, Hauerwas mercilessly critiques the “functional pacifism” (or “nuclear pacifism”) of the United Methodist Bishops’ statement “In Defense of Creation,” since “it presupposes that if we could eliminate nuclear weapons then war again might be a viable institution.”⁸ Hauerwas compares this position to Schell’s crassly secular “survivalist” view:

The Bishops want to be a little bit pacifist. But it is no easier to be a little bit pacifist than it is to be a little bit pregnant. The peace that is sought is not the peace that has been given by Christ. Instead it is a peace that encourages us to put our faith in the threat of nuclear war, for it is assumed that threat is frightening people to the extent that they may finally come to their senses and realize that they stand on the brink of annihilation. Yet a peace so built cannot be the shalom to which the Bishops appeal; it is a peace based on fear rather than on positive faith in God.⁹

Hauerwas is much more respectful and appreciative of the position taken in the book by Paul Ramsey in *defense* of just war—even though (obviously) he strongly disagrees with it—since it recognizes that both “pacifism and just war (at least if Ramsey is right in his account of just war) are only intelligible against the background of faith in Jesus as the

⁷ Sigval Berg, in *PJWT*, 34.

⁸ *Speak Up*, 156.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Lord's anointed. If that faith is missing, then pacifism and just war alike become hollow abstractions inviting casuistical games at best and ideological perversions at worst."¹⁰

As this statement of Hauerwas (rightly) suggests, however, it is not only "semi-pacifist" Lutherans who must "examine themselves" to determine if (or to what extent) their views on war and peace are genuinely grounded in particular theological presuppositions and truly formed by "faith in Jesus as the Lord's anointed." Charles Lutz writes:

Dr. Yoder suggests that, in practice, most citizens in nations of the West (those most influenced by the assumptions of the just-war tradition) have followed throughout the centuries and at the present moment continue to follow neither pacifism nor an ethic of justifiable war. In fact, most of us have adhered to a crusader ("this is God's holy war") or a national-interest ("my nation, right or wrong") ethic. I believe he is correct.¹¹

Especially on a grass roots level, there are undoubtedly many non-pacifist Lutherans who (if they are honest) tend to support or oppose a particular war or military policy proposed by a particular president or administration not so much on the basis of specific theological presuppositions and considerations but on the basis of personal political preferences and proclivities—or on the basis of their own (largely unexamined) naturalistic, rationalistic, capitalistic or nationalistic assumptions about the nature and role of secular government and the nature and necessity of war. If Lutherans are seriously interested in engaging in meaningful dialog with Hauerwas on issues of war and peace, therefore, they would be wise to follow the example of Ramsey by speaking up for the just war tradition as honestly and straightforwardly as possible—in clear *theological* terms—rather than effectively setting it aside by defending either a functional pacifism or a politically-based militarism ultimately rooted in non-theological, non-Christological,

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 152.

and non-ecclesial presuppositions and convictions. Lutz gets to the heart of the matter—for both Luther and Hauerwas—when he writes:

The essential origin of anything like the just-war ethic, in terms of the biblical faith, is the overarching concern of love for one's neighbor. I understand pacifists to begin there also, leading to the argument that violence is never a way to show love to a neighbor, including a neighbor who is my enemy. But I see just-war ethics as being equally concerned with such love. The difference is that another set of neighbors receives primary attention: those who may be called the innocent, those who are in need of protection from attack, those who would be defenseless unless someone took up arms on their behalf. It is finally that question, "How shall the defenseless be protected?" which just-war theory is seeking to address. Any other question (such as, "How shall my nation remain supreme in the world?" or "How can the comfortable life-style we have be maintained?") is not a legitimate one for the just war ethic.¹²

Lutheran Challenges and Contributions:
Making a Theological Case for Just War Thinking

Based on the evidence provided in chapter three, the best Lutheran response to this valid criticism of Hauerwas (we would argue) is to strive to rediscover, revive and recover Luther's own theologically-grounded and Christ-centered approach to issues of war and peace. In his treatises on war and peace, Luther reminds his readers constantly that he is writing as a Christian theologian to believing, professing, practicing Christians—anyone else, he says, is bound to misunderstand and misconstrue his comments. While he occasionally appeals to reason or natural law as supporting or confirming truths revealed in Scripture, Luther has no interest in using natural law as a foundation for war and peace ethics.

In this respect, it could be argued that Luther is as potentially vulnerable as Hauerwas to the charge of "sectarianism"—indeed (as we have seen), Luther freely acknowledged the inevitability of the inability of non-Christians to grasp the true nature

¹¹ *When War Is Unjust*, 10.

and implications of his Gospel-centered and Scripturally-grounded reasoning regarding war and peace. This does not mean, of course, that either Luther or Hauerwas is willing to accept the charge of sectarianism—as if their “particularistic” positions regarding war and peace have no practical implications for the church’s witness to the world. On the contrary, both see this witness as crucial, although there are significant differences in the way that they perceive and depict it. For Hauerwas, this witness take place primarily (if not exclusively) in and through the life of the church itself as “social ethic”—as a radically unique and “peaceable” alternative to the world’s ethics and politics, which (from the perspective of Hauerwas) are always ultimately rooted in the use of force or violence. For Luther, the Christian witness to the world takes place in a variety of ways and on a variety of levels: through widely diverse acts of Christian love and kindness carried out by individual Christians in their God-given vocations in the civil realm (some of which may involve the *loving* use of necessary and justifiable force); through “peace-promoting” activities and arguments that may appeal even to non-Christians by virtue of their (God-given, even if fallen and distorted) awareness of the need for order and stability in the civil realm; and through the church’s constant and faithful efforts to “be the church” and to do what only the church has been called, gifted and empowered by God’s Spirit to do: preach, teach, live and worship in faithfulness to the radical Gospel of Christ as a bright beacon of hope, peace and truth in a dark and sinful world. It is especially in this latter respect that Lutherans can learn much and benefit greatly from Hauerwas’s insights into the nature of the church as “social ethic” and as a radical alternative to the politics of this world—we will return to this point later in this chapter and in subsequent chapters in this part of our study.

¹² *Ibid.*, 14.

In this connection it is also important to underscore the point made in chapter three that Luther's treatises on war and peace were not prompted by abstract, philosophical theorizing about war and peace nor by a desire to craft a "universal theory of statecraft" nor even by primarily political considerations and concerns. For Luther, theology is never an abstract speculative activity, but is always a most practical and pastoral endeavor. Frederic Cleve notes that Luther's writings on war and peace, like his theological approach to matters in general, "seems to be typical of his disposition and it also gives his statements their poignant intent: Luther appeals to people's consciences; he wants to influence their relationship to God, and his chief concern is to show them the road to eternal salvation."¹³ As we have seen, the historical context and background for Luther's treatises on war and peace bears this out. For example, when Duke John of Saxony and other sincere followers of Luther were "perturbed over Christ's injunction[s]" in Matthew 5 and Romans 12 about "not resisting evil," Luther wrote his treatise on "Temporal Authority" as a theological and pastoral response to these very practical concerns.¹⁴ Assa von Kram, professional soldier and counselor to Duke Ernst of Braunschweig-Lüneberg, was "troubled in conscience and unable to reconcile his confession of the Christian faith with his profession." For him and others like him, Pastor Luther addressed the question of "Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved."¹⁵

At the conclusion of his essay "Toward a Christian Ethic on Peace and War," contemporary Lutheran theologian Sigval Berg notes, in an almost understated way, that

¹³ Cleve, 80.

¹⁴ *Temporal Authority*, 81; cf. 77-80.

¹⁵ *Whether Soldiers*, 89.

“the people in our parishes are often confused by our conflicting statements and fearful about the future.”¹⁶ Christian consciences are undoubtedly as troubled today as they were in Luther’s day about issues of war and peace. Unfortunately, much of the current theological literature on this topic, and even statements by church bodies, seems to be directed most often not to the troubled and confused “person in the pew” who is genuinely looking for guidance on these issues, but to the academic elite or to governmental officials and agencies that are not typically waiting with baited breath to hear what this or that theologian or denomination has to say. And when genuinely theological discussion and dialog on these issues does take place within the church, it often takes place in a manner and on a level that seems rather far removed from the real-life fears, doubts and anxieties of the average church-goer—including the parents, spouses and children of soldiers who may well be wrestling with the very kinds of questions that Luther sought to address in his essay on “Whether Soldiers, Too, May Be Saved.” A return to the writings of “Pastor Luther” himself, we would suggest, may help to inspire and generate greater sensitivity and attention to the genuinely pastoral, practical and theological concerns that lie at the heart of real-life issues of war and peace—and that lie deep within the hearts of the real, live people whom Christ came to save, shepherd, serve and send forth as his witnesses.

In this regard, Lutherans would do well to model Hauerwas’s desire and willingness to “get a little help from his friends”—even (especially!) friends from outside his own theological circle or tradition. Ironically, Methodist Paul Ramsey (in his book *War and the Christian Conscience*) gives more attention to the writings and theological insights of Luther than do many Lutheran scholars who write on the issue of war and

¹⁶ *PJWT*, 33.

peace. His book serves as a good example of how to approach the issue of just war from a genuinely theological perspective and in a way that takes seriously the practical and pastoral concerns of Christian just war thinkers like Augustine and Luther.

Paul Ramsey

Ramsey's fundamental thesis is that although the Christian just war tradition owes much to classical thought, "the norm of Christian love, and not natural justice only, was still the main source both of what the Christian could and should do and what he could and should never do in military action."¹⁷ It was "the conscience schooled by Christ," argued Ramsey, "which first compelled Christians to justify warfare [and] at the same time proscribed for them its moral limits."¹⁸

It was to be expected that natural justice would not be the only or even the main source of the Christian's conduct, and that, even in the special case of war, certain clearly limiting definitions had to be given of the military conduct permitted or prohibited to the Christian in justifiable warfare.¹⁹

Just war in the Christian tradition, properly understood, must be seen as a product of Christian love—and it must continue to be seen in that way if it is to be properly understood and applied in a world that has witnessed the horrors of Dresden and Hiroshima and understandably fears witnessing horrors even greater than these:

That product of *agape* in Western thought, the doctrine of the just or limited war, must happen again as an event in the minds of men and in Christian ethical analysis in every age. He who has gone so far as to justify, for the sake of justice and the public order, wounding anyone whom by his wounds Christ died to save, will find no one to escape from the moral limitation upon the conduct of war which requires that military force be mounted against the attacking force and not directly against whole populations. Christian love should again, as in the past,

¹⁷ *War and the Christian Conscience*, xviii.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, xix.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

surround the little ones with moral immunity from direct killing. It should discern the difference between just war and murder.²⁰

According to Ramsey, it is Aquinas who was mainly responsible for the historical shift in just war thinking that resulted in “an increasing emphasis upon the natural-law concept of justice,” which further resulted in more pragmatic, rationalistic and nationalistic applications of just war theory—many of which must be rejected by Christians.²¹ Ramsey’s goal is to help Christians to recognize and recover the true *Augustinian* roots of the just war tradition, which (argues Ramsey) are also clearly reflected in the thinking of Luther. Though writing in different historical and theological contexts, “Augustine is in agreement with Luther,” says Ramsey, when the latter writes (in *Temporal Authority*):

In what concerns you and yours, you govern yourself by the Gospel and suffer injustice for yourself as a true Christian; in what concerns others, you [still] *govern yourself according to love*, and suffer no injustice for your neighbor’s sake.²²

For Luther, argues Ramsey, it is clear that “bearing the sword is an alien work yet still the proper work of love. This is the very essence of Luther’s political ethics, and not ‘a somewhat labored argument’ (as Preserved Smith believed).”²³ Summarizing the just war tradition as rooted and reflected in the theological presuppositions and pastoral convictions of Augustine and Luther, Ramsey writes:

The point that needs stressing is that the limitations placed upon conduct in the just-war theory arose not from autonomous natural reason asserting its sovereignty over determinations of right and wrong (and threatening to lead Christian faith and love, which are and should be free, into bondage to alien principles), but from a quite humble moral reason subjecting itself to the

²⁰ *Ibid.*, xx.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

²² Cited in *War and the Christian Conscience*, 37-38; emphasis Ramsey’s.

²³ *Ibid.*, 38; fn. 3.

sovereignty of God and the lordship of Christ, as Christian men felt themselves impelled out of love to justify war and by love severely to limit war.²⁴

Gilbert Meilaender

One prominent Lutheran theologian and ethicist who (like the Methodist Ramsey) has attempted to take seriously the theological thinking of Luther on war and peace and its implications for modern-day application is Gilbert Meilaender. Meilaender writes:

In the centuries immediately after the Lutheran Reformation, the tradition of just war, which already had a strong hold on the Christian West, was developed in much greater detail than Luther offers in *Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved*, and it has continued in its development to the present day. But the essential foci of reflection remain those noted in Luther's treatise; we continue to discuss the sorts of injustice that may legitimize and indeed require war to rectify. We continue to refine and discuss our understanding of the limits that should govern all acts of war. And we continue to try to understand war as a work of love, but a strange and alien one: love's doing in behalf of the needy neighbor what love would never do in its own behalf.²⁵

Building on the theological thought of Luther, Meilaender attempts to develop an argument for the viability of the just war tradition today by asking "Whether (in This Nuclear Age) Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved." As noted earlier, he warns against two temptations—first, the temptation presented by secular authors like Hans Morgenthau and Jonathan Schell, who see as the greatest possible evil the "extinction of the human species." Certainly, says Meilaender, "Christians cherish the earth and the drama of human history, but they have always expected that the curtain will someday fall on the final act." At the same time, they "believe the promise that this curtain cannot fall until God Himself is ready."²⁶ Therefore, Christians must "reject the idol of the survival of the human species" as an end in itself," which is tantamount to a "worship of humankind"

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

²⁵ *PJWT*, 90-91.

²⁶ *PJWT*, 93.

rather than a worship of God. Hauerwas, of course, shares this disdain for “survivalism,” and he would no doubt affirm Meilaender’s strong critique of Schell’s approach plea as a reminder that it is impossible to do ethics “without a qualifier,” i.e. without faith in something or someone:

“We do not even necessarily ask for our personal survival; we only ask that we *be survived*. We ask for assurance that when we die as individuals...mankind will live on” [Schell, *The Fate of the Earth*, 184]. This is genuine religious faith. I have no wish to belittle it; indeed, I am moved by it. But it happens not be Christian. We all live on borrowed time, and if the human species is to become extinct after the generation of my children (or next week), it is still important for me to take the time to play games with these children, celebrate their marriages, enjoy my own, read good books, pull the weeds in my garden, sing a good hymn. All good things are meant for my enjoyment and my neighbor’s, but I am to worship none of them. One of the great temptations of our time is the loss of faith that would let the worth of such activities depend on the continuation of our world and our history. Christians should resist this temptation and learn how not to argue against nuclear weapons.²⁷

On the other hand, says Meilaender, the very eschatological hope that enables Lutherans to resist the temptation of survivalism exposes them to another dangerous temptation: a theological realism that often devolves into a pessimism regarding the possibility of actually placing moral limits on the use of violence in a sinful world. The end result of this kind of thinking is some form of the “functional pacifism” spoken of earlier, which (despite the outward appearance of a concerned Christian activism) actually involves a retreat from serious moral deliberation about war and peace in the modern (nuclear) era. This temptation, suggests Meilaender,

...is the one likely to become most powerful among American Lutherans in the immediate future. But this, too, is no way to argue against nuclear weapons. To argue that the weapons themselves are autonomous, that they are inherently beyond our control, that considering their possible uses for deterrence or war is tantamount to affirming nuclear devastation and the extinction of our species, that no possible use of such weapons could be just, all this is only to fall prey to the old Lutheran temptation. It is to imagine that moral limits have no place in the

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.

public sphere, that no moral distinctions can be made when we discuss possession and use of nuclear weapons, that if we have nuclear weapons, there is no controlling them. This is only a way of retreating from the responsibility to think morally about the public realm. The weapons alone are not our greatest danger. We are threatened even more by our willingness to grant them autonomy from human will and moral reflection.²⁸

Meilaender insists, therefore, that we must adamantly reject this temptation of nuclear pacifism:

“Nuclear weapons are beyond our control; hence, we must be rid of them entirely.” We should recognize that formulation as a temptation. It is no way to argue against nuclear weapons, nor does it take seriously the needs of neighbors who can only be served in the political realm. “War first became total in the minds of men,” Paul Ramsey once wrote, echoing thereby Jesus’ observation that it is what comes from the heart that defiles (Matt. 15:18-19). Lutheran discourse about nuclear weapons can be responsible only as it learns this lesson: The weapons do not entirely control us. They may make life precarious. Their existence may set in motion forces not easily reversed. But they do not make impossible moral reflection and discrimination. And since they do not, such reflection is our obligation. We must still seek to distinguish between just and unjust in the possession and use of nuclear weapons.²⁹

Charles Lutz agrees with this assessment of Meilaender’s regarding the right and wrong way to argue against nuclear weapons. He writes:

It has become popular in recent decades—especially since the development of atomic and thermonuclear weaponry—for some people to say, “The just-war ethic has outlives its usefulness. In an age of mass-destruction weaponry, the just war criteria no longer apply.” It has always seemed to me that such statements miss the whole point of the just-war tradition, which is, precisely, that *because* warfare is terribly destructive and is inclined to escalate into total devastation there must be a system of restraints, of limits. It is the just-war criteria themselves that, for many pacifists today, furnish the tests by which nuclear weapons...are declared morally unacceptable.³⁰

Drawing on the insights of Luther regarding our necessary Christian concern for the needs of our neighbor, and on the insights of Ramsey regarding the need for renewed

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 95-96.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 96.

³⁰ *When War Is Unjust*, 7.

attention to the just war criterion of *discrimination* in the use of force (i.e., protection of non-combatants), Meilaender argues that

...the same love for neighbors that prevents us from retaliating in our own defense may move us to use force in defense of neighbors who need our protection. Indeed, this is finally the only Christian justification of force: It is a work of love in service of neighbors in need. And we can reformulate Luther's dictum for a more contemporary political setting as follows: "Every political community is bound to protect its people and preserve the peace for them. That is the purpose of government and that is why it must use force."³¹

Lutherans who take Article 16 of the Augsburg Confession and the writings of Luther seriously must not hesitate to decry and denounce the *unlimited* and *indiscriminate* use of force (and even the *threat* to use such force) that has all too often characterized our own nation's conduct and strategy in modern warfare, even as they defend the need to deliberate seriously about the possible use of *limited* and *discriminate* force:

Not to *limit* our forcefulness...would make a mockery of the justification for *using* force at all. Christian love discerns this insight in the just war tradition, and this is the religious case for the traditional protection given noncombatants. As neighbors who themselves are not directly inflicting harm, non-combatants are to be exempt from direct, intended attack. This, of course, cannot mean that they will never be injured; it means only that they ought not be targeted. Harm must often come to many who are not combatants, but we ought never aim at such harm.³²

The choices we face in this area today, Meilaender says in summary, "are limited in number and limited in the satisfactions they offer."³³ The first choice is to "turn our back on the moral limits of the just war tradition" by supporting some of kind of deterrent policy that threatens indiscriminate and potentially unlimited nuclear devastation—a threat that is meaningless unless there is an accompanying intention to carry it out if necessary. The second choice (and in many respects the most risky and radical choice,

³¹ *PJWT*, 97.

³² *Ibid.*, 97.

³³ See *PJWT*, 103-104 for this and all following quotations in this paragraph.

argues Meilaender) is to commit ourselves to the limits required by the just war tradition—“to a policy that relies for its deterrent on our ability and will to wage war if need be and to wage it in limited ways (even if with nuclear weapons that have limited, discriminate uses).” This will require financial, psychological, and spiritual risks—including the constant challenge of confronting the temptation of survival at any cost. Or there is a third choice: the decision that “in our age there can be no just wars and that we cannot serve as soldiers. But then the cost may be heaviest of all: a world made safe for injustice and oppression because we have turned not only our cheek but our neighbor’s as well.” He concludes:

Only the second of these choices, the alternative road we have for the most part not taken, commits us to respect both the needs of our near neighbors and the image of God even in our enemies. The third choice, eschewing war even for the sake of freedom and justice, will inevitably fail to support the just claims of many neighbors in a world as unjust and dangerous as ours. The first choice, overriding the moral limits that justice requires even in war or threats of war, treats the citizens of an enemy nation as no more than pawns in the strategic struggle, as mere political functionaries. Whether therefore we consider our duties to the neighbor near to us or the neighbor who is also an enemy, the second path is morally preferable. But no one can deny that it is a path with its own risks and dangers, and many may wonder whether it requires a more lively and substantial health than our civilization can muster. “No one in our generation can measure the full implications of this decision. He can only decide the question for himself in an act of personal venture. No one is in a position or has the authority to make either the one answer or the other a matter of binding confession for Christianity as a whole” [Thielecke]. But this much at least we can say: Even in this nuclear age, soldiers, too, can be saved. There are, if we have the will, ways to fight justly, respecting both the claims of near neighbors and the human dignity of enemies, and Christians may without sin support such efforts.

Hauerwas, of course, would not and could not agree with this conclusion without compromising his commitment to his own particular Christological and ecclesial presuppositions. But one would hope that he would be able to recognize and respect Meilaender’s argument as an honest and *theologically* meaningful attempt to apply the

just war tradition today in a way that is consistent with Luther's own Christological and ecclesial principles. This hope seems reasonable and justifiable on Hauerwas's claim (repeated often and in various ways) that "even though I am a pacifist, I have presumed that it would be a great good if moral reflection by Americans concerning war could be formed by just war considerations."³⁴ Comments such as this also help to illustrate the real and legitimate link between Hauerwas's understanding of "peace" as a unique manifestation of the presence of Christ in and through the life of the Christian community and Luther's concerns for "peacemaking" in the civil realm. Although (as noted earlier) there is clearly a distinction between these two types of peace, they cannot finally be separated—for either Hauerwas or Luther. The peace embodied in the life of the Christian community, according to Hauerwas, has definite implications—among them a certain form of pacifism that welcomes and appreciates (even as it critiques and criticizes!) any and all sincere efforts toward peacemaking outside the confines of the church (even if these efforts are based on the principles of the just war tradition). By the same token, the peacemaking supported and encouraged by Luther on the basis of the Scriptural principles underlying the just war tradition is rightly grasped and appreciated by Christians only as they are "formed" and "transformed" in their thinking and living through faithful participation in the life of the Christian community sustained by Word and Sacrament (see chapter five for a more extensive discussion of this issue).

Issues Needing Further Clarification and Exploration

When it comes to Hauerwas's emphasis on the particularist nature of Christian ethics, one issue that (from a Lutheran perspective) needs further clarification is whether

³⁴ "Whose 'Just' War," 140.

(and/or to what extent and in what way) Hauerwas sees “reason” (apart from faith) and “natural law” (however defined or designated) as having any valid and useful role at all in discussions of war and peace issues in the public realm. Typically, Hauerwas frames the issue of “Christian ethics” in stark “either-or” terms: *either* one must do ethics in a radically Christian way that excludes the role of reason or natural law *or* one must find some “a-Christian” foundation for ethics that excludes (or, at best, leaves as optional) the unique person and work of Christ. Hauerwas does not engage in extensive, substantive dialog with the position (held by Luther and historic Lutheranism) that a specifically and radically Christian ethic *includes* the God-given means and ability (through reason and some form of natural law) to converse with non-Christians about truths that *Scripture* says are able to be perceived by *both* Christians and non-Christians. His position seems to be that as soon as we attempt to engage in conversation on the basis of human reason or universally accessible insights or principles, we inevitably open the door to violence (since Christ alone makes authentic and lasting non-violence possible). This leaves Hauerwas himself open, however, to the very charge that he most detests: the charge that finally the church has no real means of communicating with a non-Christian world, since the only language it speaks is a language the world cannot (by its very nature) understand. As Robert Jenson says:

All address by the church to the world must indeed be “violent”—as all mutual address by factions within the world undoubtedly must be—*unless* the church and the world are always antecedently involved in one conversation. That is, unless there is God and unless he is in converse with the world by ways other than by way of the church. We may not want, as I do not, to construe this converse by the categories of “natural” and “law.” But Hauerwas has arrived at a position where he must acknowledge it somehow, or end with a silenced church.³⁵

³⁵ “Hauerwas Examined,” *FT* 25 (Aug./Sept. 1992), 51; cf. “The Hauerwas Project,” *Modern Theology* 8:3 (July 1992), 285-295.

The fact that such conversations (regarding, e.g., issues of war and peace) can and do take place between Christians and non-Christians need not undermine or obliterate the qualified nature of Christian ethics, as long as Christians remain honest about and faithful to the radically unique (i.e., Christ-centered) character of their own witness to the world.

In this respect Hauerwas's position appears at times to be even more radical than Yoder's, since Yoder clearly allows for meaningful conversation between Christians and non-Christians on the basis of what he calls "middle axioms," norms that are formulated "in pagan terms (liberty, equality, fraternity, education, democracy, human rights)," and which are the "highest conceivable level of standards to which one can appeal in the world of unbelief."³⁶ Yoder sees these norms as ultimately grounded not in some structure of "natural law" or "universal morality" instituted by God apart from Christ, but rather as grounded in the love of Christ himself. The norms themselves, however, are apparent (in varying degrees) even to those without faith in Christ, and they make conversation possible: "It is therefore possible to explain...how the Christian can speak to the statesman, without failing to take account of their differing presuppositions, using pagan or secular terminology to clothe his social critique without ascribing to those secular concepts any metaphysical value outside of Christ."³⁷

Hauerwas, at times, seems to presume a similar view: in "Can a Pacifist Think About War," for example, he says that he is concerned to show that "just because Christians are committed to the practice of nonviolence does not mean that the

³⁶ Yoder, *The Christian Witness to the State* (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1964), 73.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

conversation [with the world] is at an end.”³⁸ In *The Peaceable Kingdom*, he acknowledges that “people who are not Christians” may, at times, “manifest God’s peace better than we ourselves,” leading to the hope that “such people may provide the conditions for our ability to cooperate with others for securing justice in the world.”³⁹ He immediately goes on to say, however, that “such cooperation... is not based on ‘natural law’ legitimation of a generally shared ‘natural morality.’”⁴⁰ On *what* then, the reader may reasonably ask, *is* such cooperation and conversation based? Hauerwas never answers this question, however; he simply goes on to say that such cooperation is “a testimony to the fact that God’s kingdom is wide indeed,” and that the church has “no right to determine the boundaries of God’s kingdom,” which is “wider than the church.”⁴¹ Precisely what this means or implies is (to say the least!) less than clear—and (as Jenson argues) this issue seems quite crucial in addressing the question of the possibility of the church’s conversation and cooperation with non-Christians when addressing issues of common concern (such as war and peace). Hauerwas’s lack of clarity in this regard is disappointing, since—at least on the basis of Yoder’s discussion of “middle axioms”—there seems to be more hope for finding common ground here than one might think on the basis of Hauerwas’s strong and consistent denunciation of any concept of “natural law.” With reference once again to Yoder, this hope is engendered also (ironically) by

³⁸ *Dispatches*, 123. See also Hauerwas’s ultimate appeal to “common sense” in his testimony on *in vitro* fertilization before the Ethics Advisory Board of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, published in *Suffering Presence* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 142-158.

³⁹ *PK*, 101.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Yoder's mischaracterization of the historic Lutheran view of "the order of creation" and the two realms.⁴²

For example, one of Yoder's sharpest criticisms of the Lutheran ethic is its alleged dualistic character—its acceptance of a higher standard for Christians on the level of private, personal relationships and a lower standard on the level of the public performance of their responsibilities in their allotted stations or vocations in society. In

The Christian Witness to the State Yoder writes:

Christian ethical thought has attempted to deal with social problems in one of two general ways. One the one hand there have been the dualistic approaches, of which the Roman Catholic distinction between "mandates" and "counsels," or the Lutheran "two kingdoms" (better "two regimes") may be taken as classical historical expressions. Here it is clearly recognized that for the operation of society there must be moral standards falling short of the righteousness of Christ, but ways are found for explaining the adequacy of these lower standards as guides for *Christian* behavior, at least for certain Christians or certain portions of the Christian life.⁴³

Later on, in his summary of "The Classical Lutheran View," Yoder argues that:

Instead of dividing mankind into two categories, some saints living in perfect love and the mass of common men operating on the level of justice, Luther places every man on both levels. As an individual, involved in face-to-face relations with his neighbor, every Christian is to be nonresistant, bearing patiently every kind of evil treatment. Likewise, every man, when he functions with a view to his assignment ("vocation" or "station") in society, operates on the lower level. Thus, instead of asking, What kind of person am I . . . , the Christian will ask from case to case and moment to moment, On what level am I now operating, in my station or as an individual?⁴⁴

⁴² See *Christian Witness*, 63-64. Yoder 1) has far too narrow a view of Luther's concept of the order of creation; 2) fails to grasp the simultaneous nature of the Christian life in the two realms, contributing to the view that this involves a dualistic double standard; 3) confuses Luther's view of human sinfulness with the notion that this assumes the necessity of willful, conscious, deliberate sin in the "lower realm;" 4) misreads Luther's view of the divinely instituted nature of human government as divine approval of specific governments and rulers and their actions and decisions. These issues are taken up in more detail below and in subsequent chapters.

⁴³ *Christian Witness*, 29-30.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 63.

As an individual, says Yoder (in his effort to summarize the view of Luther), the Christian is always and only to be guided by “agape,” selfless love for one’s neighbor. On the lower level of one’s vocation in the world, the Christian need not be guided by love but by the “lower standard” of justice.

It should be clear from our discussion of Luther’s views in chapter three, however—and from the foregoing summary of Luther’s perspective as reflected in the just war arguments of Ramsey and Meilaender—that Yoder’s presentation of Luther’s “dualistic,” “private-public” ethic is not fully adequate nor accurate. While it is true (first of all) that Luther maintained that a Christian might be called upon to engage in contrasting (and even apparently conflicting) types of behavior in different situations in life, it is misleading to say that for Luther the key question involved in making such decisions is, “On what *level* am I now operating, in my station or as an individual?” For Luther, life in the “two realms” is not a matter of moving back and forth between two static and separate, higher and lower levels of existence, and making (ultimately incompatible) decisions on the basis of determining “on which level I am now operating.” Rather, the Christian lives and operates *simultaneously* in *both* “realms”—which are not two distinct and static spheres of human existence but rather two different and dynamic forms of divine rule and activity. Thus, each Christian remains at all times and in all places and situations under the *unified* realm of God’s *twofold* governance—both as an individual and as one called by God to serve in a variety of public vocations. It should also be noted (as we discussed in chapter three in connection with Luther’s explanation of the fifth commandment in the *Large Catechism*) that *any* Christian (regardless of his or her civic vocation) may be called upon by God in certain situations to come to the

assistance of a neighbor in need, which may (regrettably) require the use of force or violence. In such situations, the Christian “as individual” is fulfilling the responsibilities of his general station or vocation of neighbor, which remain in force in any and all situations in life (whether in a public or private setting or context).

More importantly, it is not at all accurate to say that a Christian fulfilling the responsibilities of his vocation (whether as soldier or judge or neighbor) is required or expected to forego or ignore the Christian standard of “agape” and is merely to be guided by the “lower standard” of justice. For Luther, it is *never* permissible for a Christian to act contrary to Christian love—love for one’s neighbor in need is the *sole* and *unwavering* standard for *all* actions and decisions by the Christian, whether done or made privately as an individual or publicly in one’s vocation. This must be clearly understood in order for genuinely meaningful dialog to take place between those committed to the position of Luther on war and peace and those committed to the position of Yoder and Hauerwas. Charles Lutz says it well (in words cited in the introduction to this chapter):

The essential origin of anything like the just-war ethic, in terms of the biblical faith, is the overarching concern of love for one’s neighbor. I understand pacifists to begin there also, leading to the argument that violence is never a way to show love to a neighbor, including a neighbor who is my enemy. But I see just-war ethics as being equally concerned with such love. The difference is that another set of neighbors receives primary attention: those who may be called the innocent, those who are in need of protection from attack, those who would be defenseless unless someone took up arms on their behalf. It is finally that question, “How shall the defenseless be protected?” which just-war theory is seeking to address.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ *When War Is Unjust*, 14.

The “public-private” distinction found in Luther’s writings on war and peace, in summary, is not a distinction between a higher and lower realm with higher and lower ethical standards. It is a distinction between differing responses that may be required in differing situations as the Christian seeks to remain completely faithful to the *sole ethic* of Christian love in living out his or her life as a simultaneous citizen of two realms—both of which exist under God’s governance and both of which require absolute obedience to the standard of love laid down in Scripture (e.g., the Ten Commandments) and exemplified in the life (and death) of Christ. The question facing the Christian in *every* situation in life is: how do I show love to my neighbor in faithfulness to the command and example of Christ?

When a Christian is personally confronted by threats or acts of violence by his or her enemy, our Lord and Master Jesus insists that the proper and necessary way to show love to this enemy (who is also his or her neighbor) is to submit to such attacks, to “turn the other cheek,” and not to resist or respond in kind—trusting in the mercy and protection of God, who promises to cause all things to work together for the good of those who love him. When a Christian sees his or her neighbor confronted by threats or acts of violence by another, the only possible way to show love to the neighbor in need is by coming to his or her help and defense, which may involve the use of violence—not in one’s own defense, but in the defense of one’s neighbor. As Meilaender puts it, Jesus commands us to “turn our own cheek”—he does not command us to “turn the cheek” of our neighbor. The fact that a Christian may find himself or herself in this situation of having to choose between acting “peaceably” toward one of two neighbors (one attacking and the other under attack) is a regrettable result of life in a fallen world. In Luther’s

view, however, the same Christ-centered, Scripture-based ethic of love requires and motivates *both* responses—one in the context of our personal relations with a neighbor who is our “enemy,” the other in the context of our Christian vocation as “neighbor” or as civil servant entrusted (by God and by the human authorities acting in his behalf) with the responsibility of serving and protecting those in need. This crucial (at least for Luther) issue of Christian vocation will be discussed in more detail below in chapters six and seven.

Luther’s ethic, therefore, is just as “particularistic” as that of Yoder and Hauerwas—it is not grounded in the notion that one can identify two separate ethics, a higher, love-based “ethic of Jesus” and a lower, justice-based “ethic of the state” to which Christians are equally bound and between which they must constantly choose. In describing his own position in *The Christian Witness to the State* Yoder writes:

The position which we would here argue seeks to be more faithful to the example of the New Testament. It fits none of these [dualistic] patterns, since in searching for a way to speak of an “ethic for the state” we do not believe that such an ethic can stand alone. With the New Testament we shall affirm the necessity of orders and organization based on power in social relations. This is the result not first of God’s having willed that it be so, but only of human sin. The Anabaptists described this “duality without dualism” by speaking of the sword as part of the world “outside the perfection of Christ”; the phrase “inside the perfection of Christ” designated both the Christian church as a body and Christian ethics as a new ethical level. Both the violent action of the state (Romans 13:4) and the nonresistance of the Christian (12:9) are ways of God’s acting in the world. These two aspects of God’s work are not distinguished by God’s having created two realms but by the actual rebelliousness of men.⁴⁶

This helpful summary clearly identifies the concept of the “two realms” as a key point of difference in the thinking of Yoder (and Hauerwas) and Luther, and yet it also provides several “handles” for further discussion and dialog on this important issue. It is clear that

⁴⁶ *Christian Witness*, 31.

in articulating their understanding of the two realms to those schooled in the thinking of Yoder and Hauerwas, Lutherans need to make more clear that it is not their intention to defend or establish a separate “ethic for the state” that allows or encourages Christians to compromise their absolute and radical commitment to the love-ethic of Jesus. Lutherans may also find it helpful to point out that the pacifist Anabaptist tradition itself finds it necessary—on the basis of the teaching of Jesus and the New Testament—to speak of some sort of “duality” in Scripture’s teaching on this issue, even if it cannot accept the Reformation understanding of the “two realms” as a proper description of this duality. Yoder, too, speaks of “two aspects of God’s work” and “two ways of God’s acting in the world”—even if he is (apparently) led to conclude that one of those ways of “acting” (in response to the tragic reality of the fall) is possible or “permissible” only for God and not for his followers in Christ. In any event, there are clearly issues here that seem fruitful for further discussion, issues relating to shared concerns and convictions about both the particularity of Christian ethics and God’s activity in (and care and concern for) a fallen world.

Among the Lutheran theologians who have stressed the need to retain a particularistic approach to Christian ethics while at the same time taking seriously Yoder and Hauerwas’s concerns about the church’s falling prey to the charge of sectarianism is Ronald Thiemann. An extended discussion and critique of Thiemann’s entire program for engaging in “public theology” is outside the scope of this study; it should be noted that his work has been sharply criticized by theologians (such as D. Stephen Long) who are committed to the radically particularistic approach of Yoder and Hauerwas.⁴⁷ Our

⁴⁷ See D. Stephen Long, *The Goodness of God: Theology, the Church, and Social Order* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2001), 71-75.

purpose in quoting Thiemann here is to make a rather simple and limited point—essentially the same point made above by Robert Jenson—that one of the challenges faced by Christians in any society is to make known their convictions about the implications of Scripture’s teaching for life in the civil realm to those who do not share those convictions, and do so (so far as possible) in common sense ways (cf. Yoder’s “middle axioms”) without losing sight of or compromising the particularity of those convictions. Of course (see below), this is undoubtedly easier said than done; according to Thiemann, however:

Our challenge is to develop a public theology that remains based on the particularities of the Christian faith while genuinely addressing issues of public significance. Too often, theologies that seek to address a broad secular culture lose touch with the distinctive beliefs and practices of the Christian tradition.... On the other hand, theologies that seek to preserve the characteristic language and patterns of Christian narrative and practice too often fail to engage the public realm in an effective and responsible fashion.... If Christians are to find an authentic public voice in today’s culture, we must find a middle way between these two equally unhappy alternatives.⁴⁸

In his concluding thoughts Thiemann defines this challenge more specifically:

There has been a great deal of discussion in academic theology about “public theology.” Most of that debate has focused on the question of whether theological arguments are available for public examination and whether theological assertions are intelligible beyond the confines of a particular religious community. Although such issues are intellectually interesting and important within a rather small circle of academic theologians, they only begin to help us address what I consider the far more important questions: Will religious convictions and theological analyses have any real impact on the way our public lives are structured? Can a truly public theology have a salutary influence on the development of public policy within a pluralistic democratic nation? The real challenge to a North American public theology is to find a way—within the social, cultural, and religious pluralism of American politics—to influence the development of public policy without seeking to construct a new Christendom or lapsing into a benign moral relativism.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Ronald F. Thiemann, *Constructing a Public Theology: The Church in a Pluralistic Culture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster; John Knox Press, 1991), 19.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 173.

In discussions of this nature, Robert Kolb reminds us, “believers do not hide the fact that their convictions spring from their faith. They do not deny the power of historical arguments from the Judeo-Christian heritage which shaped this culture.” “But,” says Kolb,

...if we are to argue persuasively in this culture, we must use arguments which can reconstruct a commonly accepted “common sense” in this society for those who do not share Christian convictions concerning the vertical relationship with God. That is entirely possible. Those with different convictions regarding life’s ultimate meaning may still come to consensus on how to operate in the horizontal realm. The regulation of that realm will arise from rational argument and formulation among people of different ultimate beliefs as they seek the common good within the realm of the possible.⁵⁰

Once again, it is not entirely clear if, or to what extent, Hauerwas himself would find such an approach acceptable, but Lutherans making use of this approach in articulating arguments about war and peace in the public realm would certainly do well to take to heart Hauerwas’s warning—shared by the Lutheran theologians cited above—not to “lose touch with the distinctive beliefs and practices of the Christian tradition.”⁵¹ This may involve (among other things) the challenge of developing different arguments for different audiences: speaking to Christians in ways that make explicit the connection between faith in Christ and loving service to one’s neighbor (and society as a whole), and speaking to non-Christians on the basis of “common sense” arguments about the common good—even while keeping clearly in view the very different nature of those arguments. At times, however, it may also mean simply bearing witness to the world the church’s faith-based perspective on an issue such as war and peace, without expecting that it will be understood or accepted—even while hoping that it may be respected as stemming

⁵⁰ Robert Kolb, “Christian Civic Responsibility in an Age of Judgment,” *Concordia Journal* 19:1 (January 1993), 20.

⁵¹ Thiemann, 19.

from genuine religious convictions that are shared by many professing Christians in society.

It must also be acknowledged—as Hauerwas strongly and repeatedly warns—that the very act of engaging the world’s interests and issues on *its* terms (rather than on specifically *Christian* terms) may itself involve compromise. One of the reasons that Hauerwas is so concerned about reclaiming and retaining the particularistic nature of Christian ethics is that only in this way can the church—God’s “particular people” who exist as an alternative *polis* in the world—preserve the sense of freedom it needs to bear witness faithfully to God’s truth by *challenging* the pretentious presumptions of the state (any state) and its own demands for obedience and loyalty. In this way Christians actually *serve* society and government, as Long explains:

Hauerwas’s project is *against* the nations only in that it is for the church as the only social formation holding the narrative that can prevent freedom from usurping the good and thus making violence more determinative of our lives than God’s peaceable kingdom. The point is not to destroy liberalism but “to help the church recover a sense of its own integrity that it might better be able to make discriminating judgments about the society which we happen to call America.” If liberalism is the theory of society under which Christians must live until the eschaton, then the point is to prevent it from realizing its own imperial demands. The church does this by being the church. If another form of society arises, then the church will have to respond to it as well. The response will be different, but Hauerwas follows Yoder in insisting that the response should be one that reflects the “war of the lamb” who refused to seize power and instead endured the cross.⁵²

As Long’s summary makes clear, much more important to Hauerwas than abstract arguments (whether grounded in specifically Christian truths or in what Yoder calls “middle axioms”) is the actual *life* of the Christian community, which *is* the “social ethic” that exposes the world as world and bears witness to a new way of living in Christ. All argumentation is useless—even counter-productive—unless the church is able to

⁵² Long, 103.

demonstrate in and through its life together how the story of Christ has become (and continues to become) *its* story. We will discuss the topic of “the church as social ethic” in more detail in chapter seven (which is in many ways a continuation of this chapter). However, following the basic logic and progression of Hauerwas’s presentation in *The Peaceable Kingdom* (as outlined in chapter two), we turn our attention now to the crucial issue of Hauerwas’s understanding of the church as “God’s story” under the heading, “War, Peace and the Narrative Character of Christian Ethics.”

Chapter Five

War, Peace and the Narrative Character of Christian Ethics

Valid Hauerwasian Insights and Concerns: Staying Connected to Christ's Story

One of Hauerwas's most fascinating (and insightful) essays is titled "A Story-Formed Community: Reflections on *Watership Down*."¹ In this essay Hauerwas makes use of Richard Adam's classic novel about a threatened and courageous colony of rabbits to illustrate "the importance of stories for social and political life." He writes:

Too often politics is treated solely as a matter of power, interests or technique. We thus forget that the most basic task of any polity is to offer its people a sense of participation in an adventure. For what we finally seek is not power, or security, or equality, or even dignity, but a sense of worth gained from participation and contribution to a common adventure. Indeed, our "dignity" derives exactly from our sense of having played a part in such a story.²

"A Story-Formed Community" is written for the express purpose of explicating Hauerwas's "Ten Theses" for "Reforming Christian Social Ethics," the first of which (as we noted in chapter two) is that "the social significance of the Gospel requires the recognition of the narrative structure of Christian convictions for the life of the church."³

Hauerwas asserts:

Christian social ethics too often takes the form of principles and policies that are not clearly based on or warranted by the central convictions of the faith. Yet the basis of any Christian social ethic should be the affirmation that God has decisively called and formed a people to serve him through Israel and the work of Christ. The appropriation of the critical significance of the latter depends on the recognition of narrative as a basic category for social ethics.⁴

¹ *HR*, 170-199.

² "Story-Formed Community," *HR*, 172.

³ "Ten Theses," *HR*, 111.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 110.

Whether we realize it or not, says Hauerwas, “every social ethic involves a narrative, whether it is concerned with the formulation of basic principles of social organization and/or with concrete policy alternatives.”⁵ In fact, the very “form and substance of a community is narrative-dependent, and therefore what counts as ‘social ethics’ is a correlative of the content of that narrative.”⁶ The primary task of the church, therefore, “is not to make the ‘world’ better or more just, but to help Christian people form their community consistent with their conviction that the story of Christ is a truthful account of our existence.”⁷

For Hauerwas, of course, a faithful and truthful account of the story of Christ as retold and re-enacted in the life of the church includes “the refusal to resort to violence,” which (for Hauerwas) is always a sign of the failure to trust in God as the “Lord of history” and to live in obedience to his way (revealed in Christ’s cross) of dealing with the evil and violence of the world.⁸ Even if Lutherans cannot accept this specific conclusion of Hauerwas’s, they can certainly recognize and affirm the truth of much of what Hauerwas has to say about the narrative character of Christian ethics. Precisely because of its long and dominant history of “doing theology” primarily on the basis of systematic and dogmatic categories and strategies, Lutheranism is among those theological traditions that must be on guard against allowing such systematic approaches to dominate its theology in ways that fail to do full justice to the narrative of Scripture itself (centered in the story of Christ as recounted in the Gospels) and to its continuation in the life and tradition of the church. As they seek to respond in appropriate and

⁵ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ See Thesis 5 of “Ten Theses,” *HR* 113.

meaningful ways to the issue of war and peace, Lutherans would do well to remember that

The nature of Christian ethics is determined by the fact that Christian convictions take the form of a story, or perhaps better, a set of stories that constitutes a tradition, which in turn creates and forms a community. Christian ethics does not begin by emphasizing rules or principles, but by calling our attention to a narrative that tells of God's dealing with creation.⁹

Lutherans who seek to remain faithful in just war thinking to their own (truly “Luther-an”) story can benefit from this insight of Hauerwas in several ways. First, Lutherans need to guard against a legalistic or narrowly systematic obsession with the just war principles themselves—an attitude or approach that allows the principles to become detached or isolated from the Christ-centered story of Scripture that gives them their true *Christian* context, content, and purpose. As Hauerwas repeatedly (and rightly) warns, such an attitude can—and no doubt sometimes does—lead Christians (including Lutheran Christians) to use the abstract principles of the just war theory as a blanket justification for virtually any war their own government wants to fight, for virtually any reason. Joseph Allen's word of caution also applies to Lutherans:

One question to put to a just-war approach is *whether it merely serves as a rationalization for whatever the government does*. That can happen. Some citizens or national leaders may use the criteria as a check list to try to show that at every point a war is justifiable, but without any serious moral self-examination. When this happens, the criteria have been reduced merely to verbal weapons against those who disagree.¹⁰

This, says Allen, “is a misuse of the criteria, not an inherent weakness of a just-war approach.”¹¹ As Ramsey and Meilaender clearly demonstrate, such use of the just war theory is also inconsistent with and unfaithful to the Christian and Lutheran story of

⁹ *PK*, 24-25.

¹⁰ Allen, 48.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

the just war tradition and the Scriptural story on which it is based. Still, we do well to heed Hauerwas's warning that "once 'justice' is made a criterion [or at least the *central* criterion] of Christian social strategy, it can too easily take on a meaning and life of its own that is not informed by the Christian's fundamental convictions."¹² He rightly reminds Christian (and Lutheran) just war thinkers that

...just war theory surely requires its adherents to contemplate the possibility that they will find themselves in deep tension with the warmaking policies of their governments. The criteria that war be declared by "legitimate authority" does not in itself entail any account of what constitutes legitimacy....I suspect that those who employ just war thinking as Christians are able to do so with integrity exactly to the extent that they assume a position of resistance to the state not unlike that of their pacifist sister and brother.¹³

The second point is closely related to the first: Lutherans need to keep in mind that any form of the just war tradition (like any form of pacifism) is part of a larger "story"—part of a broader historical tradition that contains both commendable and Christian elements as well as variations, applications and manifestations that faithful Christians and Lutherans simply cannot (or at least should not) affirm and accept. As was noted in our survey of Christian attitudes toward war and peace in part one of this study, there is little question that medieval theories regarding just war helped lay the theological groundwork for the acceptance (or at least tolerance) of the crusades in the Middle Ages. As Joseph Allen points out, the principles of the just war theory are also (mis)used by some today to support a crusading attitude toward war, an attitude clearly rejected by Luther—and (more importantly!) by Jesus. His warning and historical reminder is one to which Lutherans, too, need to give heed:

In the wars of religion that followed the Reformation, Catholic fought against Protestant, Protestant against Catholic, and often Protestant against Anabaptist

¹² "Ten Theses," *HR*, 112.

¹³ "Can A Pacifist Think About War?" 134.

Protestant, all in the name of God and often without moral restraint. In the past two centuries we have seen the emergence of ideas of total war, which is much like the crusade in its absolute ends and lack of moral restraint. Christians and others have fought in the name of religious and nonreligious causes that they deemed absolute against what they saw as the forces of evil: extremists of the French revolution against anything that smacked of the old order, communists against the forces of “reaction,” Nazis and Fascists as embodiments of all evil, Iranians against the United States as “the Great Satan,” Iraqis against the evil Americans, and Western leaders against Saddam Hussein as “a new Hitler.” Crusade thinking has a long history, one not confined to Christians but also present among them.¹⁴

Finally, one of the most helpful insights of Hauerwas concerning the narrative character of Christian ethics is his constant reminder that it is through the concrete and communal life of the church—particularly through its *worship* life and practices—that the story of Christ becomes “our story.” “The emphasis on narrative,” says Hauerwas, “is unintelligible abstracted from an ecclesial context.”¹⁵ And the church is known only by its marks: “through practices such as preaching, baptism, eucharist—in short, *worship*.”¹⁶ This explains Hauerwas’s insistence that the liturgical practices of the church “*are* our effective social work. For if the church *is* rather than has a social ethic, these actions are our most important social witness.”¹⁷ In his book *In Good Company*, Hauerwas explains how, in his course on theological ethics at Duke University, he teaches “Christian ethics as worship” by highlighting “the liturgical shape of the Christian life.”¹⁸ The topics discussed in the class are structured around the liturgy used in the United Methodist Church in an attempt to show how the worship life of the church is integral to and inseparable from the formation of Christian character (which is at the

¹⁴ Allen, 8.

¹⁵ “The ‘End’ of ‘Narrative Theology,’” in HR, 152; cf. “Casuistry in Context: The Need for Tradition,” in HR, 267-286.

¹⁶ *Where Resident Aliens Live*, 18.

¹⁷ PK, 108.

¹⁸ “The Liturgical Shape of the Christian Life: Teaching Christian Ethics as Worship,” in *IGC*, 153-168.

heart and core of Christian ethics). In the following section we will suggest ways that Lutherans might make practical use of this insight by seeking more intentionally and deliberately to demonstrate how the church in and through its catechesis and worship seeks to inculcate attitudes and practices that reflect a truly Christian and Lutheran perspective on “real life” ethical issues—including the issue of war and peace. In the very act of undertaking this task, we are implicitly acknowledging the validity of Hauerwas’s own narrative-based theological methodology, as well as his accompanying assumption that the story of Christ himself—his life, suffering, death and resurrection—has paradigmatic moral significance for those who seek to make his story their own. We acknowledge and affirm these insights of Hauerwas even while recognizing that, from a Lutheran perspective, certain aspects of Hauerwas’s own construal of Scripture’s story are themselves distorted or incomplete due to his failure to view the person and work of Christ (and the work of Christians done in obedience to and imitation of Christ) within the broader Scriptural context of God’s dual reign in the church and in the world.

Lutheran Challenges and Contributions: Worship and Catechesis

Far too often we forget, says Hauerwas, that “the most basic task of any polity is to offer its people a sense of participation in an adventure.”¹⁹ Despite the many ways that Lutherans have undoubtedly failed to recognize and to demonstrate how the story of Jesus and of our participation as real-life “adventurers” in that story is at the heart of a truly Lutheran approach to issues of war and peace, confessional Lutherans seem well resourced—with their high regard for the Christ-centered authority of Scripture and the strong heritage of Luther’s efforts to affirm a version of just war thinking rooted in

¹⁹ “Story-Formed Community,” *HR*, 172.

Scripture's story—to recapture this necessary insight and emphasis. If they are to do this, however, it must be done not only on an academic or intellectual or official level (by way of dissertations, scholarly essays, or institutional policies and principles), but in a way that attempts to show how the Christ-centered, Scripture-based “narrative” of the Lutheran just war tradition is and can be incorporated into the ongoing spiritual, liturgical, and educational formation and nurturing that takes place as part of the normal life and worship of the Christian community, the church. We highlight here two historic Lutheran strengths that could be further strengthened by more deliberate attention to how and where the issue of war and peace fits into the story of Christ and the “adventure” of the Christian church—namely, worship and catechesis.

War, Peace, and Lutheran Worship

“The best way to learn the significance of stories is by having our attention drawn to stories through a story.”²⁰ And the way that Lutherans (like most other Christians) are most frequently, consistently, effectively brought into contact with and formed by the story of Christ and his work is through the rehearsal and repetition of that story in and through the regular liturgical practices of the church. The liturgy, in countless ways, rehearses the truths and realities that connect and reconnect us to the story of Christ and remind us how our “story” is radically different from “the world’s story,” and the implications that this has for our witness in and to the world. Hauerwas insists that that the liturgical practices of the church—its preaching, teaching and faithful observance of the sacraments—“are the essential rituals of our politics,” since “through them we learn who we are,” who God is, and how he acts and intervenes in our lives and in a world

²⁰ Hauerwas, “Story-Formed Community,” *HR*, 172.

marked and marred by evil and violence.²¹ Luther makes a strikingly similar point in his treatise *On War Against the Turk* when he insists that “the devil is a spirit who cannot be beaten with armor, muskets, horses, and men;” rather, “Christian weapons and power must do it.”²² According to Luther, the best and most effective witness the church can offer during times of war and peace is to show, through its regular worship and faithful use of God’s Word and sacraments, that it is “the pious, holy, precious body of Christians” which has the true “arms for this war”—and that “they know how to use them.”²³

Although we will discuss the issue of catechesis separately below as a vital task of the church that needs to go hand in hand with its ongoing liturgical life and practices, it is also important to recognize that worship itself *is*, in many ways, the most effective and meaningful form of catechesis. In a recent article in *Theology Today* titled “Worship as Catechesis: Knowledge, Desire, and Christian Formation,” Debra Dean Murphy (a colleague of Hauerwas’s at Duke University Divinity School) persuasively argues that

...knowledge’s intimate connection to action, to doing, to practice, to habit, and to ritual means that what we know cannot be separated from who we are or within the confessional language of the church, who we hope to be. Thus the original question *How do we know what we know?* Should now be recognized as deeply indebted to the Cartesianism under scrutiny here and to the objectivist view of knowledge that needs dismantling. In other words, a doxological, liturgical, eucharistic account of knowledge—as I am attempting to develop here—account of knowledge—as I am attempting to develop here—assumes that we can never be at any distance from the knowledge we need.²⁴

Thus, insists Murphy,

...to admit the intimate connection between knowledge and action, between learning and bodily practice, is to recognize that, for Christians, worship is the site

²¹ See *PK*, 108.

²² *On War Against the Turk*, 170.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Theology Today* (October 2001), 323-324.

at which our formation and education are initiated and completed (insofar as they can ever be complete). What we *do*, how we *act*, in the liturgical assembly, shapes us in particular and powerful ways and is both formative of identity and catechetical in the most basic sense.²⁵

Murphy closes her article with a strong critique of traditional approaches to catechesis and their underlying assumptions, and with an urgent plea to “pay more serious attention to preparation for and reflection on the church’s worship:”

Much of what constitutes educative efforts in Christian communities today is bland, feeble, and ineffectual. This signals the failure to take seriously the catechetical nature and power of the worshipping assembly, the body of Christ gathered in Eucharistic fellowship, becoming the truth in a world captivated by falsehood and deception. Modern catechesis (multiform though it is) has often assumed the “objectivist” model of learning and viewed Christian “knowledge” as context-free, disembedded from the liturgy and life of the worshipping community. It has presumed the priority of “the individual” and the autonomous self and, in regard to Christian formation, has understood the liturgy to be, at best, supplementary and, at worst, superfluous. This makes all the more urgent the need to pay more serious attention to preparation for and reflection on the church’s worship. Such preparation and reflection are, ultimately, the core of Christian discipleship and the heart of extraliturgical formation and education. The forms of such preparation cannot be known and delineated *a priori*; they emerge out of particular worshipping communities’ engagement with Scripture, tradition, cultural and political contexts, economic exigencies, and so on. The least that can be said is that the forms that these practices take must assume that catechesis is a lifelong process of conversion—not a program for instilling rationalist book-knowledge in the young.²⁶

While it is no doubt true that the formation, instruction, and training for witness of God’s people that takes place in and through the liturgy is more “caught” than “taught,” it is not hard to envision ways in which pastors and worship leaders (e.g., through written or verbal “worship notes,” appropriate sermonic commentary, and the regular and ongoing instruction that takes place outside the context of worship) can help worshippers to perceive and better understand how the various parts of the liturgy relate in very

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 324-325.

practical ways to our unique identity as Christians and our “peaceable witness” in and to the world.²⁷

The invocation, for example, names the God who has called us his own and has given us a radically new identity and purpose in life. It reminds us that we begin our worship in the same way that we were given a new beginning in life—“in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” into whose name we were baptized. By his undeserved and unlimited love, the Triune God has claimed and captured our trust and loyalty in way that (as Jesus himself demonstrated in the desert temptations and in the trial before Pilate) makes it impossible for us to put our ultimate trust in ourselves or in “princes” or in any of the earthly “powers that be.” The confession of sin reminds us of our innate and inexhaustible capacity for self-deception (“we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”) and for deception by others, and our need to look to Jesus constantly not only for forgiveness but also for the ability to come to grips with the truth about ourselves and the competing “gods” in our hearts and lives and nation and world—anyone or anything which would seek to qualify in any way the loyalty that we owe to God alone. Having received assurance of God’s love and forgiveness in Christ, we also trust that he will “renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways to the glory of your holy name.” We look to Jesus’ own example—especially his willingness to forgive those who hated and persecuted him—as our supreme guide for determining what kinds of lives please God and truly give him glory.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 331. For another engaging discussion of this issue, see Hauerwas’s own essay “Suffering Beauty: The Liturgical Formation of Christ’s Body” in *Performing the Faith: Bonhoeffer and the Practice of Nonviolence* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004), 151-168.

²⁷ Unless otherwise noted, the various liturgical references and citations in the following paragraphs are taken from Divine Service II (Second Setting), *Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), 158-177. Parenthetical references to *Lutheran Worship* in the text of this chapter are abbreviated *LW*; references to “*HS98*” are to *Hymnal Supplement 98* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1998).

The Kyrie reminds us that we look to and depend on the Triune God alone for the gift of a *twofold* peace. First, “for the peace from above and for our salvation,” we pray “Lord, have mercy.” This peace we find in the cross of Christ, who has freed us by his willing suffering and death from the tyranny of sin, death, and all demonic powers in heaven and on earth. But in the same breath we also pray “for the peace of the whole world,” which (we realize) is intimately and necessarily tied to our plea “for the well-being of the Church of God.” For without the peace preserved by God through the structures of earthly government, says Luther, “no one could support wife and child, feed himself and serve God. The world would be reduced to chaos,” and the church itself—as a real (though radically unique) “social and political institution” could not exist.²⁸ Thus we conclude by praying, “Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord”—a prayer that has clear implications for God’s gracious and powerful rule and work in *both* realms.

In the “Hymn of Praise” we give “glory to God in the highest,” and once again praise and implore him for the gift of “peace to his people on earth.” We extol our “Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,” who “takes away the sin of the world” through Jesus Christ—the “Lamb of God” who, because of his obedient sacrifice on the cross, is now “seated at the right hand of God,” and is “alone” the Lord and “the Most High.” He *alone* is the God we serve and in whom we trust, even when we “serve” and “trust” those to whom he has delegated certain earthly authority and responsibility. In the same way, the “Feast of Victory” celebrates not only the reign of the “Lamb who was slain,” “whose blood set us free to be people of God,” but also the “power, riches, wisdom and strength” that belong to both “God and the Lamb forever.” Jesus not only sets us free by his blood *from* the sin that seeks to hold in bondage, he also sets us free *to*

²⁸ *Temporal Authority*, 91.

be “the people of God:” people who show themselves to be a new and different kind of people as they seek to display in and through their lives together the virtues (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness) so clearly displayed in the life of Christ himself. Our faith in the God who is our Redeemer and also our Creator, Protector, and Preserver makes it possible for us to sing not only “with the people of God,” but also to “join in the hymn of all creation”—a creation that God preserves day after day through his appointed “masks” on earth, until the day when it will be restored and set free from its bondage to sin and from the fallen powers of this world (Romans 8).

The Scripture lessons connect us in a direct and obvious way with the story of Christ, and many of those lessons throughout the church year speak directly to the ever-present problems of war, tragedy, violence and injustice in the world. These lessons provide ample opportunity for sermonic exposition on these real life issues—exposition that aims to help the hurting, confused, fearful, sinful, proud, repentant people of God better understand the connection between the “story of Christ” and “the politics of the church,” and between the story of Christ and his church and “the politics of the world.” Sermons delivered on the basis of Lutheran theological presuppositions, of course, will seek to preserve the Scriptural distinction between Law and Gospel and retain the centrality of Scripture’s own central message concerning the redemptive power and significance of Christ’s saving work. Such sermons dare not exclude, however, Scripture’s own emphasis (frequently reflected in the sermons of Luther himself, as in his sermons on Peter’s letters referred to earlier) on the paradigmatic moral of Christ’s life, suffering, death and resurrection. Included in and among Hauerwas’s numerous occasional essays are sermons that he has preached: “My use of sermons,” he says, “is an

attempt to use a practice central to the church's life in which form and matter are one," and which illustrate "what Christian practice might look like in a world without foundations."²⁹ In imitation of Hauerwas's example, included in an appendix of this study are several sermons that may help to illustrate how the Lutheran perspective on "the politics of Jesus and the church" might be conveyed in a way that demonstrates the practical implications of our confession that "Jesus is Lord"—Lord of our lives, Lord of the church, and (properly understood!) Lord of our nation and of all nations.³⁰

The Creed reaffirms the connection between creation, salvation and sanctification that is so crucial for understanding the Christological and ecclesiological presuppositions underlying a Lutheran perspective on war and peace. Once again, incorporating into the liturgy in appropriate ways Luther's explanations of the Creed from both catechisms could greatly enrich this aspect of the service. The prayers provide manifold opportunities to demonstrate that (for Lutherans) there is no contradiction or even tension between our sincere supplications for our own government and nations around the world, for our own leaders and leaders around the world, for our friends and for our enemies, for those who love us and for those who hate us, for temporal peace and for God's help and protection in times of war. Here once again we are instructed and encouraged by the example of Christ himself, who responds to our request "Lord, teach us to pray!" not only by giving us the perfect prayer to pray (the Lord's Prayer) but by showing us *how* to pray by his own fervent and disciplined practice as recorded throughout the Gospels. The

²⁹ "The Church's One Foundation Is Jesus Christ Her Lord, or In a World Without Foundations All We Have Is the Church," in *IGC*, 33-34. Three of Hauerwas's sermons are included in this essay on pages 33-49 of *IGC*; additional sermons appear periodically in his other essays and books.

³⁰ See Appendix II.

rubrics of *Lutheran Worship* indicate that in the divine service prayers not only “may” but *are* to be offered “for the whole Church” and “for the nations” of the world.³¹

In the “General Prayer of the Church” we ask that God would “in mercy remember the enemies of your church, and grant them repentance to life.” We ask God to “protect and defend your Church in all tribulation and danger,” and help us as Christians “to fight the good fight of faith.” We also beseech God to “bestow your grace on all nations of the earth” (not just *our own* nation), but that he would “bless especially our country and its inhabitants and all who are in authority.” “Let your glory dwell in our land,” we pray, “that mercy and truth, righteousness and peace may abound everywhere.” “Graciously defend us against all calamity...from war and pestilence...and from every other evil.” We ask God to remember, even as we remind ourselves, that “we are strangers and pilgrims on earth;” therefore we implore the wisdom and humility, “by true faith and a godly life to prepare for the world to come, doing the work you have given us to do while it is still day.”³²

In the “General Intercession” we pray that God would keep his church “in the way of truth” and “in the bond of peace” and that he would sustain and comfort in “in every time of trouble.” We also implore God’s mercy for “all who are in authority over us,” that “they may be inclined to your will and walk according to your commandments.”³³ This is followed (in *Lutheran Worship*) by a fervent prayer “For Peace:” “Grant peace, we pray, in mercy, Lord. Peace in our time, oh, send us! For there is none on earth but you, None other to defend us. You only, Lord, can fight for us.”³⁴ Included among the

³¹ *Lutheran Worship*, 187.

³² *Ibid.*, 132-133.

³³ *Ibid.*, 128-129.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 129.

numerous special supplications and intercessions are prayers “for divine protection,” “for our enemies,” “for good government,” “for responsible citizenship,” “for our country,” “for the armed forces of our nation,” “for those who minister in the armed forces.”³⁵ The regular use of these and other prayers in public worship (including the Litany³⁶ and the many prayers written by Luther himself for peace, rulers, good government and divine blessings in the temporal realm³⁷), perhaps more than any other single ecclesial practice, can serve to form the minds, hearts and lives of Lutheran people in ways that enable them to imitate the worship-centered character and conduct of Christ and bear witness faithfully to the Lutheran understanding of the “Scripture’s story” of God’s work in the church and in the world.

Especially during times of war, when the minds and hearts of people are focused on Christian (and Lutheran) friends, family members, fellow-citizens, and members of allied (and even *enemy*) forces who are serving in a military vocation, it may be meaningful and appropriate to make use of or at least call attention to the “Soldier’s Prayer” included in Luther’s treatise “Whether Soldiers, Too, May Be Saved,” since it brings together in such a simple yet profound way the connection between faith in Christ alone and service to God through obedience to earthly authorities:

Heavenly Father, here I am, according to your divine will, in the external work and service of my lord, which I owe first to you and then to my lord for your sake. I thank your grace and mercy that you have put me into a work which I am sure is not sin, but right and pleasing obedience to your will. But because I know and have learned from your gracious word that none of our good works can help us and that no one is saved as a soldier but only as a Christian, therefore, I will not in any way rely on my obedience and work, but place myself freely at the service of your will. I believe with all my heart that only the innocent blood of your dear Son, my Lord Jesus Christ, redeems and saves me, which he shed for me in

³⁵ See *Lutheran Worship*, 124-133.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 279-287.

³⁷ See, e.g., “Index H” in *Luther’s Prayers*, ed. Herbert F. Brokering (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1967).

obedience to your holy will. This is the basis on which I stand before you. In this faith I will live and die, fight, and do everything else. Dear Lord God that Father, preserve and strengthen this faith in me by your Spirit. Amen.³⁸

Following the prayers of the church, the gathering of the offerings reminds us that the church in this world (as Hauerwas often emphasizes) is more than a merely “spiritual” entity. It must be sustained with gifts earned by the labors of Christians serving in various God-given vocations, and it cannot be sustained apart from certain organizational structures and “brick and mortar” facilities that make interaction with realities in the “left-hand kingdom” necessary and inevitable. God sustains government, as Luther says, so that we may receive such crucial and precious gifts as bread, order and peace—gifts apart from which the church itself cannot be sustained.

As we prepare to receive Christ’s body and blood, we laud the thrice-holy God “of pow’r and might,” who shows forth his glory both in heaven *and* on earth, in and through his work in *both* realms. We pray the prayer that Jesus taught us: the prayer that Christ’s kingdom would come, and that God’s (often inscrutable) will would be done *here on earth* as it is in heaven. We pray that God would give us (through his preservation of order and peace) our daily bread; that he would forgive us, even as we forgive our enemies and those who sin against us; that he would spare us from temptation and (finally) deliver us from the evil one and from the threat of every evil. Before partaking of Christ’s Supper, we extend God’s peace to one another—including “enemies” even within the Christian community whom God calls us to love and forgive as Jesus did, and as God himself has loved and forgiven us. In the Supper, we receive and celebrate God’s forgiveness, as well as the unity that is ours in Christ with *all* those

³⁸ *Whether Soldiers*, 135-136. Having prayed this prayer, says Luther, the Christian soldier may “commit body and soul into God’s hands, draw your sword, and fight in God’s name.”

(of every race, class and nationality) who trust in him. By freely associating with all those who showed any interest in his message and mission, Jesus clearly demonstrated by his own attitude and behavior—and in a way that we are called to reflect in our own lives in both the church and the world—that “God shows no partiality” (Acts 10:34). We then we go forth with shouts of thanksgiving to bear witness to his love and grace, the “salvation which [he] has prepared in the sight of ev’ry people.”

The final word we hear in the divine service (through the benediction) is the word “peace.” And so we depart in God’s peace—the peace won for us by Jesus’ life, death and resurrection, the peace that enables us to imitate Christ by living in love with one another in the church, the peace that sustains us in our daily lives and in our daily vocations, the peace that empowers us to forgive those who hate us and sin against us, and the peace that allows us to discern and rejoice in God’s great gift of peace in the world, and to trust in his (sometimes strange and “alien”) way of providing that peace for the sake of the world that he loves—and for the sake of the church and its “peaceable witness” in and to the world.

The hymns that we sing throughout the divine service reinforce the truths rehearsed in the liturgy and learned and re-learned through the sermon and the Scripture lessons. We implore God’s blessing on the church (*LW* 287-310) and on our nation and its leaders (*LW* 497-502). We pray for all people and all societies of the world, that God would “cure your children’s warring madness” and “bend our pride to your control” (*LW* 398; cf. 394-400). We pray for Christians in their daily vocations (*HS98*, 879) and for God’s comfort and assurance at those times “when aimless violence takes those whom we love” (*HS98*, 890). And we ask God to grant us a measure of Solomon’s wisdom to

discern that, in God's plan centered in Christ's story, "There Is a Time for Everything:" a time for peace and a time for war, as we at all times trust in God's ability (demonstrated so clearly in Christ's cross) to bring great good out what appears to be only evil.

There is a time for ev'rything,
 A time for all that life may bring:
 A time to plant, a time to reap,
 A time to laugh, a time to weep,
 A time to heal, a time to slay,
 A time to build where rubble lay,
 A time to die, a time to mourn,
 A time for joy and to be born.

A time to hold, then be alone,
 A time to gather scattered stone,
 A time to break, a time to mend,
 A time to search and then to end,
 A time to keep, then throw away,
 A time to speak, then nothing say,
 A time for war till hatreds cease,
 A time for love, a time for peace.

Eternal Lord, Your wisdom sees
 And fathoms all life's tragedies;
 You know our grief, You hear our sighs—
 In mercy, dry our tear-stained eyes.
 From evil times, You bring great good;
 Beneath the cross, we've safely stood.
 Though dimly now life's path we trace,
 One day we shall see face to face.

Before all time had yet begun,
 You, Father, planned to give Your Son;
 Lord Jesus Christ, with timeless grace,
 You have redeemed our time-bound race;
 O Holy Spirit, Paraclete,
 Your timely work in us complete;
 Blest Trinity, Your praise we sing—
 There is a time for ev'rything!³⁹

³⁹ This hymn, written by LCMS pastor Stephen P. Starke, is contained on page 161 of the *Proposal for the Lutheran Service Book* based on the work of the Lutheran Hymnal Project and prepared by the LCMS's Commission on Worship. At the time of this writing, this hymn—together with other hymns and worship resources contained in the book—was approved by the 2004 convention of the LCMS for official adoption and inclusion in its new hymnal, to be published in the year 2005.

Many more (and no doubt more insightful) connections could be observed and suggested between God's work in Christ—together with our confession of it in the divine service—and God's work in the world and our response to it by living lives of faith and obedience to him. Additional insights could certainly be gleaned from an examination of special rites such as Holy Baptism, the Burial of the Dead, and rite of Confirmation—including the solemn vow of confirmands that they intend, with the help of God, “to continue steadfast in this confession and Church and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it.”⁴⁰ If Luther's views on war and peace are taken seriously by Lutherans, this willingness to “suffer all” rather than to deny Christ has especially pointed and poignant significance for the Lutheran soldier, whether he or she is conscience-bound to *obey* or to *disobey* earthly authorities for the sake of their primary and unconditional obedience to Christ.

In summary, it is clear that abundant resources exist within the rich tradition of Lutheran worship to shape and form the minds, hearts, attitudes and character of our members in ways that support, confirm and create “the Lutheran perspective” on war and peace, and in so doing help to connect “God's story” with “our story” in a way that is critical for the proper formation of Christian (personal, social and ecclesial) ethics.

⁴⁰ *Lutheran Worship*, 206.

The Challenge of Catechesis

At the beginning of this section on “Worship and Catechesis” we discussed Debra Murphy’s contention that preparation for and reflection on the liturgical practices of the church “are, ultimately, the core of Christian discipleship and the heart of extraliturgical formation and education.”⁴¹ This very assertion, however, assumes the importance and necessity of such “extraliturgical formation and education” as further embodiments of what we receive and do in the liturgy. We turn now, therefore, to the topic of catechesis as a task and practice of the church that flows from and goes hand in hand with its liturgical life as God’s particular and “peaceable” people in Christ.

Charles Lutz bemoans the fact that

It is hard to find evidence of serious Lutheran attention to the [issue of] nuclear weapons...in resources for parish education, in the statements of Lutheran church bodies, or in the teaching of the denomination’s colleges and seminaries.... We have not learned how to sustain a concern for our ethical tradition on war and peace during the times between global crises. We have yet to commit ourselves to consistent peace education among our children, youth, and adults at all times and places in the church’s nurturing ministry.⁴²

One of the questions Walter Bouman raises in his recent “Survey” of the just war tradition “from a Lutheran perspective” is “whether members of the churches...are instructed” in the a way that enables and allows them to reflect meaningfully on this issue from a truly Christian and Lutheran perspective.⁴³ Reinhard Hütter raises the same question, and insists (on the basis of insights gleaned from Yoder and Hauerwas) that

⁴¹ “Worship As Catechesis,” 331.

⁴² *When War Is Unjust*, 6-7.

⁴³ Walter R. Bouman, “The ‘Just War’ Tradition: A Survey from a Lutheran Perspective,” *Lutheran Theological Journal* 37.3 (December 2003), 133-137.

“only in the context of communities of moral deliberation and formation can we reclaim the just war tradition.”⁴⁴

The good news is that resources do, in fact, exist for recovering this tradition and its theological underpinnings in the context of the catechetical formation of the Lutheran community. As the overview provided in the final section of chapter three may serve to illustrate, the regular use of the catechism in worship and in Bible classes (not only *The Small Catechism*, but also the all-too-frequently neglected treasures of *The Large Catechism*) cannot help but inculcate—in both conscious and unconscious ways—the fundamental Christological and ecclesial truths that underlie the Lutheran perspective on war and peace (such as God’s twofold rule in the church and in the world; the relationship between “peace with God” gained for us by the work of Christ and God’s providential preservation of temporal peace; the relationship between the “two kinds of holiness”—i.e., between justification and sanctification; the concept of Christian vocation; the credal emphasis on God’s threefold work as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier and its implications for our work in the church and in the world). Luther’s relatively brief but rich exposition of Psalm 82 could serve as a valuable resource for highlighting his understanding of the God-given role and responsibility of “princes” and governmental authorities, foremost among them the task of pursuing *peace* as the greatest of God’s earthly gifts.⁴⁵ Insofar as it contains a simple, unusually concise, and highly practical and pastoral version of the Augustinian-based just war tradition, Luther’s treatise on “Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved” (or at least portions of it) could conceivably be studied and discussed in certain Bible class settings with a view toward

⁴⁴ “Be Honest in Just War Thinking,” 81.

⁴⁵ *LW* 13, 43-73.

wrestling with how the *theological* principles set forth by Luther can be applied in today's much more complex political and military context.

Within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, a variety of resources exist for helping its members understand how the basic approach of their church body to issues of war and peace is part of a larger “story”—how it is guided by fundamental theological principles rooted in the broader Lutheran and Christian tradition. “Guidelines for Crucial Issues in Christian Citizenship,” prepared by the Synod’s Commission on Theology and Church Relations, summarizes succinctly historic Lutheran principles underlying its understanding of “The Christian and Government” (including the civic responsibilities that belong to Christians both as individual citizens and as members of the Christian community), “The Christian and the Civic Order,” “The Christian, Violence, and War,” and “The Christian and Conscience.”⁴⁶ The report “Civil Obedience and Disobedience” affirms and discusses in some detail the historic Lutheran conviction (strongly emphasized in all of Luther’s treatises on war and peace) that “Christians are to obey God rather than man when a civil law conflicts with a clear precept of God, being willing, at the same time, to accept as a part of their crossbearing the punitive consequences of their action.”⁴⁷ The report *Render Unto Caesar and Unto God: A Lutheran View of Church and State* offers a much more extensive historical survey of Christian perspectives on the relationship between church and state, a summary of the “Lutheran Two-Kingdom Perspective,” and a practical section (based primarily on the framework proposed by Robert Benne in *The Paradoxical Vision*) which attempts to show how the Lutheran

⁴⁶ *Guidelines for Crucial Issues in Christian Citizenship*, Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (April 26, 1968).

⁴⁷ *Civil Obedience and Disobedience*, Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (January 19, 1967), 5.

perspective can be applied to real-life social and ethical issues, including the issue of war and peace.⁴⁸ Any of these documents could serve well as resources for helping Lutherans better understand, support, apply, and critique the “just war narrative” of which they are a part by virtue of their identity as Lutherans. Also worthy of mention in this connection is an outstanding Bible study prepared by LCMS pastor Edward Engelbrecht and LCMS chaplain Jonathan Shaw titled *Holy Resolve: Terror and War Today*, which brings together pertinent historical resources and draws on the insights of Luther in his writings on war and peace while at the same time raising critical questions about the application of these insights to contemporary questions and issues.⁴⁹ Finally, a statement titled “Peace,” issued by the President of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod on March 4, 2003 (as the American government was wrestling with its decision to go to war against Iraq), provides a succinct summary of the Augustinian and Lutheran just war tradition and could well serve as a primer or “discussion starter” for use in Bible classes or discussion groups seeking to take up the issue of war and peace.⁵⁰

The work of Hauerwas can help us to discern a significant deficiency in most (if not all) of these materials, however, which (it must be admitted) can be traced to a deficiency inherent in the Lutheran tradition itself. As we have noted at various points throughout this study, Lutherans have tended to “do theology” primarily on the basis of systematic truths and principles concerning Christ rather than on the basis of the *story* of Christ itself as found in the Gospels. To the extent that Lutherans do give attention to the story of Christ, furthermore, they do not typically emphasize the *paradigmatic* moral

⁴⁸ *Render Unto Caesar*, Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (September 1995); hereafter *Render*.

⁴⁹ *Holy Resolve: Terror and War Today* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2003).

⁵⁰ A copy of this statement is included in Appendix I.

significance of his life, death and resurrection, but tend to focus rather narrowly (sometimes even exclusively) on the *redemptive* significance of Christ's person and work. As we have seen from Luther's own writings on war and peace (especially those relating to the peasants' war), Luther himself certainly can and does point to the specific aspects of Christ's character and story (including his willingness to suffer and die in obedience to God's will) as an example for all Christians to follow. This does not emerge as a central or primary theme in Luther's writings, however; and it surfaces only rarely and implicitly in the much of the material noted above. In making use of such materials, therefore, Lutherans would do well demonstrate more clearly and specifically how the story of Christ itself underlies the theological truths and principles contained in these materials. When, for example, the report on "Civil Obedience and Disobedience" speaks of the need for a Christian to be willing "to accept as part of their crossbearing the punitive consequences of their action,"⁵¹ connections can easily and obviously be made to the story of Christ's own willingness to "bear the cross" and accept the "punitive consequences" of his *unwillingness* to submit to demands of the earthly authorities, and to the ways in which Christ's story becomes "our story" when we are faced with similar challenges and demands. Or (for example) when the report "Guidelines for Crucial Issues in Christian Citizenship" says that one way that Christians "further justice" in the world is to serve as "responsible critics of the social order" and to "remind rulers that they are under God and the Law and that they too must give an account of their stewardship,"⁵² a Christian well-versed in the story of Christ is reminded almost immediately of Jesus' own "reminders" to Pilate and the Jewish leaders (see, e.g.,

⁵¹ *Civil Obedience and Disobedience*, 5.

⁵² *Guidelines for Crucial Issues*, 5.

Matthew 26:64; John 19:11) that they, too, were subject to a “higher power” who would someday call them to account for their actions. Critical theological *truths* abound in these and other catechetical resources for articulating the Lutheran perspective on issues of war and peace, but in many cases a conscious effort must be made to show how those truths are grounded in the story of Christ himself and how they become part of “our story” as we seek to imitate Christ in his unqualified obedience to his Father’s will.

One issue raised by all of the Lutheran resources and Lutheran theologians cited above as crucial for Lutherans who seek to be faithful to the Lutheran expression of the just war tradition is that of conscientious objection. We noted earlier that one of the reasons that Yoder, in *When War Is Unjust*, is so eager to dialog with Lutherans (and so hopeful about the possibilities for dialog) is that Luther himself “called soldiers to refuse to serve in unjust wars.”⁵³ According to Luther,

...if a prince desired to go to war, and his cause was clearly unrighteous... we should neither follow nor help such a prince, because God [has] commanded us not to kill our neighbor or do him a wrong. Likewise, if the prince were to order us to bear false witness, steal, lie, or deceive, and the like. In such cases we should indeed give up our property and honor, our life and limb, so that God’s commandments remain.⁵⁴

Yoder rightly observes that

...[the] just war criteria are pointless if they cannot also demand, situationally, the refusal of some acts apparently commanded by the national interest. In modern times the person holding honestly to a just-war position may well be obliged to withdraw at least from certain military responsibilities (what has recently come to be called “selective conscientious objection”) and certain high levels of civilian command, if that command involvement is seen as taking moral responsibility for what actually goes on in the war.⁵⁵

⁵³ *When War Is Unjust*, dedications on copyright page.

⁵⁴ *Treatise on Good Works*, 100; cf. *Temporal Authority*, 130.

⁵⁵ *When War Is Unjust*, 22.

As Lutz explains, however, this (Christian and Lutheran) approach to just war creates a serious ethical and legal dilemma for military personnel who sincerely seek to be faithful to it. For while the American government recognizes the right of consistent or “vocational” pacifists (those who believe that *all* war is inherently immoral and that participation in *any* war would be wrong) to refuse to serve as combatants in a war, the same is not true for nonpacifists who object to a particular war. What Lutz writes in 1984 is still true today, and it needs to be taken quite seriously as the potential for war continues to escalate around the globe and the possibility looms of re-instituting the draft:

The law does not recognize the right of a citizen to make judgments about the morality of *specific* wars or military enterprises and then to withhold service as a combatant on the basis of such judgments. The irony is that a position held by relatively few of our citizens (“all wars are immoral”) is recognized under the draft law as valid; the view supposedly emanating from the religious tradition claimed by the great majority of Americans (“each war must be judged by strict ethical criteria”) has no legal status under the draft law.⁵⁶

Like other Lutheran commentators on this issue, Lutz recognizes the great “practical difficulty” faced by the government in this regard; how could it ever be determined fairly and accurately whether a “selective conscientious objector” is really objecting on the basis of conscience-bound religious convictions or on the basis of some lesser motive? For this very reason, says Lutz, this is an “ethically troubling” situation, and one that requires as much (if not more) moral courage and character than is required by adherents of pacifism:

I would argue that selective participants/objectors who come to a particular military enterprise with careful, conscientious judgments about its morality and then refuse participation on the basis of such moral reasoning are engaging more consciously in moral conduct than are total pacifists. In adopting the position that they can never, under any circumstances, engage in bearing arms, principled

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

pacifists have put the decision *beyond* the realm of moral judgments conditioned by day-to-day circumstances.⁵⁷

Such a position—which is the authentic *Lutheran* position on just war—requires not only profound moral courage and character on the part of individual objectors, but also on the part of the church that must offer them much-needed support in the wake of the inevitable legal and social consequences of their decisions:

Those who seek to follow an ethic such as the just/unjust war tradition rather than one of universal principle (“all used of armed force is always wrong”) are left without a legal place to stand. It is because of this dilemma that the religious communities following a justifiable-war ethic must be very clear: those who run afoul of their own nation’s laws because they follow that ethic deserve the fullest support of their churches. To be consistent, those churches ought to advocate change in the conscription law so that selective participation/objection regarding combat service is made legal. But until and unless the law is changed, those churches must stand with their young people who find themselves in civil disobedience out of faithfulness to the ethic they have learned.⁵⁸

The problem and challenge presented by selective conscientious objection is also the primary concern of Reinhard Hütter’s essay “Be Honest in Just War Thinking!” Hütter has many valuable insights and exhortations to offer in this essay, not the least of which is that “the denunciation of unjust wars is an inherent element of the truth-telling mandate of proclaiming God’s Word.”⁵⁹

One of the challenges for The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in properly catechizing its members on issues of war and peace is informing and instructing them regarding the (perhaps little-known) fact that their church body has clearly and definitively gone on record—in keeping with its own theological principles—as supporting selective conscientious objection and objectors. The report of its theological

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵⁹ “Be Honest in Just War Thinking,” 81.

commission on *Guidelines for Crucial Issues in Christian Citizenship*, as well as its report on *Civil Obedience and Disobedience*, offer explicit theological argumentation for this position and specific criteria to individuals seeking to make such judgments. At its 1969 convention the LCMS gave this position official status, resolving in Resolution 2-28 that the reports cited above be used “in providing a counseling and supporting ministry to those who conscientiously object to military service as well as to those who in conscience choose to serve in the military,” that the Synod “petition the government to grant equal status under law to the conscientious objector to a specific war as it does to a conscientious objector to all wars,” and that it investigate the matter “of amnesty for those who have refused to serve in the armed force for reasons of conscience.”⁶⁰

Issues Needing Further Clarification and Exploration

When it comes to Hauerwas’s strong emphasis on faithfulness to “the story of Christ” as the basis for Christian social ethics, perhaps the primary issue that needs further clarification from a Lutheran perspective is the question of Hauerwas’s own faithfulness to that story in all of its (often disconcerting) wholeness. Ironically, Hauerwas’s own account of the story of Israel, Christ and the church sometimes appears to be controlled and circumscribed by a systematic adherence to the “material principle” of pacifism, raising the same question Hauerwas is quick to put to others: whose story is this—*Scripture’s* story or a particularized account of Scripture’s story? Hauerwas gives very little explicit attention to portions or aspects of the story of Scripture (e.g., Old Testament accounts in which both Israel and God himself are directly involved in

⁶⁰ Res. 2-28, 1969 *Convention Proceedings*, 91. For the full text of this resolution, see Appendix I.

justifiable acts of violence;⁶¹ New Testament passages cited by Luther such as Christ's cleansing of the temple; and the apparent commendation of practicing soldiers by Jesus and John the Baptist) that challenge or complicate his pacifist version of God's story.

In a letter written in response to Hauerwas's critique of his article "Listening to Pacifists,"⁶² Daryl Cole raises this issue by pointing out, first of all, that "if the pacifism of the messianic community is characterized by anything, it is characterized by a renunciation of all use of force, not simply 'less violent alternatives.'"⁶³ Therefore, says Cole, "if pacifists are right about their use of force, then soldiering is the same thing, morally speaking, as prostitution. Each is a profession that is inherently evil and out of step with God's kingdom." However, says Cole, "such a view of soldiering is hard to establish within the text of the Christian Bible (much less the Jewish one)," as illustrated by a "useful thought experiment" based on specific texts of Scripture.

Consider the passage in Luke (3:14) where soldiers come to John the Baptist to be baptized. Simply follow the moral logic of pacifism and substitute "prostitutes" for "soldiers." Can anyone imagine prostitutes coming to John the Baptist to be baptized and John not telling them simply to quit their profession rather than offer advice on how to pursue it more justly? Similar substitutions should be made in the passages where Jesus deals with the centurion of great faith (Matthew 8:5-13, Luke 7:1-9), where Peter brings the gospel to Gentiles for the first time via the centurion Cornelius (Acts 10), and where the writer of Hebrews commends to his Christian audience the acts of force used by notable soldiers in the Old Testament (ch. 11). When we substitute prostitution for soldiery in these passages, the difficulty of reading pacifism back into the New Testament (as all pacifists of the messianic community do) become obvious.

To his credit, Hauerwas rarely fails to respond in some way to those who question or criticize his views; for this very reason, it is disconcerting to note that (as far as our research is able to determine) nowhere in his books or essays does he give serious,

⁶¹ We will discuss this issue in greater detail in the next chapter.

⁶² *FT* 125 (Aug-Sept 2002), 22-25.

⁶³ For the citations by Cole in this paragraph, see *FT* 128 (December 2002), 3-5.

substantive attention to exegetical questions such as those raised by Cole above that seem to have such serious implications for his pacifist views and their alleged grounding in the narrative of Scripture itself.

This failure or reluctance to deal fully and adequately with portions of Scripture's story that seem to condone the use of violence in certain circumstances may lead some to suspect that part of Hauerwas's preference for narrative and his distaste for systematics is the latter's disconcerting habit of forcing us to account for the *whole* truth of Scripture and not just the portions of the story that seem most meaningful and valuable to us. While such systematic approaches may themselves become forced in unhealthy ways, this discipline (rightly used) serves the salutary purpose of keeping us *honest* (a paramount concern of Hauerwas's!) when it comes to accounting for the whole story of the Holy Scriptures. As indicated above, we are not suggesting here that Hauerwas deny or set aside the Christological and ecclesial presuppositions on which his radical pacifism is based. We are simply suggesting—especially in view of his own strong insistence on the need to be fully faithful to the story of Scripture—that his account of those presuppositions might be more compelling and persuasive if a greater effort was made to show how those presuppositions take into account specific parts of Scripture's story that do not appear to be consistent with them.

In this connection, it also seems ironic (and at times, even somewhat disingenuous) that one of Hauerwas's sharpest criticisms of the just war tradition is its fluidity, flexibility, and ambiguity—its tendency to adapt and be adapted over time to a wide variety of historical situations and political realities and its inability to render “hard and fast” conclusions about whether a particular war can, in fact, be justified from a

Christian perspective. For someone who (primarily on the basis of a narrative approach to theology and ethics) consistently resists being described as having a position or as offering hard and fast definitions and conclusions”⁶⁴ to insist that others (e.g., just war thinkers) articulate their positions and conclusions in strictly dogmatic and unambiguous terms seems somewhat unfair and inconsistent, especially since—as Luther, Ramsey, Meilaender and all honest just war thinkers freely admit—a certain (and sometimes considerable) degree of ambiguity is inherent in the very fabric of a just war approach.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ See, e.g., *IGC*, 12; *HR*, 5, 13, 16, 31, etc.; see also the discussion of “The Definition of Violence” in the next chapter.

⁶⁵ For a helpful discussion of the ambiguity inherent in a (Lutheran) two realms approach to Christian participation in social and political life and debates, see Richard John Neuhaus, “The Ambiguities of ‘Christian America,’” *Concordia Journal* 17:3 (July 1991), 285-295.

Chapter Six

The Problem of Violence and the Politics of Jesus

Valid Hauerwasian Insights and Concerns: Taking Violence (and the Words and Witness of Jesus) Seriously

Hauerwas's pacifism is not (as is often alleged) utopianism. He understands the consequences of the fall for every person on earth and for every social and political community (including the church). Hauerwas has no illusions, therefore, about the possibility of creating a world free from violence, war, suffering, injustice and tragedy. As Christians, however—as those who have learned from Christ to put our trust in God and not in ourselves or in competing authorities—“we have the means to recognize and accept the tragic without turning to violence:”

For finally our freedom is learning how to exist in the world, a violent world, in peace with ourselves and others. The violence of the world is but a mirror of the violence of our lives. We say we desire peace, but we have not the souls for it. We fear the boredom peace seems to imply. Even more we fear the lack of control a commitment to peace would entail. As a result the more we seek to bring “under our control,” the more violent we have to become to protect what we have. And the more violent we allow ourselves to become, the more vulnerable we are to challenges.¹

Much of what Hauerwas says about violence as evidence of human sinfulness and of our insidious, idolatrous insistence on claiming control of our lives and destinies is not only true but quite profound, and it has profound implications for the church's peaceable message and mission. If we have any hope at all of helping the world to see itself as it really is, then we must first see ourselves as we really are: as fellow sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, consumed by the craving to “play God” and to choose and create our

¹ PK, 48-49.

own gods rather than letting God be God. If we are honest, we must admit that it is all too often true that

Our need to be in control is the basis for the violence of our lives. For since our “control” and “power” cannot but help but be built on an insufficient basis, we must use force to maintain the illusion that we are in control. We are deeply afraid of losing what unity of self we have achieved. Any idea or person threatening that unity must either be manipulated or eliminated. We fear others because they always stand as an implicit challenge to our deceptions. Thus it seems the inherent necessity of all people to have or create an enemy.²

Those who (like Lutherans) have been reared in the context of Christian traditions that take for granted the validity and viability of just war thinking may not be nearly as aware as they should be of the seriousness of the problem of violence in their hearts, homes, lives, nations, and world—nor about the way this violence may penetrate the structures, patterns, habits and practices of congregational life and the politics of the institutional church. Lutherans who have learned “too well” (i.e., too simplistically) the “distinction between Law and Gospel” can easily read Jesus’ words in Matthew 5 (about “turning the other cheek” and not resisting those who do evil and forgiving our enemies) exactly as Luther refused to read them (and as Niebuhr resigned himself to reading them): as “ideal but impossible” commands that are ultimately not relevant to life in the real world, but are simply meant to remind us of the depth of our sinfulness and our tragic need to choose continually between greater sins and lesser sins in our attempt to reflect in our behavior a dim approximation God’s will in a sinful world.

From an academic perspective, it may be possible to take issue with Yoder’s characterization of Luther’s ethic as essentially “dualistic”—i.e., as suggesting that Jesus’ words about non-resistance and non-violence must be taken seriously on a personal level

² *Ibid.*, 47.

but not on a social or political level.³ Aside from that academic debate, however, one wonders how many Lutherans would be willing to identify with Luther's uncompromising insistence that these words be taken seriously even on a *personal* (or *ecclesial*) level as offering actual, practical guidance for the Christian life and the life of the church.

In Romans 12 [:19] Paul says, "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God." In the same sense he praises the Corinthians for gladly suffering if someone hits or robs them, II Corinthians 11 [:20]. And in 1 Corinthians 6 [:1-2] he condemns them for going to court for the sake of property rather than suffering injustice. Indeed, our leader, Jesus Christ, says in Matthew 7 [5:44] that we should bless those who insult us, pray for our persecutors, love our enemies, and do good to those who do evil to us. These, dear friends, are our Christian laws....[I]f you claim that you are Christians and like to be called Christians and want to be known as Christians, then you must allow your law to be held up rightly.... If you will not bear this law, then lay aside the name of Christian and claim another name that accords with your actions, or Christ himself will tear his name away from you....⁴

The question is worth asking: how well do Lutheran Christians (as individuals and in their congregational and institutional life, relationships and debates) bear up under the weight of these strong words of Luther? Hauerwas's warnings about the ever-present and insidious nature of violence can (at the very least) serve to prod us to do some careful self-examination in light of Luther's own teaching concerning the implications of the "law of Christ" for our personal and ecclesial conversation and conduct.

This dissertation is being written at a time when the writer's own church body, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, is coming to the close of an ecclesial triennium marked and marred by serious intra-synodical conflict and division, bitter infighting between various groups and parties within the Synod, the issuing of charges and

³ See *Christian Witness to the State*, 63-64.

⁴ *Admonition to Peace*, 29; 28.

counter-charges of false doctrine and political power-plays, and a highly-charged convention (church assembly) at which the majority of decisions were made by way of hotly contested resolutions typically adopted by the slimmest of margins. At the same time, ironically, the theme and central emphasis of this convention was the “mission of the church”—its urgent, all-important, God-given calling and responsibility to bear witness to the world concerning the grace, forgiveness, kindness, and peace—with God and with one another—that is available only in and through Jesus Christ. If it is true, as Hauerwas insists, that the most significant witness the church has to offer to the world is the witness of its own life, character, and practices as an embodiment of the peaceable kingdom of Christ, then (in view of the characterization offered above) this has serious implications for a church like The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. It means that the LCMS must take utterly seriously the undeniable contradiction between the witness that it seeks to give to the world by way of its proclamation of the Gospel message and the witness that it actually *is* giving to the world through its apparent inability or unwillingness to grasp the real and practical implications of that Gospel for its own life together as members of Christ’s “peaceable community,” the church. As Hauerwas says, ultimately the church is known by the character of its own communal life, “and if we lack that character, the world rightly”—or at least understandably and inevitably—“draws the conclusion that the God we worship is in fact a false God.”⁵ No matter how “right,” “true,” and “orthodox” our theology and our written and spoken articulation of the precious message of God’s peace that we seek to share, it is difficult to imagine our church body gaining an eager and sympathetic hearing for that message if it is not incarnate in our own life together as God’s peaceable community on earth.

⁵ PK, 109.

Furthermore, it is difficult to imagine how a church like The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod can truly be or become an effective and authentic witness for peace in the world as long as the characteristic for which it is most widely and publicly known is its own internal and institutional lack of peace and harmony. This is not merely a bureaucratic or institutional problem or issue—it has serious ramifications for the very integrity (even survival) of our church body as an authentic witness for Christ and his Gospel in and to a watching world. At the same time, although this pattern of institutional violence is not merely an institutional problem, it must certainly be addressed also in very concrete, practical ways that enable us to examine how the very structure of our institutional life seems to foster and encourage (rather than prevent and discourage) conflict, division, and the constant grasping for control among those who hold contrasting views regarding important issues. While it is true (of course) that decision-making in any organization or institution (including the church) will inevitably involve some use of power and experience some degree of conflict resulting from disagreements about how that power is or should be exercised, ways must be found—especially in the church—to deal with those disagreements both honestly *and* charitably, both seriously *and* civilly, in ways that both require and promote fraternal dialog, conversation, and (where necessary) reconciliation rather than continuing dissension and verbal and political sparring and dueling.

The regrettable situation in this writer's own church body testifies to the wisdom and lucidity of Hauerwas's assertion that the way of violence and coercion is always the easiest way to deal with disagreements and with challenges to our personal craving (however properly motivated, from our own perspective) to be in control. Overcoming

such tendencies, insists Hauerwas, requires “hard work.” It requires (among other things) the patient and persistent determination to seek more imaginative and creative ways to address our difficulties and disagreements—ways that go beyond “majority votes” at conventions and “rules and bylaws” that seek to restrain outward behavior in the absence of an inward desire for peace and unity based on truth and trust. Offering specific creative solutions to such problems in this (highly specific and illustrative) case goes beyond the scope of this study. At the very least, however, it would seem to require a strong commitment on the part of church leaders to work toward identifying the major issues of contention and to create both the “space” and the “place” for frank, genuine and fraternal conversation regarding those issues. Only in this way will it be possible for God’s Spirit, working through the Word of Christ (which must stand at the center of those conversations), to restore some sense of the peace and unity that must go hand in hand with our proclamation of Christ’s peace to the world.

With regard to the Christian perspective on issues of war and peace, Lutherans can also benefit from Hauerwas’s insights about the all-too-frequent connection between violence and the craving for control by being attentive to the subtle ways that the (real or potential) use of unjustified *governmental* violence can be rationalized by personal concerns about safety and security and survival that (while understandable) do not form the theological basis for Christian just war thinking. Whenever war is *not* justified, we must refuse to participate in it or support it, resist the temptation to seek to control the situation by our own power, and instead put our trust in God and bring our pleas for help and deliverance before his throne of grace:

The psalms show us many examples of genuine saints taking their needs to God and complaining to him about them. They seek help from God; they do not try to

defend themselves or to resist evil. That kind of prayer would have been have more help to you, in all your needs, than if the world were full of people on your side. This would be especially true if, besides that, you had a good conscience and the comforting assurance that your prayers were heard, as his promises declare: “God is the Savior of all men, especially those who believe,” I Timothy 4 [:10]; “Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver you,” Psalm 50 [:15]; He called upon me in trouble, therefore I will help him,” Psalm 91 [:15]. See! That is the Christian way to get rid of misfortune and evil, that is, to endure it and call upon God. But because you neither call upon God nor patiently endure, but rather help yourselves by your own power and make yourselves your own god and savior, God cannot and must not be your God and Savior.⁶

Where Lutherans and Hauerwasians part ways, of course, is on the question of whether violence can *ever* be used by Christians in a way that does not contradict the core meaning and message of the life and death of Jesus and its implications for the peaceable witness of the church, and in a way that does not reflect a sinful (faithless) craving for control, but actually flows from true and genuine *faith* in God as Creator and Redeemer and from true and genuine (Christ-like) *love* for one’s neighbor in the context of fulfilling one’s God-given vocation in the world. The challenge for Lutherans—both in terms of offering a clear and consistent Lutheran witness in this regard and in terms of articulating the basis on which serious, Christ-centered dialog with Hauerwasians might take place—is to articulate more clearly than has (perhaps) been done in the past how the occasional justification of acts of violence by Christians (especially those serving in specific civic vocations that inevitably require the use of violence) is consistent with the non-violent witness of Jesus and his climactic act of non-resistant submission on the cross. We address this challenge in the following section and in our discussion of the two kinds of righteousness and their connection to Christian vocation in chapter seven.

⁶ *Admonition to Peace*, 34.

Lutheran Challenges and Contributions:
The Hidden Nature of God's Work in Both Realms

The Strange Work of God's "Merciful Wrath" in the Civil Realm

Sharply criticizing the just war theory and its viability in a world of modern warfare, Roman Catholic James Douglass writes as one who approaches the issue from within the just war tradition itself. The basic (and fatal) problem with the just war tradition today, says Douglass, is that it cannot "bear the cross:"

It is evident that the doctrine [of just war] is too weak in its theological presuppositions to be able to support the cross, either the cross of conscientious objection or the cross of unilateral disarmament. The foundations of a just-war theory do not have the strength to sustain adequately the kind of witness demanded today by its own moral logic, which taken by itself compels one to relinquish all recourse to modern war.⁷

Hauerwas's primary concern, however, is not the ability of certain theological presuppositions to "bear the cross" of "unilateral disarmament" or even of conscientious objection, but their ability to bear the cross of Christ himself. "For," as Hauerwas says, "if you believe that Jesus is the messiah of Israel, then 'everything else follows, doesn't it?'"⁸

Lutherans would certainly agree with this assertion from Hauerwas's essay "A Story-Formed Community," even if they cannot agree with Hauerwas's specific understanding of the nature of the messiahship of Jesus and its implications for the church. The crucial Lutheran contribution to the question of "the problem of violence and the politics of Jesus" is Luther's insight, based primarily on his understanding of God's hidden and alien work in the left-hand kingdom as a providential work of

⁷ James Douglass, *The Non-Violent Cross* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1966), 172.

⁸ "Story-Formed Community," 198.

divine love and mercy, that participation in violence need not *always* stem from a sinful craving to exact personal vengeance or exercise god-like control, but it actually can at times and in certain situations stem from true faith in God, loyalty to God, and love for one's neighbor. Here the words of Gustaf Wingren cited earlier are worth repeating, not only for their pithy insight into the reality of the strange work of God's merciful wrath and violence but also for their practical relevance to the issue of Christian vocation (also a primary concern of Luther's):

God's wrath is an instrument of his love. To be sure, there can never be a clearly evident relation between divine wrath and love, but when cross and suffering come upon man he has to believe that God's love is concealed in his wrath. He will be able to see the connection only after death. As an officeholder he is often in a situation where he has to bring cross and suffering upon others; that is, he has to serve as a point through which God's stern law and punitive wrath break through. The reaction is like that which occurs when a man himself is smitten by God's wrath; reason cannot see how this wrath can be an instrument of God's love. Then man is usually unwilling to give himself to an office in which he must bring suffering on others, as, for instance, in military service or judicial action, in the work of a soldier or an agent of justice. Faith, however, is willing to serve in this way, for it has learned that God's love is veiled under law. Faith trusts that the mandate of a man's vocation leads to something good; behind all stations and offices stands the Creator, who is none other than the God of the gospel. So even severe action is something which a Christian can freely will, certain about God's command.⁹

Such a view is unthinkable for Hauerwas, of course, because of the centrality of nonviolence in his understanding of the nature and meaning of Christ's cross and its necessary implications for the nonviolent character of any authentic Christian witness to the world. We recall his affirmation of the words of Yoder:

Christ is *agape*; self-giving, nonresistant love. At the cross this nonresistance, including the refusal to use political means of self-defense, found its ultimate revelation in the uncomplaining and forgiving death of the innocent at the hands of the guilty. This death reveals how God deals with evil; here is the only valid starting point for Christian pacifism or nonresistance. The cross is the extreme

⁹ Wingren, 232.

demonstration that *agape* seeks neither effectiveness nor justice, and is willing to suffer any loss or seeming defeat for the sake of obedience.¹⁰

Luther insists, however, that even Christ's work can and must be viewed in the context of his own divinely-given office and vocation, and in the context of the unique nature of Christ's kingship:

You ask: Why did not Christ and the apostles bear the sword? Answer: You tell me, why did Christ not take a wife, or become a cobbler or a tailor. If an office or vocation were to be regarded as disreputable on the ground that Christ did not pursue it himself, what would become of all the offices and vocations other than the ministry, the one occupation he did follow? Christ pursued his own office and vocation, but he did not thereby reject any other. It was not incumbent upon him to bear the sword, for he was to exercise only that function by which his kingdom is governed and which properly serves his kingdom. Now, it is not essential to his kingdom that he be a married man, a cobbler, tailor, farmer, prince, hangman, or constable; neither is the temporal sword or law essential to it, but only God's Word and Spirit. It is by these that his people are ruled inwardly. This is the office which he also exercised then and still exercises now, always bestowing God's Word and Spirit.¹¹

Therefore, says Luther, "although Christ did not bear or prescribe the sword, it is sufficient that he did not forbid or abolish it but actually confirmed it,"¹² just as he confirmed marriage without himself taking a wife. For Hauerwas, absolute nonviolence is an absolutely essential characteristic of the character of Christ and is the key to understanding the very nature of his person and work. Luther believed that Christ eschewed violence not because it was absolutely essential that he do so in any and every situation (and, in fact, Scripture suggests that even Christ—as in the cleansing of the temple—did not *always* refrain from acts of violence), but because he wanted to make it clear that violence was *not essential* to the unique nature and purpose of his kingdom.

He had to manifest himself wholly in connection with that estate and calling which alone expressly served his kingdom, lest from his example there should be

¹⁰ *Grain*, 219; cf. *The Original Revolution*, 59.

¹¹ *Temporal Authority*, 100-101.

¹² *Ibid.*, 101.

deduced the justification or necessity of teaching and believing that the kingdom of God could not exist without matrimony and the sword and similar externals (since Christ's example is necessarily binding), when in fact it exists solely by God's Word and Spirit. This was and had to be Christ's peculiar function as the Supreme King in this kingdom. Since not all Christians, however, have this same function... it is fitting that they should have some other external office by which God may be served.¹³

In these "other external offices," Christians serve not only God but they also serve their neighbor in love—even when such offices or vocations may involve the use of necessary violence.

Here you inquire further, whether constables, hangmen, jurists, lawyers, and others of similar function can also be Christians and in a state of salvation. Answer: If the governing authority and its sword are a divine service, as was proved above, then everything that is essential for the authority's bearing of the sword must also be divine service. There must be those who arrest, prosecute, execute, and destroy the wicked, and who protect, acquit, defend, and save the good. Therefore, when they perform their duties, not with the intention of seeking their own ends but only of helping the law and the governing authority function to coerce the wicked, there is no peril in that; they may use their office like anybody else would use his trade, as a means of livelihood. For, as has been said, love of neighbor is not concerned about its own; it considers not how great or humble, but how profitable and needful the works are for neighbor or community.¹⁴

As noted earlier, even apart from the specific *civic* vocations cited above by Luther, a Christian may (in extreme circumstances) be called upon to use force to defend a neighbor in need. In such cases (as we discussed) a Christian is carrying out the responsibilities of his more general vocation as "neighbor." It should be emphasized once again, however, that Luther insists (with Christ and the New Testament!) that a Christian must *never* use violence merely in self-interest or self-defense, or when motivated by hatred or a desire for personal vengeance. And even within the context of one's vocation of neighbor or civil servant, a Christian must never use violence in ways

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 103-104.

or situations that cannot be justified as divinely allowed or approved acts of love performed for the sake of public order, justice and peace and/or in service to one's neighbor in need. When asked or expected to participate in unjustified works of violence, a Christian has no choice but to "obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

This understanding of violence as "divine service" and as "a work of Christian love" is admittedly difficult to grasp, says Luther—if viewed simplistically, it even seems contradictory and paradoxical. But from the vantage point of faith, things are not always what they seem to be: "Now slaying and robbing do not seem to be works of love. A simple man therefore does not think it is a Christian thing to do. In truth, however, even this is a work of love."¹⁵ Just as a doctor does not seem kind and loving when he amputates a hand or foot in order to save the body, in the same way (says Luther):

...when I think of a soldier fulfilling his office by punishing the wicked, killing the wicked, and creating so much misery, it seems an un-Christian work completely contrary to Christian love. But when I think of how it protects the good and keeps and preserves wife and child, house and farm, property, and honor and peace, then I see how precious and godly this work is; and I observe that it amputates a leg or hand, so that the whole body may not perish. For if the sword were not on guard to preserve peace, everything in the world would be ruined because of lack of peace. Therefore, such a [justified] war is only a very brief lack of peace that prevents an everlasting and immeasurable lack of peace, a small misfortune that prevents a great misfortune.¹⁶

Yet Luther goes one step further. When necessary and justifiable, such acts of violence are not only commendable human acts performed in service to God and neighbor, they are actually "works of God," performed by God himself through human instruments.

This is why God honors the sword so highly that he says that he himself has instituted it [Rom. 13:1] and does not want men to say or think that they have invented it or instituted it. For the hand that wields this sword and kills with it is

¹⁵ *Whether Soldiers*, 96.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

not man's hand, but God's; and it is not man, but God, who hangs, tortures, beheads, kills, and fights. All these are God's works and judgments.¹⁷

Frederic Cleve finds confirmation for this view in Luther's explanation of the first commandment:

If God has instituted the sword, he is also the supreme authority that uses the sword. In his explanation of the first commandment Luther states that anything that we receive from human beings we actually receive from God, whenever events in question are ordained and commanded by God. The created things are only the hand or the means through which God acts. This is something that Luther applies directly to the use of power in mundane contexts. In his opinion God has created the justice there is on earth, and God is its Master and Lord, and also maintains this earthly justice. Therefore, the hand that sways the sword is no human hand, but God's hand. It is God who is the executioner, who puts the convict on the rack, who wages war and kills. A soldier who fights with a clear conscience has a right to think that his fist is God's fist and his lance is the lance of God. He is justified in thinking: It is not I that cuts and kills, but God and my prince, whose servants my hand and my body are.¹⁸

Since such acts of *justified* violence are actually the works of a good and loving God, no one has the right or authority to say that Christians are forbidden to participate in them:

Be not so wicked, my friend, as to say, "A Christian may not do that which is God's own peculiar work, ordinance, and creation." Else you must also say, "A Christian must not eat, drink, or be married," for these are also God's work and ordinance. If it is God's work and creation, then it is good, so good that everyone can use it in a Christian and salutary way, as Paul says in II Timothy 4, "Everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected by those who believe and know the truth." Under "everything created by God" you must include not simply food and drink, clothing and shoes, but also authority and subjection, protection and punishment.¹⁹

Not only, in fact, *may* Christians participate in such works; according to Luther, they *must*—if and when such works are clearly commended and commanded by God for the sake of one's neighbor.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Cleve, 81-82.

¹⁹ *Temporal Authority*, 99.

Just as [the Christian] performs all other works of love which he himself does not need—he does not visit the sick in order that he himself may be made well, or feed others because he himself needs food—so he serves the governing authority not because he needs it but for the sake of others, that they may be protected and that the wicked may not become worse. He loses nothing by this; such service in so way harms him, yet it is of great benefit to the world. If he did not so serve he would not be acting as a Christian but even contrary to love; he would also be setting a bad example to others who in like manner would not submit to authority, even though they were not Christians. In this way the gospel would be brought into disrepute, as though it taught insurrection and produced self-willed people unwilling to benefit or serve others, when in fact it makes a Christian the servant of all.²⁰

John Stephenson observes:

It is essential to grasp that Luther regards secular government...as an integral part of the good divine work of preservation, for—especially when it conscientiously respects its appointed limits—civil authority acts as a curb against the kingdom of the devil. Accordingly, although its coercive authority must partially take the form of punishment and notwithstanding the fact that, as a tool of God’s wrath, it must work his *opus alienum*, the eye of faith may discern in secular authority a manifestation—albeit usually blurred and at times outright paradoxical—of divine love.²¹

Stephenson’s comment about the appointed limits of civil authority serves as a vital reminder (lest we forget!) that the primary purpose of the various just war criteria set forth by Luther (in keeping with the just war tradition) is to *limit* the use of violence and to ensure that it is used only when absolutely necessary and appropriate, in divinely approved ways and for God-pleasing reasons: namely, in pursuit of peace and the maintenance of order. For Luther, such justifiable participation in violence is not (or at least ought never be viewed as) a human attempt to “control history:” “Whichever side... suffers defeat, whether it be in the right or in the wrong, must accept it as a punishment from God....You are his creature and He can do with you as He wills, just so your

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 94.

²¹ John R. Stephenson, “The Two Governments and the Two Kingdoms in Luther’s Thought,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 34:4 (August 1981), 324.

conscience is clear.”²² In this sense, too, God’s work is a strange and hidden work—his ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9). Our task is not (contrary to Yoder’s assertion) to “discern definitively and... not only in the light of faith”²³ how God is working in the world. Since (for Luther) God’s work in the world is always in some sense hidden, faith is always required to discern it. Ultimately, those who are constrained by conscience to support or participate in acts of violence in obedience to God and out of love for one’s neighbor trust not in their “right decision” or “right discernment” of God’s will or activity in the world, but in “the innocent blood of your dear Son, my Lord Jesus Christ [who] redeems and saves me. This is the basis on which I stand before you. In this faith I will live and die, fight, and do everything else.”²⁴ In this faith, too, of course, the Christian must *refuse* to participate in violence—no matter what the cost—if and when called upon to do so in ways that are clearly contrary to God’s Word and will.

God’s “Strange Work” in the Civil Realm and the Theology of the Cross

Ultimately, perhaps the most helpful and unique contribution Lutherans can make to a proper understanding of God’s “strange work” in the (left-hand) realm of civil government is to demonstrate how that work is (in many ways) analogous to God’s strange work in the (right-hand) realm of the government of Christ. As Luther understood, it is precisely through the violence and judgment endured by Christ on the cross (not only by the hands of sinners and the power-hungry earthly authorities, but ultimately by the wrathful hand of God himself) that God reveals himself to be a

²² *Temporal Authority*, 126.

²³ See *PJ*, 158-159.

²⁴ *Whether Soldiers*, 135-136.

gracious, merciful and peaceable God. In his “Heidelberg Theses,” therefore, Luther insists:

19. That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened [Rom. 1:20].
20. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.
21. A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.²⁵

Paul Althaus writes:

The theology of the cross permeates all of Luther’s theological thought. All true theology is “wisdom of the cross.” This means that the cross of Christ is the standard by which all genuine theological knowledge is measured, whether of the reality of God, of his grace, of his salvation, of the Christian life, or of the church of Christ. The cross means that all these realities are hidden. The cross hides God himself. For it reveals not the might but the helplessness of God. God’s power appears not directly but paradoxically under helplessness and lowliness. Thus it is that *God’s grace is hidden under his wrath* and that his gifts and benefits are “hidden under the cross”....God’s reality thus completely contradicts the world’s standards. In the eyes of the world—and they are also our eyes—God’s truth seems to be a lie and the world’s lies seem to be the truth. The world—and Christians also belong to this world—judges God on the basis of what he does with his own and concludes that he is a devil. The devil, however, appears to be God, the Lord of the world. That is the terrible impression the reality of the world gives. All men, including the Christian, must endure before the miracle of faith can occur. The man who believes must repeatedly pass from this experience to that faith which recognizes the reality of the grace, truth, and faithfulness of God hidden under its opposite.²⁶

For Luther (in contrast to Yoder and Hauerwas), faith does not mean primarily faithfulness to the nonviolent example of Christ, but (in a sense) it means the very opposite: it means to despair completely in one’s ability to follow the *example* of Christ and instead to trust completely in the God who, by means of the very violence he himself

²⁵ *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*, LW 31, 40.

²⁶ Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 30-31.

inflicted upon Christ on the cross in our stead, shows himself (despite all outward appearances) to be a gracious, kind, and loving God.

The theology of the cross works with a standard exactly contrary to that of the theology of glory....This standard is the cross....The theology of glory leads man to stand before God and strike a bargain on the basis of ethical achievement in fulfilling the law, whereas the theology of the cross views man as one who has been called to suffer. Man's cross "destroys man's self-confidence," so that now, instead of wanting to do something himself, he allows God to do everything in him. Such a man has been led from moralistic activism to pure receptivity.²⁷

This radical faith that views everything in relationship to God as "pure receptivity" and "pure gift" does not discount obedience and new life lived in imitation of Christ; rather it makes such a life possible. It allows the Christian to see and understand (by faith) that even this new life is ultimately nothing but another free gift of God in Jesus Christ. Thus, for Luther,

The theology of the cross means that God hides himself in his work of salvation and that he acts and creates paradoxically while camouflaging his work to make it look as though he were doing the opposite. In this Luther feels that God glorifies himself as God. God has the power to create out of nothing; he can even create something out of its opposite. This is demonstrated by the reversal of all earthly standards and relationships. God shows that he is God precisely in the fact that he is mighty in weakness, glorious in lowliness, living and life-giving in death. This in Luther's thinking, the theology of the cross and God's being are most intimately connected.²⁸

One cannot truly know God without coming to know him through the "alien work" of the wrath and suffering of the cross of Christ, through which he (paradoxically) performs his proper work of grace, love and forgiveness. And it is this same God who works in a strikingly similar way in the left-hand realm. "Although the severity and wrath of the world's kingdom seems unmerciful," writes Luther, "nevertheless, when we

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

see it rightly [with the eyes of faith and in the light of the theology of the cross], it is not the least of God's mercies."²⁹ Robert Kolb writes:

The Gospel permits us to recognize that God's judgment [including his judgment through human disasters such as war] is an expression of His ultimate love.... We would rather write a history of our society without the necessity of such judgment. In view of the fact that we have seized the pen and written a history ridden by rebellion against our God, we can rejoice in the judgment that recalls—that recalls the fresh breeze of Eden and that recalls us out of the storm of our sin.³⁰

As the authors of the study *Holy Resolve: Terror and War Today* rightly recognize, the specter of war raises some very terrible and temptation-riddled questions:

Why doesn't God judge here and now terrorists or nations who play war games with real, deadly toys? Is He at fault for not intervening in these crises? How can fellow human beings, created in God's image, hate us so intensely that they would die for the opportunity to murder us?³¹

Some Christians, they suggest, may experience profound and troubling anger at God for "letting war happen;" other may "chafe at war" and wonder whether or how they can support the government's decision to go to war. "How," they ask, "are fear, love, and trust involved" in answering these questions? Their answer points us to the mystery of God's hidden work in the cross of Christ:

Apart from God's love, we couldn't dare ask such questions. Because we know he loves us, we ask and seek answers from His Word. Scripture declares that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, perfectly submitted Himself to His Father's will. Fearing no human threat and loving His Father above all others, He trusted completely in His Father's help. Christ kept God's Law perfectly in our place. He submitted Himself to authority—earthly and heavenly—and accepted the death sentence of the cross, suffering the just punishment for our sins. Having accomplished this mission, once and for all, He rose from the dead to bring us forgiveness of our sins, true life, and salvation. In the cross, which appeared to be only evil, God hid the greatest good—the salvation of the world.³²

²⁹ *An Open Letter*, 71.

³⁰ Kolb, "Christian Civic Responsibility," 15.

³¹ *Holy Resolve*, 8.

³² *Ibid.*, 9.

In his discussion of the “hidden God,” “the way of the cross,” and the problem of evil in his book *Where God Meets Man*, Lutheran theologian Gerhard Forde points out:

For Luther most attempts to “solve” the problem of evil are theologically suspect because they involve the same kind of illegitimate attempts to penetrate God’s “mask” that we have already seen. One usually tries to solve the problems by limiting God’s omnipotence in some way. But all such theoretical attempts are of little real use. When one is really met by tragedy and sorrow it is small comfort to be confronted by a theoretical discourse on whether or not God is completely in control of things. The real question is whether we have any warrant to affirm life and to believe in the face of evil and tragedy that the good God is in fact ultimate control, whether we can confess our trust in “the Father Almighty.” The question is really whether anything that happens here is strong enough to enable us to look evil in the face and still say, “I believe.”³³

According to Forde:

Luther’s conviction was that such a thing happened in the cross and resurrection of Christ. There something was accomplished: the will of God was revealed in such a way as to enable us to say, “I believe in God the Father Almighty,” which means, “I trust God with the government of the world.” Of course this is not a solution to the problem of evil in the sense that it explains where it came from or how it started or how exactly it is related to God’s omnipotence. Luther has no better answers to those questions than anyone else: the problem of evil remains for him a deep mystery. But by making the distinction between God hidden and God revealed he points out better how it might actually be handled. Apart from his revelation in Christ, God is hidden. We have, ultimately, no means for penetrating that hiddenness. We don’t really even have a basis for making an absolute separation between good and evil. Many things we think are good turn out to be evil in the end and *vice versa*. But this confusion of good and evil, this impenetrable hiddenness drives us to that one place where the hiddenness is broken through: the cross. Because of the cross we can say, “I believe in a good God, creator of a good earth.” There God has come down to earth and revealed his will for his.³⁴

Only as we comprehend God’s ability to bring good out of the apparent evil of the cross can we begin to reflect meaningful on the next question raised in *Holy Resolve*:

“How does God also use war, which can appear to be only evil, to bring people His help

³³ Gerhard O. Forde, *Where God Meets Man: Luther’s Down-to-Earth Approach to the Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), 29-30.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

and blessing?”³⁵ We cannot answer this question with the eyes of reason or the eyes of human experience, which (on the basis of a theology of glory) is bound to call “evil good” and “good evil.” Fortunately, however,

The Scriptures...have good, clear eyes [Matt. 6:22-33] and see the temporal sword aright. They see that out of great mercy, it must be unmerciful, and from utter kindness, it must exercise wrath and severity. As Peter and Paul say, it is God’s servant for vengeance, wrath, and punishment upon the wicked, but for the protection, praise, and honor of the righteous [1 Pet. 2:14; Rom. 13:4]. It looks upon the righteous with mercy, and so that they may not suffer, it guards, bites, stabs, cuts, hews, and slays, as God has commanded; and it know that it serves God in doing even this. The merciless punishment of the wicked is not being carried out just to punish the wicked, and make them atone for the evil desires that are in their blood, but to protect the righteous and maintain peace and safety. And beyond all doubt, these are precious works of mercy, love, and kindness, since there is nothing on earth that is worse than disturbance, insecurity, oppression, violence and injustice. Who could or would stay alive if such things were the rule? Therefore the wrath and severity of the sword is just as necessary to people as eating and drinking, even as life itself.³⁶

This does not suggest, of course, that those whom Luther describes here as “the righteous” (law-abiding citizens, including Christians) may not also suffer at times (even frequently) at the hands of unjust and ungodly leaders and enemies. The cross answers that question by assuring us of the ever-certain and everlasting love of God in Christ, and by turning our eyes of faith to the promise that someday “our dear Lord Jesus Christ [will] come down from heaven with the Last Judgment and strike down... all tyrants and the godless, and deliver us [once and for all] from all sins and from all evil. Amen.”³⁷

Finally, as Luther suggests, even God’s ultimate “work of wrath,” the final judgment, is a work of great mercy and love performed on behalf of those who trust in Christ as Savior and Lord—for there can be no final end to the cosmic war against sin,

³⁵ *Holy Resolve*, 9.

³⁶ *Open Letter*, 73.

³⁷ *On War Against the Turk*, 205.

death, hell and the devil without a final Armageddon in which the enemies of God and his church are vanquished once and for all. Only when “the wrath of God is finished” do the saints “sing the song of Moses... and the song of the Lamb;” only when the “seven bowls of God’s wrath” have been fully emptied upon the earth does the angel rejoice in the “justness” of God:

“Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you have brought these judgments. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!” And I heard the altar saying: “Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!”³⁸

At this very point, however, it seems appropriate to add a sobering word of caution and even warning. Scripture’s theology of the cross and its analogous manifestation of “God’s merciful wrath” in the civil realm can easily become a theology of glory if we glorify violence as such, or seek to use these *God*-glorifying teachings of Scripture to explain and justify our own self-devised and self-appointed words and works of wrath and violence in the church or in the world. Like all true and radical teachings of Scripture, the teaching of God’s alien work in both kingdoms is an exceedingly dangerous teaching—with the smallest of slips in any direction, it can quickly and easily degenerate into sheer heresy.³⁹ As we discussed in the very first chapter of our study, the (proper and Biblical) justification of violence as “God’s work” in the left-hand realm can be (and often has been) used to justify a crusade mentality in which Christians have taken it upon themselves to identify, punish and even eliminate “God’s enemies. In addition, the (proper and Biblical) concern for “God’s work” and God’s truth in the realm

³⁸ See Rev. 15:1-4; 16:1-7. Unless otherwise noted (or quoted from other sources), all quotations of Scripture are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2001).

³⁹ No one expresses this more vividly than G. K. Chesterton in his classic work *Orthodoxy: The Romance of Faith* (New York: Doubleday, 1959), 100-101.

of his rule in Christ has been used to justify sinful conflict in the church as well as wrong-headed efforts to defend and establish God's kingdom here on earth through force, violence and/or coercion.

There are dangers on every side, and the only way to guard against these dangers is to continue to strive to articulate as carefully as possible—and to defend as zealously as God gives us the grace and wisdom to do so—the *whole* truth of God's Word with all of its (often subtle) distinctions and connections. This includes the crucial distinction between the two realms, the distinction between *God's work* in both realms and our *faith-based* participation in it (as opposed to our sinful attempts to control it), the connection between justification and sanctification (as this relates to our lives and conduct in *both* realms), and the connection between Christology and ecclesiology—the connection between the radical and unique work of Christ and radical and unique calling of his church in the world. On the other hand, it is not a capitulation to a theology of glory, but a proper expression of Scripture's true theology of the cross, to recognize and celebrate the glorious truth that he who humbled himself even to the point of death on the cross has now been highly exalted by God and given the name that is above all names, "so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (Phil. 2:2:9-11). Nor is it a capitulation to a theology of glory to rejoice and take comfort in God's sure promise that by his own grace and power in Christ, and in his own time and way, we will someday share fully in Christ's eternal victory over all of God's enemies and reign with him "in glory and dominion forever and ever" (Rev. 1:6).

Issues Needing Further Clarification and Exploration

The Wrath of God and of the Lamb

On the basis of the foregoing summary of the Lutheran perspective on “The Problem of Violence and the Politics of Jesus,” one of the primary issues that (for Lutherans) requires further clarification in the thought of Yoder and Hauerwas is how they understand and interpret the teaching of Scripture regarding God’s wrath against sinners, which is hardly a minor theme in the Bible as a whole. One looks in vain for an explicit discussion of this theme in the writings of Yoder and Hauerwas. There is a great emphasis on God’s mercy, love, kindness, patience, forgiveness, trustworthiness, wisdom and power, but where (one is left to wonder) does the prominent (and theologically crucial) Scriptural teaching of God’s real and righteous wrath fit into the theology and ethics of Yoder and Hauerwas?

One problematic aspect of the teaching of God’s wrath in Scripture (for Yoder and Hauerwas) is its rather unambiguous portrayal of God’s support for and participation in numerous of wars and acts of violence in the Old Testament. This is, of course, problematic in various ways for all readers and interpreters of Scripture—we noted in the introduction the need for great care in either “spiritualizing” these texts or interpreting and applying them too literalistically (e.g., abstracting them from the unique theocratic context of the Old Testament)—as if they provide direct guidance for the church or state today in its struggle against its enemies. But in view of their convictions about the non-violent story of Christ as typified in the life of God’s Old Testament people Israel, it seems especially crucial that Yoder and Hauerwas deal forthrightly with this aspect of

Scripture's story. It is rather surprising, therefore, that this issue receives so little attention in their writings. Yoder does devote a brief (11 page) chapter to this topic ("God Will Fight For Us") in his book *The Politics of Jesus*; Hauerwas addresses this issue only in passing (e.g., various footnotes) in a few of his books and essays. In *The Peaceable Kingdom*, for example, Hauerwas comments in a footnote:

The strong emphasis on the continuity between Jesus and Israel may be felt to be misleading exactly in terms of the central theme of this book—namely, nonviolence. For the depiction of war and violence in the Hebrew Scriptures continues to underwrite the crude, but still powerful picture held by many, that the God of the Old Testament is one of wrath and vengeance compared to the New Testament God of mercy and love. Yet those who hold this picture often, ironically, appeal to the Hebrew Scriptures to justify Christian approval of war.⁴⁰

Hauerwas goes on to refer to a book that serves as both his and Yoder's answer to the problem of divinely-approved violence in the Old Testament: Millard C. Lind's *Yahweh Is a Warrior: The Theology of Warfare in Ancient Israel*.⁴¹ Chapter four in Yoder's book *The Politics of Jesus* is, in essence, a concise version of Lind's extended argument in *Yahweh Is a Warrior*. Hauerwas summarizes:

Lind argues that "Yahweh the warrior fought by means of miracle, not through the armies of his people; 'it was not by your sword or by your bow' (Josh. 24:12). By miracle we mean an act of deliverance that was outside of Israel's control, beyond the manipulation of any human agency. This conviction was so emphatic that Israel's fighting, while at times a sequel to the act of Yahweh, was regarded ineffective; faith meant that Israel should rely upon Yahweh's miracle for her defense, rather than upon soldiers and weapons. The human agent in the work of Yahweh was not so much the warrior as the prophet."⁴²

While the evidence and argumentation provided in Lind's book is very helpful for forming a more complete and theologically profound picture of holy war and divine

⁴⁰ *PK*, 163.

⁴¹ Published by Herald Press (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania), 1980; Yoder contributes the introduction to Lind's book.

⁴² *PK* 163-164; cf. Lind, 23.

violence in the Old Testament, it ultimately fails to answer the most fundamentally problematic questions relating to Yoder and Hauerwas's pacifist views. First, by placing the emphasis on *Yahweh* rather than on *Israel* as "warrior," Lind appears to solve the problem of the complicity of God's people in acts of violence. In so doing, however, he seems to highlight even further the problem singled out by Hauerwas in his footnote and by Yoder in the introduction to Lind's book—namely, the question of Marcionite tendencies in the pacifist view of God himself. On the basis of their expressed support for Lind's argument, one is led to assume that Yoder and Hauerwas believe that God is justified in killing and using violence in a way that Israel is not. Neither Yoder nor Hauerwas actually acknowledges this in so many words, however; and their silence on this issue raises questions about to what extent the character of God in the Old Testament (who clearly engages in violence) corresponds to the nonviolent character of God as revealed in Christ in the New Testament.

In his book *When God Says War Is Right*, Darrell Cole devotes an entire chapter to "What God's Character Tells Us" about "Why Christians Use Force." He rightly points out that New Testament accounts of Jesus' person, work and teachings must not be read "in a way that conflict with God's eternal and unchanging moral character as it is revealed in the Old Testament.... The New Testament reveals a new covenant, but not a new God."⁴³ Yoder and Hauerwas's strong denials of any sympathy for a Marcionite view must, of course, be regarded as sincere and taken seriously; but unless and until a

⁴³ *When God Says War Is Right* (Waterbrook Press, 2002), 32. Cf. Leonard Verduin's admission, in *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1964; 272) that there was a tendency toward Marcionism in the Anabaptist treatment of the Old Testament when it came to issues such as pacifism. He quotes Harnack as affirming the historic Anabaptist perspective: "Better to let go of the Old Testament than to let the image of the Father of Jesus Christ be clouded by a warlike shadow."

clearer explanation is given of how God's violent character and activity in the Old Testament corresponds to the non-violent character and work of Christ in the New Testament, questions about this issue will undoubtedly remain and will hamper meaningful dialog.

Just as troublesome, however, is that Lind's emphasis on divine violence in the Old Testament as a miracle of Yahweh by no means eliminates the problem of *Israel's* frequent participation in this violence—not only with the aid and support of Yahweh, but also by his direct command (the disobedience of which has dire—and violent—consequences). The fact the victory in battle is always to be ascribed to the divine blessing and intervention of Yahweh does not, in and of itself, answer the question of how it is that God's peaceable people in the Old Testament were justified in serving as God's instruments in battle, while (according to Yoder and Hauerwas) this is not and cannot be true of God's peaceable people in the New Testament. In the footnote cited above, Hauerwas clearly sees this as a problem, especially (as he himself acknowledges) in view of his strong emphasis on the *continuity* between the life and witness of Israel and that of Jesus and the church. Lind's book, however, simply does not deal with this question in a satisfactory way, and in view of the significance of the problem it hardly seems sufficient for Hauerwas to note that "it is beyond the scope of this book [*The Peaceable Kingdom*] to attempt to challenge this understanding of war in the Hebrew Scripture."⁴⁴ On a more positive note, if it is true that Hauerwas is open to an understanding of justified violence that is rooted primarily in *God's* activity rather than in the (often sinful, selfish, dishonest and controlling) initiative and efforts of human

⁴⁴ *PK*, 163 (fn. 11).

beings, then in view of Luther's understanding of justified war (as essentially *God's work* and not ours) this would seem to hold out some possibility for further discussion and clarification of this issue.

Even more critical, of course, is the question of the role God's wrath and violence in connection with the work of Christ itself. If it is true that neither Yoder nor Hauerwas wants to deny more traditional understandings of the work of Christ on the cross, in what sense are they willing to accept and affirm the traditional understanding of Christ's death as satisfying the just demands of God's law, appeasing God's righteous wrath against sinners, and rendering full and complete payment for the sin of the world? How do they account for the New Testament teaching (e.g., the book of Hebrews) that the entire sacrificial system of the Old Testament is to be seen as a type of the person and work of Christ? It is one thing to seek to offer a corrective to what is seen as an overly narrow focus on the atoning and sacrificial nature of Christ's death on the cross, but it is hard to discern from the writings of Yoder or Hauerwas how or even whether they would regard such a view as compatible with their own particular understanding of the work of Christ and the nature of God.

In his most recent book *Performing the Faith*, for example, Hauerwas explicitly rejects the idea that we can speak of God as punishing sin, since punishment by its very nature always bears the taint of sin. He writes:

All punishment cannot help but be a tragic risk because punishment by its very nature has a private relationship to being and, therefore, cannot escape the taint of sin. That is why God cannot be said to punish. We are not punished for our sin, but rather sin is our punishment.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ *Performing the Faith*, 178.

While these words are not written in the specific context of a discussion of the propitiatory nature of Christ's work on the cross, they seem to have direct and far-reaching implications for Hauerwas's perspective regarding this issue. In a recent (and provocatively-titled) article titled "The Good News of God's Wrath," Anglican theologian Peter Jensen seeks to explain and defend the classical orthodox understanding of the atonement, and in so doing takes issue directly with the notion that we must not conceive of God as punishing sin—whether our sin or the sin that Christ bore on our behalf:

The New Testament again and again connects the death of Christ to our sins. And when it does, it means that God himself is the one who actively punishes; it is not merely a matter of sin being its own reward. Thus the New Testament speaks of Christ "bearing sin," "of him "becoming a curse," even of him "becoming sin."⁴⁶

This aspect of Christ's story, says Jensen, is inseparable from the story of God's dealing with Israel—and of his dealing with all of his human creatures who find themselves under God's curse because of sin:

When Christ was handed over by his own people to the pagan occupying power, it was understood to be a mark of judgment. He fell under the curse of God. When Israel went into exile, that is precisely what was happening. As the story unfolds, every sign of God's wrath is experienced by Jesus: the betrayal, the abandonment of friends, the twofold negative judicial verdict by those who were God's agents of justice, the darkness at noonday, the great cry of dereliction from the cross. It is important to see here not some heavenly Trinitarian transaction occurring out of our sight, but the actual, in-the-body acceptance of judgment by a totally righteous man for the sake of those who deserve to be forsaken of God.⁴⁷

Moreover, as the title of Jensen's article conveys (and as Luther himself repeatedly emphasizes in his own writings), apart from the reality of God's wrath against sin there is finally no good news of God's grace and forgiveness:

⁴⁶ *Christianity Today* (March 2004), 46.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

The Scriptures speak of the wrath of God, his holy anger against sin and those who sin against him. His anger is just and thoroughly righteous; it is deserved by us. If there were no anger of God in this universe, we would be living in an unjust and hopeless world. But the fact that we are the enemies of God means that we are by nature children of wrath. It is this that John means when he writes, "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).⁴⁸

It seems crucial for meaningful conversation with Lutherans (and other Christians) who hold firmly to this traditional understanding of Christ's atonement that Hauerwas spell out more clearly his understanding of specific passages of Scripture that speak of God's wrath and punishment in the context of Christ's sacrificial death and his atoning work, and whether (or how) he actually does view this traditional understanding of the redeeming work of the Triune God as complementary to his own.

Of course, the issue of God's wrath and judgment is not limited to the question of the meaning of Christ's cross. As emphasized above, the New Testament makes it clear that Christ will also return on the last day "to judge the living and the dead." In some ways, this connection between divine wrath and the work of Christ seems even more problematic for Hauerwas and Yoder, since here it is not simply a matter of Jesus passively enduring divine wrath and judgment but actively meting it out. "Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth will wail on account of him" (Rev. 1:7). The Lamb of God himself, Scripture teaches, will preside over the last judgment at which any and all who have rejected him "will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb" (Rev. 14:9-10). If for Yoder and Hauerwas any active exercise of violence is simply incompatible with the person and work of Christ, how do

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

they explain this teaching of Scripture regarding Christ's role not as "Prince of Peace" but as co-executor of God's wrath and punishment on the last day? The final chapter of *The Politics of Jesus* is titled "The War and the Lamb" and quotes frequently from the book of Revelation; strangely, however, Yoder offers no treatment of passages and questions such as those cited and raised above. Further explication of questions such as these also seems crucial for meaningful conversation between Hauerwasians and Lutherans.

War as a "Lesser Evil"

A second issue that needs clarification (even correction) in connection with the "problem of violence and the politics of Jesus" is the consistent characterization of the just war tradition by Yoder and Hauerwas as rooted in a "presumption against violence" and in a "lesser evil" view of war. "Any account of just war in the Christian tradition," says Hauerwas, "owes its intelligibility to the presumption of the practice of nonviolence in the church."⁴⁹ On the final pages of the final essay included in the anthology *The Hauerwas Reader*, Hauerwas is at pains to make it clear that:

I am not a Niebuhrian. One of the problems with Niebuhr's account of sin is that it gets you into a lesser-of-two-evils argument. Because I am a pacifist, I do not want to entertain lesser-of-two-evils arguments. As you know, Christians are not about compromise. We are about being faithful.⁵⁰

This implies, of course, that those who are not pacifists (i.e., adherents of the just war tradition) are inevitably bound to adopt some form of Niebuhr's "lesser-of-two-evils argument," which (in turn) seems to imply that they are inevitably bound to be "about compromise" rather than "about being faithful." This brings us back to the issue of the

⁴⁹ "Can a Pacifist Think About War?" 122.

⁵⁰ "Abortion, Theologically Understood," *HR*, 621.

Yoderian compliment referred to earlier: the notion that as long as just war thinkers are willing to admit that their position is less consistent with the radical claims of Christ than absolute pacifism, then their views can be respected and serious dialog can take place—on the basis of a *pacifist* characterization of the just war tradition.

As we have emphasized in various ways and places throughout this study, however, Niebuhr’s “lesser evil” view of just war is not the only—nor even the classical historic Christian—understanding of just war. Cole writes:

If you accept the lesser evil approach to war, then you cannot think in classical just war terms. This is the main reason why the book trumpeted by Hauerwas and Sider, Yoder’s *When War Is Unjust*, is such a failure in just war thinking. On the very first page Yoder claims: “The just war tradition considers war to be an evil.” Because his entire approach to just war thinking is based upon this mistaken assumption, his analysis is rendered quite fruitless in the eyes of the classical just war advocate.⁵¹

George Weigel agrees: “The claim that a ‘presumption against violence’ is at the root of the just war tradition cannot be sustained historically, methodologically, or theologically.”⁵² James Turner Johnson insists that “the concept of just war... does not begin with a ‘presumption against war’ focused on the harm war may do, but with a presumption against *injustice* focused on the need for responsible use of force in response to wrongdoing.” According to Johnson, “the presumption-against-war position... is simply not to be found in classic just war teaching, ‘even in the specifically churchly theorists Augustine and Aquinas to whom Catholic just war theorists generally refer for authority.’”⁵³

⁵¹ “Darrell Cole Replies,” *FT* 128 (December 2002), 4.

⁵² Weigel, 23. Cf. “Just War: An Exchange” *FT* 122 (April 2002), 31-37.

⁵³ Keith J. Pavlischek, “The Justice in Just War,” *FT* 103 (May 2000), 43.

For all of its helpful insights, Hütter's essay "Be Honest in Just War Thinking" also falls short in this critical regard, since it uncritically embraces Yoder's "lesser evil" characterization of the just war tradition. Lutz, too, in his (generally excellent) introduction to Yoder's book *When War Is Unjust*, gives the author a bit too much credit when he describes Yoder as "one who stands outside [the just war] tradition, but knows it as well as its best inside theorists."⁵⁴ Lutherans who reject—against Niebuhr and with Luther—a "lesser evil" approach to just war would need to modify this compliment in order to establish an honest basis for theological dialog.

It is this same "lesser evil" view of the just war tradition that allows Yoder to assert, in his 1991 essay "Just War Tradition: Is It Credible?" that, when set alongside his own pacifist "testimony to Jesus' words and work," the just war tradition "still has the burden of proof"—i.e., it is "guilty" of moral failure and inconsistency until and unless "proven innocent."⁵⁵ There is, of course, a sense in which it can be said that just war thinking bears the burden of proof and carries with it a "presumption against violence." As we noted earlier, Gilbert Meilaender acknowledges that Luther's treatises on *Temporal Authority* and *Whether Soldiers, Too, May Be Saved* both "suggest a Christian presumption against waging war, a burden of proof resting on any Christian who would propose to serve as a soldier."⁵⁶ The burden of proof of which Meilaender speaks here, however, is one that *assumes* the viability and moral validity of the just war principles, and seeks to defend (offer proof for) a given decision on the basis of them. The burden of proof of which Yoder speaks, on the other hand, calls into question the viability and

⁵⁴ *When War Is Unjust*, 5.

⁵⁵ *The Christian Century* (March 13, 1991), 298.

⁵⁶ *PJWT*, 89.

moral validity of the just war tradition as such, not simply its need to “live up to its own principles.” The very notion of just war as such, from Yoder’s perspective, is guilty until proven innocent—and the just war tradition itself (claim Yoder and Hauerwas) admits this guilt.

At least part of the problem here may be differing and even conflicting understandings of the concept of evil itself. Augustine, we recall, spoke of war as both the *consequence of* as well as the *remedy for* sin and evil. According to Augustine, war may certainly be described as evil—or more accurately, as “an evil”—in the sense that it is a tragic *result or consequence* of sin. The same can (and must) be said, of course, about tragic realities of the fall such as suffering and sickness. But to say that suffering and sickness are “evil” or “evils” in the sense that they are *consequences* of sin is not to say that they are inherently “evil” or “sinful”—as if anyone participating in suffering or sickness were necessarily participating in sinful or evil behavior. The same distinction must be kept clearly in mind when speaking of war as an “evil” or “tragic” consequence of sin. To speak of war in this way does not mean that it is *inherently* evil or sinful—otherwise, a holy God could hardly participate in it or command others to do so. As the editors of *First Things* put it, just war, “although occasioned by evil, is not itself an evil; nor is it even, as is commonly said today, a necessary evil. It is, if just, a positive duty, the doing of which, while it may entail much suffering, is to be counted as good.”⁵⁷

This is why it is crucial to keep in mind the second half of Augustine’s assertion—namely, that war is also a *remedy* for evil, in the sense that God himself can

⁵⁷ “In a Time of War,” 12.

(and does) use it to punish wrongdoing, to restrain evil, and to promote and preserve the (very good!) gift of peace. As Luther says, “it is precisely because God wills to create and preserve peace among men that he has instituted governments” which at times (tragically) must wage war.⁵⁸ Here again we encounter a parallel with the profound mystery of Christ’s suffering and death on the cross. The suffering of Christ was, in a very real sense, the greatest evil (the greatest tragic result of sin) that has ever occurred in the history of the world. God’s violent and wrathful punishment of Christ was likewise a great evil (a tragic consequence of sin). At the same time, paradoxically, the suffering of Christ at the hands of a just, holy, and wrathful God was the greatest and most profound *remedy* for sin in the history of the world. Neither God by his divine punishment nor Christ by his (innocent!) suffering were complicit in doing evil. It was, in fact, the very innocence of Christ’s act of suffering that made it possible for God to accept his work as rendering satisfaction for the sin of the world—only in this sense can Christ rightly be called (as Luther often calls him) “the greatest sinner who ever lived.” A “lesser evil” view of war that considers any and all participation in violence to be sinful in and of itself confuses Augustine’s understanding of war as *both* a consequence of sin *and* a remedy for sin, and makes it difficult if not impossible to discuss meaningfully the validity and viability of the just war tradition as a legitimate moral option for Christians who sincerely seek to be faithful and uncompromising followers of Christ. As Cole says:

Classical just war advocates (those who rely upon the tradition as formulated by the likes of Ambrose, Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin) deny that the just war criteria allow us to do evil—even *prima facie* evil—that good might come. They hold in fact that the just war criteria rule out evil altogether and help us determine when we must refrain from certain proposed acts of force. Just warriors refuse to restrain evil with evil. If we cannot prevent an evil without doing evil ourselves, then we throw ourselves on God’s mercy and trust in His will for us, even if it

⁵⁸ *Exposition of Psalm 82*, 55.

means dying; for such dying is a noble death, and noble dying always beats ignoble living.⁵⁹

The question of whether (or in what way) war is to be regarded as evil is, of course, more than just an abstract and academic question. It also has profound practical and pastoral implications. For if war is inherently evil (even in a lesser sense), and if (therefore) any and all participation in war is (in and of itself) wrong and sinful (even if it is regarded as a regrettably necessary sinful activity), then it follows—at least if the matter of sin is taken seriously—that those who participate even in justifiable war and violence cannot do so not with the conviction that they are performing a good work in obedience to God and in loving service to their neighbor. Rather they must participate in such acts with the understanding that their complicity in violence is conscious and deliberate sinful behavior that requires repentance and forgiveness by God and by the church.

In the response to the editorial “In a Time of War” referred to in the introduction, Hauerwas says: “I did not expect the Editors to take a pacifist stance, but I confess that their lack of any sadness that should accompany the use of violence fills me with sadness.”⁶⁰ It is clear that for Hauerwas the “sadness” required by those who support or participate in what they believe to be a justified war is not merely sadness resulting from the tragic reality of war in the world but the sadness that (according to Scripture) must accompany true *repentance* for sinful acts. In a subsequent response to Cole’s article “Listening to Pacifists,” Hauerwas wonders aloud “what Prof. Cole can possibly mean when he says that it is a ‘sad fact that Christians are always going to have to use violence’ and yet also maintain that when just warriors use force justly, ‘such acts bear no

⁵⁹ “Listening to Pacifists,” *FT* 125 (Aug./Sept. 2002), 23.

stain of evil.” “Why,” asks Hauerwas, “would it be appropriate to feel sorrow for an action that is justified?”⁶¹

In the medieval world [continues Hauerwas] penance was required from those returning from a just war, but surely such a requirement was because the Church continued to have some sense that war is incompatible with the gospel. Prof. Cole does not think war is incompatible with the gospel. So why is he sad?⁶²

Cole’s responds in the same issue of *First Things* by including an analogy often used by Luther himself in addressing God’s remedy for the evil of war:

Just soldiers and commanders are sorry that evil exists to such an extent that acts of force are necessary to bring about justice, but they are not sorry about their acts of force. Similarly, surgeons should feel sorrow that cancerous tumors exist, but feel joy and even experience a certain amount of professional satisfaction in being able to cut out the cancer. Or closer still, policeman may express sorrow that crime exists, but not at their just acts of stopping crime....Karl Barth, who rarely spoke for the classical Christian view of war, surely got it right when he said that our decision to go to war should be made in sorrow, but once it is made, we ought to go to war joyfully.⁶³

On the other hand, Cole emphasizes, there is certainly a place for repentance in the church’s teaching and practice in connection with just war:

The church can do even better than say “no” to some wars and some acts in war; it can demand penance from its members who participate in unjust wars or do unjust things in war. Penance is the practice that enables the Church to show the world that it takes just-war thinking seriously. Aquinas and Calvin insist that, at the very least, the Eucharist be withheld from anyone suspected of unjust acts. Thus any ecclesiastical official (bishop, priest, or pastor) who knows or has good reason to believe that someone under his care has done injustice in war should withhold the Eucharist until either the suspicions are allayed or penance imposed. Notorious offenders should of course have to undergo public penance, since the Church should show itself to be a place where sin is not taken lightly....Thus penance in wartime serves two purposes: it protects the integrity of the Church (and thus Christ) and restores the soldier and political leader to the body of Christ.

⁶⁰ “In a Time of War: An Exchange,” *FT* 120 (February 2002), 13.

⁶¹ “Pacifism Redux,” *FT* 128 (December 2002), 3.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ “Darrell Cole Replies,” *FT* 128 (December 2002), 5.

Such ecclesial practices should allay any fears that the Church cannot maintain its independence [from the state] while saying “yes” to particular conflicts.⁶⁴

Luther, as we have seen, offers no “aid and comfort” to Christians who would try to justify participation in a clearly unjust war: “If you know for sure that [a particular war] is wrong, then you should fear God rather than men...and you should neither fight nor serve, for you cannot have a good conscience before God.”⁶⁵ He also stresses the importance of repentance during a time of war as part of the *church’s* unique “battle” against the consequences of sin and the devil’s “stirring up of strife” in the world. For “Sir Christian” (the church), says Luther: “This fight must begin with repentance, and we must reform our lives, or we shall fight in vain.”⁶⁶ But this exhortation relates not to the decision of an individual Christian soldier or military commander to engage in what he is convinced is a just war, but to the ongoing life and character of the church as a whole, in keeping with Luther’s understanding that the entire Christian life should be a life of repentance.⁶⁷ The Christian soldier who goes off to fight in a war that he is convinced is justified is free to go (indeed, *must* go) “with a good conscience,” giving thanks and praise to God for “your mercy and grace that you have put me into a work which I am sure is not sin, but right and pleasing obedience to your will.”⁶⁸ “Though in God’s sight we are as poor sinners as our enemies are,” says Luther, when we put our trust in God’s grace in Christ and in his assurance that he has chosen to work through civil government

⁶⁴ “Listening to Pacifists,” *FT* 125 (Aug-Sept 2002), 25. See also Cole’s article “Just War, Penance, and the Church” in *Pro Ecclesia* XI:3 (Summer 2002), 313-328 for a much more extensive discussion and analysis of the general (not universal) practice of the early church, in the first centuries of its existence, to require Christian soldiers to do penance.

⁶⁵ *Whether Soldiers*, 130.

⁶⁶ *On War Against the Turk*, 171.

⁶⁷ Thesis one of the “Ninety-Five Theses” reads: “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent [Matt. 4:17], he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance” (see *LW* 31, 83).

⁶⁸ *Whether Soldiers*, 135.

to restrain evil and promote peace, we can indeed go “forward with joy” into battle, “sure and certain that in serving and obeying [our commander] we are serving and obeying God.”⁶⁹ For soldiers troubled in conscience such as Assa von Kram⁷⁰—and Christian soldiers and their friends, families and loved ones troubled in the same way today—this was (and remains) precious, necessary and comforting good news, even if it surely does not (and should not) eliminate the sense of sadness that fills the heart of every Christian who soberly reflects on the tragic necessity and reality of war as a consequence of sin in a fallen world.

The Definition of Violence

Another (rather significant) issue that bears mentioning in this connection is that the term “violence” itself is never clearly defined or delimited in the writings of Hauerwas. It is clear that Hauerwas believes that any and all participation in violence is contrary to the will of God—but what exactly constitutes violence? In the post-9/11 “Exchange” in *First Things*, the editors challenge Hauerwas’s loose use of this term:

The crucial distinction here is between violence and the use of force in the service of justice. Violence is the disordered use of physical force that injures, abuses and destroys. The use of military force in a just war...is ordered to the defense of the innocent and the securing of justice. Violence is inherently disordered—meaning it is random or capricious, or ordered to an evil end. Force is a sometimes necessary means ordered to a good end.⁷¹

Hauerwas himself seems to acknowledge a rather uncomfortable ambiguity regarding the scope of this term by including as an appendix in his book *After Christendom* a letter from a graduate student chiding him for the violence of his own language and

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁷⁰ Cf. pages 111 and 189 above.

⁷¹ *FT* 120 (Feb. 2002), 14.

argumentation in his efforts to persuade others of the truth of his position. Hauerwas offers no response to this letter except to say that “it is a reminder that the way of nonviolence is never easy and that our language can embody that violence in ways that we hardly knew.”⁷² But this hardly seems a satisfactory answer to the far-reaching questions raised by the suggestion that virtually everything we do or say as Christians might legitimately be viewed as “violent” (and therefore sinful) efforts to “exercise control” over the lives of others. If this is the case, virtually any type of Christian witness is rendered suspect. Allen’s primary critique of Hauerwas’s witnessing argument, in fact, is its “unclarity” about the precise nature and use of violence.⁷³

Hauerwas’s most straightforward—and helpful—attempt to explain his understanding of “violence” and “nonviolence”—as well as his reluctance to define these terms in a narrowly circumscribed way—is contained in an essay titled “Explaining Christian Nonviolence,” included as chapter seven in his most recent book *Performing the Faith*. The problem with insisting on a strict definition of violence, argues Hauerwas, is that it concedes to nonpacifists the right to establish the terms and framework for the debate—as if “concerns about violence” are at the heart of a true, Biblical, Christological, ecclesial pacifism. Authentic pacifists, however (says Hauerwas), are not so much “against violence” as they are “for peace”—and the true nature of violence cannot be known or perceived apart from this peace: the peace that (for Hauerwas) is embodied in the life of the church itself as God’s “peaceable people.”

My argument, quite simply, and it is a simple point, is that pacifists cannot let their understanding of Christian nonviolence be determined by what we are against. We do not know what violence is or may be if we do not know violence against the background of a more profound peaceableness...any attempt to

⁷² *After Christendom* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 153.

⁷³ Allen, 22-23.

develop a defense of “Christian nonviolence” but reproduces the problem I am trying to avoid. The very phrase, “Christian nonviolence” cannot help but suggest that peace is “not violence.” Yet a peace that is no more than “not violence” surely cannot be the peace that is ours in Christ.⁷⁴

A commitment to Christian nonviolence, insists Hauerwas, is not a pious, legalistic, perfectionist pledge to avoid all forms of violent behavior, but (on the contrary) it is a *confession* that each one of us, if we are honest—being prone to violence by nature and by virtue of the violent world in which we live—desperately needs help from others within God’s peaceable community to notice and name the violence in our lives and to continue to struggle against it by continually recommitting ourselves to a life of peace modeled after the life of Christ and manifested in the church.

This is one of the reasons I have always felt something of a fraud when I claim to be a pacifist. My sense of being fraudulent is not simply because—Texan that I am—I am a violent person. That I do not know how to be nonviolent is, of course, a problem, but even more troubling is my sense that I do not know what I am claiming when I claim to be a pacifist. I assume, however, that my declaration at least means I create expectations in others who can and should call me to account for living in a manner that belies my conviction that, if I am to live a truthful life, I must be nonviolent. In other words, nonviolence is at least a declaration that should make me vulnerable to others in a manner that hopefully can put me on the way to being at peace in a world of violence.⁷⁵

Thus, says Hauerwas,

Christians committed to nonviolence can never...assume we know we are nonviolent. Rather, our nonviolence is a declaration that renders our lives vulnerable to challenges that may reveal that we are implicated in forms of violence we have not recognized or have chosen to ignore. By discovering the violence in our lives we hope we may witness to those that do not follow Christ the violence that may grip all our lives.⁷⁶

Acknowledging once again his debt to Yoder—“I have...never pretended that I have anything to say about nonviolence that Yoder has not said and said better than any

⁷⁴ *Performing the Faith*, 170.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 181.

of my efforts”—Hauerwas points out that “Christian nonviolence...does not name for Yoder a position or even a principled stance that works from a predetermined understanding of what counts as violence or nonviolence. Rather Christian nonviolence names the present reality of a community that refuses to be determined by the very ‘world’ it creates by its own existence.”⁷⁷ Hauerwas goes so far as to say that “Yoder was not a pacifist” if that term is defined in some simplistic way that presumes some established or commonly agreed-upon definition of violence:

Yoder is not a pacifist if by that you mean someone who assumes that pacifists know in advance what may and may not be violence. Of course Yoder assumes that Christians do not kill, but that is only to state what it means to be a pacifist in the most minimal fashion. The practice of peace among Christians requires constant care of our lives together, through which we discover the violence that grips our lives and compromises our witness to the world. If the church is not peace, then the world does not have an alternative to violence. But if the church is not such an alternative, then what we believe as Christians is clearly false. For when all is said and done, the question of peace is the question of truth and why the truth that is ours in Christ makes possible a joyfulness otherwise unobtainable.⁷⁸

It must be admitted that this is, in many ways, a compelling and persuasive argument: better to leave the concept of violence (and nonviolence) somewhat ambiguous, says Hauerwas—even if it means being open to the charge of ambiguity—than to capitulate to the pressure to define it in some legalistic, systematic fashion and in so doing shift the focus of the discussion away from the true pacifist concern for the *peace* that is to be embodied in the life of the church and toward casuistic debates about which particular actions or decision must be placed into which category (“violent” or “nonviolent”). One might even see a parallel here to Luther’s (equally misunderstood!) encouragement to “sin boldly”—i.e., not to allow a moralistic or legalistic obsession with

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 174-5.

rules and strictly defined “do’s and don’ts” to prevent us from living freely, joyfully and boldly as God’s people, even as we remain open constantly to the guidance and exhortation of our brothers and sisters in Christ, and to the real and potential need for continual repentance and personal renewal. Lutherans formed by an appreciation for the ordinary, creaturely gifts highlighted by Luther in the first article will also undoubtedly find appealing Hauerwas’s concluding emphasis on “peaceable activities such as raising lemurs, sustaining universities, having children, and, of course playing baseball.”⁷⁹

Seeking to counter (like Meilaender) the survivalism of Jonathan Schell and Gordon Kaufman, Hauerwas notes: “To be sure, in the face of alleged nuclear destruction these appear trivial or inconsequential activities; but I believe without them and many other such examples, we have no hold on what it means to be nonviolent.”⁸⁰ To this true Lutherans (and baseball lovers!) cannot help but say, “Amen!”⁸¹

It is also true, however, that in the actual, practical course of our daily life and existence as Christians, specific and difficult (even conscience-troubling) decisions must be made and actions taken. It would seem that those who claim an unwavering commitment to nonviolence as constitutive of true worship of the Messiah, therefore, would find it necessary to identify a somewhat more objective standard for determining whether or not they were being faithful to the will and example of Christ in specific situations. This would seem to be true also (even especially!) in view of Hauerwas’ call to be open to the admonition and exhortation offered by those within God’s “peaceable community” who seek to hold others accountable to a life of peace. Such a standard would not necessarily have to be based on abstract or predetermined notions of violence

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 182-183

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 183.

or nonviolence formulated apart from Scripture and the practices and traditions of the church; but since this church (according to Hauerwas) actually *exists* as a “community of peace,” with a story and sources of authority well-tested by time and experience, the question might legitimately be raised: can this church *itself* give us any specific guidance in defining violence and nonviolence beyond simply admitting (as does Hauerwas in the final sentence of this chapter) that “nonviolence cannot be explained”?⁸²

As we observed in chapter two, Hauerwas himself readily acknowledges the seemingly abstract nature of his argument, noting the objection that “even if it is true that the church itself is a social ethic, surely it must also have a social ethic that reaches out in strategic terms in the societies in which it finds itself.” “That is *most certainly the case*,” admits Hauerwas; “indeed, different circumstances and social contexts bring different needs and strategies.”⁸³ The very mention of “needs and strategies” in “different circumstances and social contexts,” however, seems to suggest (once again) the possibility of “explaining violence” a bit more concretely than Hauerwas is willing to do in chapter seven of *Performing the Faith*. Yoder’s insistence that the essential mark of the church, according to the New Testament, is a “social style characterized by the rejection of violence *of any kind*,”⁸⁴ likewise suggests the possibility—if not the necessity—of offering *some* sort of concrete explanation of what these various kinds of violence may look like. The insistence that “violence” cannot be explained may actually close off conversation with those who are genuinely interested in knowing more about

⁸¹ See, e.g., Matthew Rose, “Unremarkably Lutheran,” in *First Things* (February 2001), 13-14.

⁸² *Performing the Faith*, 183.

⁸³ *PK*, 111; emphasis added.

⁸⁴ *PJ*, 250.

how to *recognize* specific forms of violence that Yoder and Hauerwas are convinced are so destructive of our lives and of the church's witness for Christ.

Finally, it should be recognized that there are two sides to Hauerwas's somewhat off-handed (at least in this essay) acknowledgement that, "of course, Christians do not kill." His point—and it is well taken—is that it is wrong to reduce the "pacifism of the Messianic community" to merely being "against killing"—it clearly involves much more than that (see chapter two). On the other hand, such an assertion also makes it clear that for Hauerwas it is impossible to separate the true and authentic politics of the non-violent social revolutionary Jesus (embodied in the church as alternative to the world) from the obvious truth that Christians can *never*—in faithfulness to the witness and example of Jesus—engage knowingly and willingly in particular acts of obvious violence such as taking the life a fellow human being. This may be, for Hauerwas, the most minimal definition of true pacifism; but it is clearly also non-negotiable. It is one fact that can never be "explained away," even if the term or concept of "violence" as such can never be fully or clearly explained. It seems important not to overlook or downplay this fact in conversations between Hauerwasian pacifists and Lutheran nonpacifists, so that that the non-negotiable conclusions of Hauerwas's Christological and ecclesial pacifism are kept clearly distinct from those of the "just war pacifism" (to use Yoder's term!) espoused by Luther and other Christians.

Chapter Seven

The Witness of the Church in and to Society

Valid Hauerwasian Insights and Concerns: The Character and Conduct of the Church and Constantinian Temptations

According to Hauerwas, “the question of the nature and form of the church is the center of any attempt to develop Christian ethics.”¹ It follows, therefore, that for Hauerwas “the first word we as Christians have to say to the world about war is ‘church.’ In other words, we do not so much have an alternative ethic to the world’s way of war—we are the alternative.”² One of Hauerwas’s sharpest criticisms of the Reformation is that it paved the way for (and resulted in) the loss of the “understanding of the church as the indispensable context” for doing Christian ethics.³ In this final chapter of our study, we focus on two critical themes in Hauerwas’s ecclesial ethics that present a special challenge for Lutherans and the witness of the Lutheran church on issues of war and peace: Hauerwas’s views regarding the character and conduct of the church as a real, visible, holy community in the world, and his concerns regarding the continuing temptation of “Constantinianism” for the church in its efforts to make a difference in the world.

The Character and Conduct of the Church as “Holy Community”

In chapter six of *The Peaceable Kingdom* Hauerwas strongly emphasizes the moral and ethical *character* of the church as fundamental to and essential for any

¹ *PK*, 95.

² “A Church Capable,” *HR*, 429.

³ “How ‘Christian Ethics’ Came to Be,” *HR*, 43.

meaningful witness to the world. The church, says Hauerwas, is called to be a “community of virtues”—virtues such as love, forgiveness, patience and trust that are clearly visible to the world. These virtues are inculcated over time through the regular, habitual practices of the church, centering in its worship, preaching, teaching and administration of the sacraments. These practices exist for the sake of the virtues which they are meant to produce, since

... neither the marks of the sacraments or preaching would be sufficient if the church was not also called to be a holy people—that is, a people who are capable of maintaining the life of charity, hospitality and justice....For the church is finally known by the character of the people who constitute it, and if we lack that character, the world rightly draws the conclusion that the God we worship is in fact a false God.⁴

Hauerwas frequently acknowledges that this emphasis on holiness stems at least in part from the Methodist (Wesleyan) tradition in which he was raised and to which he still claims basic allegiance.⁵ But he also admits that his emphasis on *discipleship*, *obedience* and *faithfulness* as constitutive elements of the communal life of the (always visible) church also stems from the ecclesiology he learned and inherited from Yoder. This ecclesiology, Hauerwas further acknowledges, cannot itself be separated from the broader “story” of the Anabaptist tradition of the “gathered, visible community of the elect” and the “obedient, disciplined church.”⁶

One of the primary theses of Leonard Verduin’s work *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren* is that one of the great failures of the Lutheran Reformation was its inability (or refusal) to break free from Rome’s Constantinian view of the church as the *Corpus*

⁴ PK, 109.

⁵ See, e.g., “Whose Church? Which Future? Whither the Anabaptist Vision?” in HR, 65-78.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Christianum (all people, duly christened, residing in a certain geographical area).

Instead, says Verduin, Luther essentially affirmed this prevailing Constantinian view of the church, leading to an exodus by those who were “convinced that ‘Christendom’ is a myth,” and that “the Church of Christ is by definition an element in society, not society as such.”⁷ One of the significant side effects of this stubborn and prevailing Constantinian understanding of the church, argues Verduin, had to do with “the area of *conduct*, or more correctly, of conductual requirement:”

In the unfallen Church, those who belong to it contrast with their environment in the manner of deportment. It is written large in the New Testament that they who have accepted Christ no longer live as do the rank and file. They have begun to walk “worthy of the calling wherewith they have been called.” They have begun to “bring forth fruits worthy of repentance.” They have been “raised with Christ” and as a consequence they have begun to “seek the things that are above.”⁸

The “stepchildren” of the Reformation, says Verduin (notably Menno Simons), resolutely rejected perfectionism. But they just as resolutely rejected what he calls the “conductual-averagism” of Luther and his followers, which eschewed any concrete or measurable demand for outward obedience and accompanying church discipline:

[T]he difference of opinion that existed concerning the kind of discipline that should be exercised in Christ’s Church was but a facet of the difference of opinion as to the delineation of the Church. For men who think of the Church as ‘including all in a given totality,’ discipline as it had been distorted ever since Constantine was right and proper; for those who thought of the Church as a society of believers, some very radical changes were in order.⁹

It is apparent, says Verduin,

that the Reformers were not minded to discard the Constantinian formula; they sought to reform the Church on the last of “Christian sacralism”; this restrained them from launching a full-scale attack upon conductual-averagism; it likewise kept them from re-instituting Church discipline according to the New Testament blueprint....In this whole area the Stepchildren blazed a new trail, by repudiating

⁷ Verduin, 17; 16.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 95

⁹ *Ibid.*, 131.

the Constantinian change, by reinstating the Church of believers with conductual distinctiveness, by driving away the sword function out of the Church, by reintroducing Church discipline in which excommunication is the ultimate penalty.¹⁰

The roots of the “conductual-averagism” of the Reformation must finally be traced (argues Verduin) to Luther’s narrow and imbalanced doctrine of justification.

In his haste to establish the doctrine of justification by faith rather than works Luther down-graded good works; the only place he had left for good works was at the very end, as a sort of postscript or appendage, something that needed attention after salvation was an accomplished fact. We meet in Luther, to put it theologically, a very heavy emphasis on the forensic aspect of salvation and a correspondingly light emphasis on the moral aspect.... There is an imbalance in this theology between what God does *for man* and what He does *in man*.¹¹

As we have seen throughout this study, many of these same concerns are expressed by Yoder and Hauerwas (e.g., Yoder’s critique of the Reformation view of “justification by grace through faith” in chapter eleven of *The Politics of Jesus*, reflected in Hauerwas’s depiction of justification in *The Peaceable Kingdom*). Included in Hauerwas’s book *Sanctify Them in the Truth: Holiness Exemplified* is a sermon bluntly titled “Reformation Is Sin.” Oddly, says Hauerwas, “As Protestants we now take pride in the acknowledgement of our sinfulness in order to distinguish ourselves from Catholics who allegedly believe in works-righteousness.” Unfortunately, however,

...the Catholics are right. Christian salvation consists in works. To be saved *is* to be made holy. To be saved requires our being made part of a people separated from the world so that we can be united in spite of—or perhaps better, because of—the world’s fragmentations and divisions. Unity, after all, is what God has given us through Christ’s death and resurrection. For in that death and resurrection we have been made part of God’s salvation for the world so that the world may know it has been freed from the powers that would compel us to kill one another in the name of false loyalties. All that is about the works necessary to save us.¹²

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹² *Sanctify Them in the Truth: Holiness Exemplified* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 242.

Later in the sermon, Hauerwas attempts to harmonize the two views:

I realize that the suggestion that salvation is to be part of a holy people constituted by the law seems to deny the Reformation principle of justification by faith through grace. I do not believe that to be the case....After all, Calvin (and Luther) assumed that justification by faith is a claim about God's presence in Jesus of Nazareth. So justification by faith through grace is not some general truth about our need for acceptance; but rather justification by faith through grace is a claim about the salvation wrought by God through Jesus to make us a holy people....¹³

In his essay "Whither the Anabaptist Vision?" Hauerwas makes a similar effort to "put the best construction" on the Reformation "vision" of the church. Approvingly citing Harold Bender's "great essay" on "The Anabaptist Vision" for example, Hauerwas observes that Bender

...situated the Anabaptist as the "culmination of the Reformation, the fulfillment of the original vision of Luther and Zwingli,...thus making it a consistent evangelical Protestantism seeking to recreate without compromise the original New Testament church, the vision of Christ and the Apostles." The Anabaptists are presented by Bender as consistent Protestant reformers who insisted that true repentance and regeneration must be a mark of the church. The Anabaptists "retained the original vision of Luther and Zwingli, enlarged it, gave it body and form, and set out to achieve it in actual experience. They proceeded to organize a church composed solely of earnest Christians, and actually found the people for it. They did not believe in any case that the size of the response should determine whether or not the truth of God should be applied, and they refused to compromise. They preferred to make a radical break with fifteen hundred years of history and culture if necessary rather than to break with the New Testament."¹⁴

Lutherans, of course, may be somewhat reluctant to receive (at least without significant qualification) the compliment offered by Bender (and by Hauerwas). But they should at least be willing to acknowledge that Lutheranism has always faced a challenge in explicating and demonstrating the practical, ethical and ecclesial implications of its understanding of the proper distinction (and relationship) between Law and Gospel,

¹³ *Ibid.*, 244.

¹⁴ "Whose Church? Which Future? Whither the Anabaptist Vision?" in *IGC*, 72.

between justification and sanctification, between grace and works, between personal faith and confession and congregational holiness and discipline.

Even within the Lutheran tradition itself these concerns have surfaced in many and various ways.¹⁵ To cite just one well-known example, consider the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

[T]he outcome of the Reformation was the victory, not of Luther's perception of grace in all its purity and costliness, but of the vigilant religious instinct of man for the place where grace is to be obtained at the cheapest price. All that was needed was a subtle and almost imperceptible change of emphasis, and the damage was done.... Luther has said that grace alone can save; his followers took up his doctrine and repeated it word for word. But they left out its inevitable corollary, the obligation of discipleship. There was no need for Luther always to mention that corollary explicitly for he always spoke as one who had been led by grace to the strictest following of Christ. Judged by the standard of Luther's doctrine, that of his followers was unassailable, and yet their orthodoxy spelt the end and destruction of the Reformation as the revelation on earth of the costly grace of God. The justification of the sinner in the world degenerated into the justification of sin and the world. Costly grace was turned into cheap grace without discipleship.¹⁶

In his recent doctoral dissertation titled *Virtue Ethics and the Place of Character Formation within Lutheran Theology*, Joel Biermann bemoans the “atmosphere of suspicion and distrust in the Lutheran church today,” its “indifference or ambivalence”—even “outright hostility”—to “concerns of Christian ethics.”¹⁷ He documents the way in which many contemporary Lutheran theologians are wrestling with the question of how to defend Lutheranism against the (too often justifiable) charge of separating doctrine from ethics and justification from sanctification, and to do so in a way that is consistent with the fundamental presuppositions of Lutheran theology. And he offers his

¹⁵ These debates are reflected, of course, in the Book of Concord itself: e.g., FC IV (“Good Works,”), V (“Law and Gospel”), and VI (“Third Use of the Law”).

¹⁶ *The Cost of Discipleship*, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1959), 53.

¹⁷ Biermann, 2-3.

own (very helpful) insights regarding a Lutheran framework for maintaining and demonstrating the proper relationship between theology and ethics on the basis of Luther's understanding of the two (and/or three) kinds of righteousness and the relationship between God's threefold activity as summarized in the Creed.

While we (quite obviously) cannot examine this topic in detail here, it deserves at least some attention in the context of this study because if the witness of the Lutheran church on war and peace is to be taken seriously (by Lutherans and by non-Lutherans), it must also be demonstrated that Lutherans take ethics truly seriously as both a theological and ecclesial issue. Although we can deal with this issue only very briefly and succinctly in the context of this study, we will attempt to point to resources within Luther's writings (as summarized in chapter three) that offer a foundation and framework for responding to Hauerwas's valid concern about the *holiness* and *character* of the church as an (if not *the*) essential aspect of its witness concerning war and peace.

Constantinian Temptations in the Church's Witness to the World

In his book *Resident Aliens*, Hauerwas draws on Yoder's distinction between the *activist* church, the *conversionist* church, and the *confessing* church, and in so doing offers insights that are applicable and meaningful not only to the contemporary church in general but also to the current state of affairs within the Lutheran tradition.

The *activist* church [writes Hauerwas] is more concerned with the building of a better society than with the reformation of the church. Through the humanization of social structures, the activist church glorifies God. It calls on the members to see God at work behind the movements for social change so that Christians will join in movements for justice wherever they find them. It hopes to be on the right side of history, believing it has the key for reading the direction of history or underwriting the progressive forces of history. The difficulty...is that the activist

church appears to lack the theological insight to judge history for itself. Its politics becomes a sort of religiously glorified liberalism.¹⁸

At the other end of the spectrum, continues Hauerwas, there is the *conversionist* church.

This church argues that no amount of tinkering with the structures of society will counter the effects of human sin. The promises of secular optimism are therefore false because they attempt to bypass the biblical call to admit personal guilt and to experience reconciliation to God and neighbor. The sphere of political action is shifted by the conversionist church from without to within, from society to the individual soul. Because this church works only for inward change, it has no alternative social ethic or social structure of its own to offer the world. Alas, the political claims of Jesus are sacrificed for politics that inevitably seems to degenerate into a religiously glorified conservatism.¹⁹

There is, however (argues Hauerwas), a “radical alternative” to these two types of churches:

The *confessing church* is not a synthesis of the other two approaches, a helpful middle ground. Rather, it is a radical alternative. Rejecting both the individualism of the conversionists and the secularism of the activists and their common equation of what works with what is faithful, the confessing church finds its main political task to lie, not in the personal transformation of individual hearts or the modification of society, but rather in the congregation’s determination to worship Christ in all things.²⁰

Hauerwas goes on to offer a concise summary of his understanding of the “church as *polis*,” further distinguishing the “confessing church” from both the “conversionist church” and the “activist church:”

The confessing church, like the conversionist church, also calls people to conversion, but it depicts that conversion as a long process of being baptismally engrafted into a new people, an alternative *polis*, a countercultural social structure called the church. It seeks to influence the world by being the church, that is, by being something the world is not and can never be, lacking the gift of faith and vision, which is ours in Christ. The confessing church seeks the *visible* church, a place, clearly visible to the world, in which people are faithful to their promises, love their enemies, tell the truth, honor the poor, suffer for righteousness, and thereby testify to the amazing community-creating power of God. The confessing church has no interest in withdrawing from the world, but it is not surprised when its witness evokes hostility from the world. The confessing church moves from

¹⁸ *RA*, 45.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

the activist church's acceptance of culture with a few qualifications, to rejection of the culture with a few exceptions. . . . This church knows that its most credible form of witness (and the most "effective" thing it can do for the world) is the actual creation of a living, breathing, visible community of faith.²¹

Finally, Hauerwas links the character and witness of the confessing church to the work of Christ himself, especially to his central and culminating work on the cross:

Yoder also notes that the confessing church will be a church of the cross. As Jesus demonstrated, the world, for all its beauty, is hostile to the truth. Witness without compromise leads to worldly hostility. The cross is not a sign of the church's quiet, suffering submission to the powers-that-be, but rather the church's revolutionary participation in the victory of Christ over those powers. The cross is not a symbol for general human suffering and oppression. Rather, the cross is a sign of what happens when one takes God's account of reality more seriously than Caesar's. The cross stands as God's (and our) eternal no to the powers of death, as well as God's eternal yes to humanity, God's remarkable determination not to leave us to our own devices.²²

Thus, "the overriding political task of the church is to be the community of the cross"²³— which for Hauerwas implies (of course) a radical commitment to resist submission to the fallen structures of this world by renouncing (and therefore exposing) its violent and coercive politics.

We have had opportunity throughout this study, and especially in chapter two, to examine in some detail Hauerwas's view of the nature and mission of the confessing church, particularly (in view of the focus of our study) its uncompromising commitment to nonviolence because of the nonviolence of the cross and the necessary implications of that cross for the life of the church. Despite the fact that Hauerwas's description of the confessing church is dependent on certain assumptions that cannot finally be harmonized with historic Lutheran ecclesial and Christological presuppositions, Lutherans can and should agree that there is much that is true, insightful and instructive about his

²¹ *Ibid.*, 47-48.

²² *Ibid.*, 47.

description of the confessing church and his critique of the activist and conversionist churches—a critique that rings true in many ways when applied to the various manifestations of Lutheranism in today’s world.

In its report *Render Unto Caesar... and Unto God: A Lutheran View of Church and State*, the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod offers evidence that supports much of what Hauerwas has to say about the characteristics and tendencies of both the activist and conversionist churches, as well as evidence that demonstrates their various Lutheran incarnations.

In 1979, LCUSA adopted a statement on “The Nature of the Church and Its Relationship with Government,” in which the role of the church in direct social action, long promoted by the LCA and accepted also by many in the ALC and LCMS, become the policy of LCUSA. The statement declared that “God also calls the church to be a creative critic of the social order, an advocate for the needy and distressed, a pioneer in developing and improving services through which care is offered and human dignity is enhanced, and a supportive voice for the establishment and maintenance of good order, justice and concord.” The role of the church includes “informing persons about, advocating for and speaking publicly on issues and proposals related to social justice and human rights.” Furthermore, the statement declared, “Advocacy on behalf of justice is an integral part of our churches’ mission.”²⁴

“Mission” defined as “advocacy,” however, all too often results in the church taking on the role of political lobby, with church leaders playing the role of political spokespersons for the church:

What some American Lutheran church bodies have done since World War II, in order to implement a more socially conscious two-kingdom ethic, is what most other American church bodies have done since then: establish a Washington lobby. A 1951 study identified 16 church offices operating in Washington and also surfaced a complaint that would eventually become commonplace: “In many cases...church lobbyists promote the causes in which church leaders are interested rather than the views of church members in general.”²⁵

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Render*, 50-51.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 59.

The formation of the ELCA in 1988, for example, included a well-staffed Washington-based lobby with a plateful of advocacy issues on which it spoke (presumably) for the church:

According to the June 1993 issue of *The Lutheran*, published by the ELCA, the following political concerns were being actively addressed by the ELCA's Lutheran Office of Government Affairs: the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, expansion of the earned income credit, balanced budget amendments, American Indian Religious Freedom Act Amendment, aid to Nicaragua, Violence Against Women Act of 1993, the Mickey Leland Childhood Hunger Relief Act of 1993, the Every Fifth Child Act, Civil Rights Amendments for Gay and Lesbian Civil Rights, opposing the death penalty, and expanding the definition of conscientious objection to include objection to specific wars. Clearly, this advocacy had moved a long way from [William] Lazareth's vision of teaching the state basic ethical principles.²⁶

No wonder Lutheran sociologist Peter Berger, voicing “the exasperation of many Americans who are faced with a flood of social and political statements issuing from church bodies and church leaders these days,” asked the blunt question: “Why don't the churches just shut up?”²⁷

It is clear that for Hauerwas, however, “just shutting up” is not quite the solution either—particularly if it leads the kind of “conversionist quietism” described in *Resident Aliens*, a quietism that is often associated with the general approach of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to the question of the church's witness to the state. While (according to *Render Unto Caesar*) some within the Missouri Synod since World War II have urged support for the increasingly activist approach adopted by the ELCA and its predecessor bodies—even while others have advocated a more conservative activist approach modeled after the “New Christian Right,” “the Moral Majority,” and various Reformed, fundamentalist and evangelical groups and churches—the basic attitude and

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁷ *Render*, 62.

strategy of the LCMS over the years (at least on an institutional level) has tended more toward the “conversionist” or “regenerationist” approach articulated by Carl Mundinger:

Keeping strictly within her sphere, the Church must put forth every effort that the nation within whose boundaries she exists become more and more permeated with the principles of social life laid down in the Word of God, the principles of righteousness, of justice, of tolerance and forbearance, of mutual helpfulness and co-operation.

She must do this not by futile efforts to control legislation or to direct the administration of government, but by laboring patiently and persistently to increase the number of those within the nation whose hearts have been regenerated by the Spirit of God and whose lives are directed by that Spirit. Not by invading political assemblies, but by entering the pulpit with an emphatic and convincing proclamation of the whole Gospel of Christ can the Church make a real contribution to the political well-being of our nation. The fact that the State and the Church are two separate and distinct organisms, that they have two separate and distinct spheres of influence, does not imply that they should assume an attitude of complete indifference toward each other; on the contrary, a mutual friendly recognition and a readiness on the part of each (within the limitations of its own scope and sphere) to aid and serve the other is indispensable to the peace and prosperity of both.²⁸

From Hauerwas’s perspective, the basic problem with both of these approaches is that they inevitably result in different but equally dangerous and unfaithful kinds of Constantinianism. The activist approach is Constantinian in that it places the church into the role of “policing society” and “controlling history” and trying to make sure “everything turns out all right,” even if this means (as Hauerwas believes it inevitably will and does mean) compromising, neglecting or even contradicting the true message and mission of the church as conveyed and constituted by the cross of Christ. The conversionist approach is Constantinian in the sense that it abdicates its proper (Christological!) role of resisting the demands of fealty and loyalty placed upon it by the “powers that be,” and simply assumes that government, as an entity “instituted by God,”

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 74.

merits the Christian's unquestioning submission and obedience so long as it allows the church to go about its business of "converting sinners." Or, to the extent that the government *fails* to conduct itself along the lines of God's design in Romans 13, the conversionist church adopts a quietism based more on eschatological aspirations than on "first article" convictions about the God-given role of government, and so is content to retreat to its sanctuaries and take refuge in the other-worldly hope expressed in the time-honored (Lutheran) hymn: "I'm But a Stranger Here, Heaven is My Home."

Like Hauerwas, *Render Unto Caesar* recognizes the danger and fallacy of both those extremes, and proposes a middle way between them, based largely on the paradoxical vision of Lutheran ethicist Robert Benne rooted in the Lutheran understanding of the two realms.²⁹ Benne's vision is (not surprisingly) different than Hauerwas's in significant ways because of their differing Christological and ecclesial assumptions. But the fact that they share common concerns and convictions about the dangers of the extremes on *both* sides offers at least some hope for fruitful conversation (and perhaps even cooperation) in certain areas relating to the church's witness in and to society. In the following section we will offer our own suggestions regarding the challenges Lutherans face and the contributions they are equipped (at least *theologically*) to make to the question of the church's witness in and to the world on issues of war and peace in view of the valid concerns of Hauerwas summarized above.

Lutheran Challenges and Contributions

The Character and Conduct of the Church As "Holy Community"

In his essay "The Lutheran Difference," Reformed scholar Mark Noll argues that

²⁹ See "The Failure of Two Extremes" in *Render*, 55ff.; cf. Benne's book *The Paradoxical Vision*.

“Lutherans have something to say to a Christian people shaped by this American history” that places so much emphasis on individualism, volunteerism and personal activism. What they have to say, according to Noll, “involves central affirmations of the Reformation”—foremost among them Lutheran ecclesiology, with its emphasis on the church as *God’s* creation, through which God works in ways that stand in marked contrast to the manipulative, deceptive, self-centered ways of the world.

What Noll does not mention in his article is that, unfortunately, Luther’s radical teachings on justification by faith and on the “priesthood of all believers”—which stand at the center of his Christologically-shaped ecclesiology—have often been misunderstood and misconstrued as fostering the sort of religious individualism and ethical subjectivism that theologians like Hauerwas so strongly (and rightly) condemn. As harshly as Bonhoeffer criticizes the followers of Luther for their failure to recognize and emphasize the necessary connection between radical grace and radical discipleship, just as emphatically he praises Luther himself for seeing and stressing this connection:

Luther had taught that man cannot stand before God, however religious his works and ways may be, because at bottom he is always seeking his own interests. In the depth of his misery, Luther had grasped by faith the free and unconditional forgiveness of all his sins. That experience taught him that this grace had cost him his very life, and must continue to cost him the same price day by day. So far from dispensing him from discipleship, this grace only made him a more earnest disciple. When he spoke of grace, Luther always implied as a corollary that it cost him his own life, the life which was now for the first time subjected to the absolute obedience of Christ. Only so could he speak of grace.³⁰

Therefore, insists Bonhoeffer:

It is a fatal misunderstanding of Luther’s action to suppose that his rediscovery of the gospel of pure grace offered a general dispensation from obedience to the command of Jesus, or that it was the great discovery of the Reformation that God’s forgiving grace automatically conferred upon the world both righteousness and holiness. On the contrary, for Luther the Christian’s worldly calling is

³⁰ *Cost of Discipleship*, 53.

sanctified only in so far as that calling registers the final, radical protest against the world.³¹

“It was not the justification of sin,” says Bonhoeffer, “but the justification of the sinner that drove Luther from the cloister back into the world:”

The grace he had received was costly grace. It was grace, for it was like water on parched ground, comfort in tribulation, freedom from the bondage of a self-chosen way, and forgiveness of all his sins. And it was costly for, so far from dispensing him from good works, it meant that he must take the call to discipleship more seriously than ever before. It was grace because it cost so much, and it cost so much because it was grace. That was the secret of the gospel of the Reformation—the justification of the sinner.³²

In a similar way, Paul Althaus seeks to clarify Luther’s teaching on the priesthood of all believers:

The priesthood means: We stand before God, pray for others, intercede with and sacrifice ourselves to God and proclaim the Word to one another. Luther never understands the priesthood of all believers merely in the “Protestant” sense of the Christian’s freedom to stand in a direct relationship to God without a human mediator. Rather he constantly emphasizes the Christian’s evangelical authority to come before God on behalf of the brethren and also of the world. The universal priesthood expresses not religious individualism but its exact opposite, the reality of the congregation as community.³³

Bonhoeffer’s book *Life Together* is a classic example of how the theological resources exist also in the Lutheran tradition—based on a full and proper understanding of Luther’s Christ-centered ecclesiology—for discovering, defending and displaying “the reality of the congregation as community.”

Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. No Christian community is more or less than this. Whether it be a brief, single encounter or the daily fellowship of years, Christian community is only this. We belong to one another only in and through Jesus Christ.³⁴

³¹ *Ibid.*, 52.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 314.

³⁴ *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1954), 21.

Just as God's righteousness in Christ is an "alien righteousness" that comes to us from "outside of ourselves" (*extra nos*), so also "the Christian needs another Christian who speaks God's Word to him" from outside of himself, "for by himself he cannot help himself;" "he needs his brother as a bearer and proclaimer of the divine word of salvation." Fellowship in the body of Christ, the church, therefore, "is founded solely upon Jesus Christ and this 'alien righteousness.'"³⁵ Later in the book, Bonhoeffer discusses the Christ-like virtues—meekness, helpfulness, forgiveness, burden-bearing, etc.—that we learn from each other and teach each other in the life and practices of the church as "holy community" in Christ.

Lutheran theologian Reinhard Hütter has persuasively argued that Lutherans can learn from and build on Hauerwas's ecclesial ethics in ways that conform well to historic, authentic Lutheran ecclesiology and its own particular understanding of "the congregation as holy community."³⁶ Summarizing first the views of Hauerwas, Hütter notes that Hauerwas avoids describing the church in purely sociological terms or primarily on the basis of purely theological terms (e.g., "the community of saints") which, at least in their traditional usage, often fail to denote the crucial *ethical* dimension of the church's life and character.

Instead, he combines the strengths of both by asking theologically for those concrete activities and practices which mark the church as church. Where these marks are found (the "*notae ecclesiae*") the church is found. In addition to those marks of the church which we know from the *Confessio Augustana*, the preached Word and the two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, Hauerwas adds the life of the Christians as a third mark. Here his United Methodist background plays a definite role. [Later in the article, Hütter also comments on the influence of Yoder's Anabaptist ecclesiology.] But we should take Hauerwas' point seriously on theological grounds, especially since we find the Christian life to be a

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁶ See, e.g., Reinhard Hütter, "The Ecclesial Ethics of Stanley Hauerwas," *Dialog* 30:3 (Summer 1991), 231-241.

mark of the church in Luther's late ecclesiology found in his treatise "On Councils and Churches."³⁷

In a way that is "similar to Luther," says Hütter,

Hauerwas understands the marks of the church as specific activities which the church is called to perform, and by which the church can be recognized as the church. These activities are the reason for talking about the church's "ethical character." They are the starting point for unfolding the basic tautological statement "The church is called to be the church."³⁸

For Luther as for Hauerwas, argues Hütter, the marks of preaching, baptism, the Lord's Supper (and, we might add, absolution) must be understood as more than mere "doctrinal truths" or "pastoral rites," but as concrete activities that involve the entire worshipping community, and that presuppose and foster a specifically Christian way of life, a particular set of habits and practices that set the church apart from the world. Although the language is markedly different than Luther's, it is certainly possible to affirm in a way that is consistent with Luther's theology Hauerwas's statement that preaching and the administration of the sacraments "are the essential rituals of our politics." "Through them we learn who we are. Instead of being motives or causes of effective social work on the part of Christian people, these liturgies are our effective social work."³⁹ These practices serve to create the "holiness" ("character," "virtues") that, for Hauerwas, constitute the "third mark" of the church. Thus, observes Hütter, there is a "circular flow" to Hauerwas's argument: "the virtues are acquired and trained in the worship activity and the life of the church and then sustain and pattern again the worship service and the practices of the church."⁴⁰

³⁷ "Ecclesial Ethics," 233; cf. Luther's "On the Councils and the Church," *LW* 41, 3-178.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *PK*, 108.

⁴⁰ "Ecclesial Ethics," 235.

Although Hütter admits that Hauerwas “often does not do enough to guard his work against [the] misunderstanding” that the visible church can simply be identified with some idealized form of the empirical church, still he insists that:

The (as I have to admit rather hidden) strength of Hauerwas’s ethical reflection upon the church is that he avoids the problematic distinction between an ideal and an empirical church, between a theological concept which does not relate to reality and a reality which is to be understood on primarily non-theological, i.e., sociological grounds. What he does instead is to take the concrete visible church communities theologically seriously by reminding them parenetically of their call as church....His “ethical ecclesiology” turns out to be nothing else than a parenetical reminder of the church’s call to witness through its form and activity to God’s story in and through Jesus Christ.⁴¹

The challenge for Lutherans, says Hütter, is “to discuss this exegesis [of the church] critically and accept or dismiss it on theological grounds.”

And if we as Lutherans take Eph. 2:8-10 seriously and relate it critically to Hauerwas’s “ethical ecclesiology,” we should learn from it without getting trapped by a few pitfalls. Eph. 2:8-10 says: “For by grace you have been saved by faith, and this is not of your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any person should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Jesus Christ for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” This is the key to understanding rightly the call of the church without falling into the trap of works-righteousness. The works we are called to perform are already prepared by God. We are giving ourselves into them by being faithful to our call.⁴²

How does all of this relate to Hauerwas’s understand of the necessarily *pacifist* calling and character of the church? Hütter suggests that

Hauerwas’ concept can be read in many ways: as an ethics of character and virtue, as a pacifist ethics, or as a consequently Methodist ethics of sanctification. In all of these approaches there is some truth, but these readings, I contend, remain peripheral; they do not hit the mark. At the very core we find the theological insight that Christian ethics properly has to start its reflection with the church and its call—not *creation in general*, not the *orders in general*, not *anthropology in general*, but rather *creation* as we get to know it through God the Creator, who is revealed first and for all time as the one who redeems and calls into the community of faith, *orders and patterns* in the world as we get to know them

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁴² *Ibid.*

through the God who calls his community to be a particular and specific one, responsible to its call, and *the human being* as the one who encounters God's justifying and sanctifying activity.⁴³

We have focused in this study, of course, on Hauerwas's pacifist convictions and on the Christological and ecclesial presuppositions underlying those convictions. We have come to the conclusion that insofar as there is a *necessary* and *inseparable* connection between Hauerwas's specific understanding of the peaceable nature of Christ's work and the peaceable character of the church, his pacifist views cannot be reconciled with the just-war thinking of Luther and of historic Lutheranism. Hauerwas himself, we have observed, maintains that this is the case. It does not necessarily follow, however, that Hauerwas's ecclesial ethics as a whole can simply be equated with or reduced to his specific pacifist convictions. It only means (not to minimize the significance of the qualifier "only!") that Hauerwas's pacifism is a critical and inseparable aspect of his own understanding of the social and political nature of Christ's work as embodied in the church. This fact, of course, can easily be understated or overstated—and neither way of stating the case does justice to Hauerwas or offers a fair and proper basis for meaningful and constructive dialog. Hütter is correct, however, in pointing out that Hauerwas's ecclesial ethics, properly understood, is not *merely* a pacifist ethics but also encompasses and encourages broader reflection on the church as a radically unique and alternative community in the world and its call to be faithful to God the Creator through its witness to his saving activity in Christ. That means that Hütter is also correct in maintaining that there is much in Hauerwas' ecclesiology from which Lutherans can learn and which they can build on in ways that are consistent with historic Lutheran theology—despite honest and important disagreements about its implications

⁴³ *Ibid.*

for the precise nature of the “peaceable witness” of the church. In fact, the observations offered in chapter five about the way in which the Lutheran perspective on *God’s work* through both war and peace is reflected and inculcated in the liturgical and catechetical life of the church stand as evidence in support of this conclusion.

At the same time, we also need to be honest (as is Hütter) about aspects of Hauerwas’s ecclesiology that we as Lutherans cannot simply affirm. These include not only his view of the necessarily pacifist character of the church’s witness, but also “the very weak and almost absent pneumatology in Hauerwas’ ecclesiology,” “the fact that Hauerwas “does not seem to emphasize enough that the call of the church to witness is one aspect of its freedom from works,” and (perhaps most significantly) “a lack in properly addressing the question of the eschatological hiddenness of the church—as the visible church.”⁴⁴ In the context of our study, this latter point is especially important. There is simply no way around the fact that “to remove the fundamental hiddenness of the church and to substitute faith for sight—this was for Luther the basic error of the Roman view of the church, a view that recurs with a new twist among the Enthusiasts in their ideal of the pure community.”⁴⁵

Luther, on the contrary, saw the church essentially as “a community or assembly of the saints in faith” and as such “something very much hidden...so that no one can know it or see it. It must be grasped and believed exclusively on the basis of Baptism, sacrament, and Word.” This “faith-oriented concept of the hidden church” which alone does justice to the New Testament reality of the church as the body of Christ [is] the chief accent in Luther’s understanding of the church. This is true even in the light of certain shifts in emphasis which were possible for him within this fundamental view.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 240-241.

⁴⁵ Hans-Werner Gensichen, *We Condemn: How Luther and 16th Century Lutheranism Condemned False Doctrine*, trans. Herbert J. A. Bouman (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), 55.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

As Althaus points out, the theology of the cross—which, as we discussed, is so crucial for understanding Luther’s view of the hidden work of God in the world through violent acts of apparent cruelty—“also determines Luther’s view of the church.”

The true church of Christ cannot be identified with the historical institution which calls itself the church and with its errors, sins, divisions, and heresies. Rather the true church is hidden under this empirical reality.... The earthly appearance of the church is an offense: “The devil can cover it over with offenses and divisions, so that you have to take offense at it. God too can conceal it behind faults and shortcomings of all kinds, so that you necessarily become a fool and pass false judgment on it. Christendom will not be known by sight, but by faith. And faith has to do with things not seen.”⁴⁷

One of the “shifts in emphasis” in Luther’s ecclesiology (noted by Gensichen above) is the one to which Hütter also refers in noting Luther’s inclusion of such elements as Christian holiness, cross-bearing, and the exercise of church discipline (including excommunication) as true “marks of the church” in his 1539 essay “On the Councils and the Church.”⁴⁸ But this must not be seen as a radical departure from Luther’s understanding of the essential hiddenness of the church. Outward holiness and church discipline are not viewed by Luther as infallible marks by which the church can be judged to be present (or absent) in a given place, but as necessary fruits—outward signs—of the “faith alone” that constitutes membership in the church. Although “we must constantly grow in sanctification and always become new creatures in Christ,” says Luther,

...these signs cannot be regarded as being as reliable as those noted before [the Word and Sacraments] since some heathen too practice these works and indeed at times appear holier than Christians; yet their actions do not issue from the heart purely and simply, for the sake of God, but they search for some other end because they lack a real faith in and true knowledge of God.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ *Theology of Martin Luther*, 321; cf. *LW* 35, 410.

⁴⁸ See *LW* 41, 143-167.

⁴⁹ “On the Councils and the Church,” 166-167.

Thus the Word and Sacraments—the means by which God creates this faith—are always for Luther the only truly reliable and infallible marks of the church’s presence and existence in the world .

At the same time, as Bonhoeffer strongly and rightly emphasizes, these fruits of obedience and discipleship in response to God’s liberating grace in Christ were taken extremely seriously by Luther. This is quite evident also—as we have noted repeatedly—in his writings on war and peace. Luther refused to tolerate any easy dismissal or compromising qualification of the clear words of Christ with regard to sinful participation in violence, no matter what form such dismissal or compromise might take place. Luther vowed to expend his last breath, if necessary, to “strip the name Christian” from those who, like the peasants, would engage in unjustified violence “in the name of Christ and for the sake of the Gospel:” “So long as there is a heartbeat in my body, I shall do all I can, through speaking and writing to take that name away from you.”⁵⁰ Such unjustified violence, says Luther, actually defames the name of Christ, contradicts his Gospel, and ignores the clear example (which Christians are bound to follow when unjustly persecuted for their faith) of Christ’s willing and passive suffering on the cross:

Christians do not fight for themselves with sword and musket, but with the cross and with suffering, just as Christ, our leader, does not bear a sword, but hangs on a cross. Your victory, therefore, does not consist in conquering and reigning, or in the use of force, but in defeat and weakness, as St. Paul says in II Corinthians 1 [10:4], “The weapons of our warfare are not material, but are the strength which comes from God.”⁵¹

Luther applies the same sharp language and strong verdict to the pope and to

⁵⁰ *Admonition to Peace*, 32.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

emperors and princes who sought to justify war “for the sake of Christ’s kingdom.”

[W]hat motivated me [to respond] most of all was this: They undertook to fight against the Turk in the name of Christ, and taught and incited men to do this, as though our people were an army of Christians against the Turks, who were enemies of Christ. This is absolutely contrary to Christ’s doctrine and name. It is against his doctrine because he says that Christians shall not resist evil, fight, or quarrel, nor take revenge or insist on rights [Matt. 5:39].⁵²

Besides, says Luther, “there are scarcely five Christians in such an army, and perhaps there are worse people in the eyes of God in that army than are the Turks; and yet they want to bear the name of Christ.”⁵³

This is the greatest of all sins and is one that no Turk commits, for Christ’s name is used for sin and shame and thus dishonored. This would be especially so if the pope and the bishops were involved in the war, for they would bring the greatest shame and dishonor to Christ’s name because they are called to fight against the devil with the Word of God and with prayer, and they would be deserting their calling and office to fight with the sword against flesh and blood. They are not commanded to do this; it is forbidden.⁵⁴

Such strong rebukes belie Verduin’s assertion that Luther was willing to acknowledge as Christians (in crass Constantinian fashion) all those within a certain community who were baptized and called themselves Christians. On the contrary, he demanded evidence of faith in the form of a Christian’s willingness to obey the clear commands of Christ—including his clear commands regarding justified and unjustified violence.

Luther repeatedly reminds both pastors and the church as a whole of their true—and utterly unique—calling in this world: to bear witness to Christ, his cross, and the salvation he accomplished, even if (as we should expect) this calling and witness means sharing in Christ’s cross and suffering.

O how gladly Christ would receive me at the Last Judgment if, when summoned to the spiritual office to preach and care for souls, I had left it and busied myself

⁵² *On War Against the Turk*, 165.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

with fighting and with the temporal sword! Why should Christ or his people have anything to do with the sword and going to war, and kill men's bodies, when he declared that he has come to save the world, not to kill people [John 3:17]? His work is to deal with the gospel and to redeem men from sin and death by his Spirit to help them from this world to everlasting life...in the garden he bade Peter to put up his sword and said, "All who take the sword will perish by the sword" [Matt. 26:52].⁵⁵

This does not mean (Luther hastens to add) "that worldly rulers ought not be Christians, or that a Christian cannot bear the sword and serve God in temporal government. Would to God they were all Christians, or that no one could be a prince unless he were a Christian!" "But what I want to do," says Luther, "is keep a distinction between the callings and offices, so that everyone can see to what God has called him and fulfill the duties of his office faithfully and sincerely in the service of God."⁵⁶

This reference of Luther to the "distinctions between callings and offices" provides occasion to discuss in a more focused way the fact that the social and political dimension of the Christian witness inevitably takes on a different emphasis in the thought of Luther than it does in the thought of Hauerwas. Because of Hauerwas's understanding of the inherently social and political nature of Christ's nonviolent resistance on the cross, the Christian witness to that cross must also (for Hauerwas) find its primary expression in a social and political form—namely, in the form of the church. As we have emphasized, the church as the community of saints also plays a vital role in Luther's thought. For Luther, however, one of the primary purposes of the church—by means of its Christ-centered worship, teaching and fellowship—is to form, equip and strengthen Christians for their re-entry into the world to bear witness through their various and diverse Christian *vocations* in the world. The church surely exists in the world as a unique

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 165-166.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 166.

community and contrasting model of the true peace and holiness that Christ alone came to bring; but the true nature of this peace and holiness (as discussed above) is always largely hidden from the world. In a very real sense, therefore, the most direct, meaningful, and effective witness that the church can give in and to the world comes in the form of the (visible and manifest) love shown by Christians to all people (including their enemies) as they exercise their God-given vocations in the world. It is here that they display before the world their righteousness of works and Spirit-given virtues (of kindness, patience, forgiveness, etc.)—works and virtues that flow (in a way that is always ultimately hidden to human discernment) from the righteousness received as a gift through faith in the work of Christ on the cross.

In this connection, a number of Lutheran theologians have recently emphasized that a true return to the thought of Luther when it comes to the issue of Christian ethics and the sanctified Christian life involves more than a narrow focus on the distinction between Law and Gospel, with its dynamic of the accusatory function of the Law, the gracious word of forgiveness, and the response of faith in the form of obedience to the Law. For as soon as one begins to obey, the Law inevitably and immediately begins once again to accuse—and so the cycle continues (centered always in forgiveness as the ultimate outcome or goal), with rather uncertain implications for encouraging, discussing or conceptualizing concrete and consistent ethical behavior. A better framework (or at least one that must be seen as a necessary complement to Luther's ethical thought), it has been suggested, is Luther's concept of the two kinds of righteousness.

We noted earlier Hütter's observation that for Hauerwas "Christian ethics properly has to start its reflection with the church and its call," that is, with "*creation* as

we get to know it through God the Creator, who is revealed first and for all time as the one who redeems and calls into the community of faith,” and “who calls his community to be a particular and specific one.”⁵⁷ The doctrine of creation also plays a crucial role in Luther’s ecclesial ethics, but with a different emphasis. The God who created *both* church and world calls the members of his radically new creation in the church to identify themselves also with the larger human community in the world and to represent him in that very community through acts of Christ-like love and service. God created human beings to *trust* him, and in this way to receive the saving passive righteousness (or “vertical righteousness”) based on the perfect work of Christ alone. However,

God also created human beings to serve Him, not just by acknowledging His goodness, Luther insisted, but also by representing Him in the delivery of mutual care and concern within the human community. Fundamental to Luther’s understanding of the Biblical teaching of creation was his conviction that God had made human beings in and for community with one another. God had so structured human life that he made individual human beings not only stand in relationship to Him in vertical dependence but also to associate with other human beings in horizontal inter-dependence. God generally comes to meet human beings behind His chosen “masks,” that is, other people who care for those in need.⁵⁸

For Luther, therefore, “the situations and responsibilities which structure human life are part of the doctrine of creation”—not just God’s creation of the church, but his continuing work of creation in preserving and sustaining the world in which the church exists and carries out its God-given work and witness.

God places all people, not just Christians, in these situations; He assigns all people these responsibilities. Only those who trust in Him, however, recognize His hand in the construction of their situations. Only those who recognize His lordship perceive that their responsibilities are personal assignments from God. Luther used the word “calling” (*Beruf*) for the assignments of daily life as the Christian perceives and practices them. The Christian’s calling is externally

⁵⁷ Ecclesial Ethics,” 240.

⁵⁸ Robert Kolb, “God Calling, ‘Take Care of My People’: Luther’s Concept of Vocation in the Augsburg Confession and Its Apology,” *Concordia Journal* 8:1 (January 1982), 5.

identical to the responsibilities assigned to others, to non-Christian parents or butchers or jury members. The structure which guides the exercise of these responsibilities is the same. What differentiates the Christian's exercise of his calling from the non-Christian's practice of his responsibilities is the faith which motivates the Christian. The vertical relationship with God, the trust which recognizes God's love and lordship, impinges on and controls the horizontal relationships in which that faith now perceives God's calling and command. Christ's righteousness, the righteousness of our vertical relationship, inspires and produces our own righteousness, the righteous activity of our horizontal relationships.⁵⁹

Luther's distinction between these two kinds of righteousness, therefore, "recognizes and rests upon Christ's observation that human life consists of two kinds of relationship, one with the author and creator of life, the other with all creatures (Matt. 22:37-39)."⁶⁰

God's human creatures are right—really human—in their vertical relationship because their faith embraces the God who loves them through Jesus Christ with the reckless trust of total dependence and reliance on him which constitutes their identity. They are right—really human—in their horizontal relationship with God's other creatures when they live a life which is active in reflecting his love through the deeds that deliver his care and concern. Two spheres and kinds of relationship demand two different ways of being right or righteous.⁶¹

As different as these two kinds of righteousness are, however, they are also inseparable, since they are both ultimately rooted not only in God's work of creation but also in Christ and his work on the cross.

Human life is of one piece, not divided into separate or separable spheres of sacred and profane. Human life is cruciform—eyes lifted to focus on God, feet firmly planted on his earth, arms stretched out in mutual support of those God has placed around us. Having the focus of our lives directed toward Christ inevitably extends our arms to our neighbors.⁶²

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁰ Robert Kolb, "Luther on the Two Kinds of Righteousness; Reflections on His Two-Dimensional Definition of Humanity at the Heart of His Theology," *Lutheran Quarterly* 13:4 (Winter 1999), 452.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 453.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 453-454.

Since *both* kinds of righteousness are rooted in Christ's completely unique and completely sufficient work *for us* on the cross—the true meaning of which is hidden from human reason and experience—“faith” or “trust” (rather than “obedience” or “imitation”) is always (for Luther) “the operative word:”

Trust defines the new creature's identity as a child of God. Passive righteousness is the trust which embraces the loving Father and throws itself upon him. Just as that was true in the Garden [of Eden], until doubt broke through and broke down the relationship of trust in God, so it becomes true as Christ's word of love draws trust back to God in the human creatures that word re-creates.... That trust, directed toward the Crucified and Risen God, is the righteousness of Eden, restored and revived, ready to advertise its identity in the performance of activities suitable for God's children.⁶³

As Luther emphasizes in *The Large Catechism* (cf. the discussion in chapter three), the faith that is so crucial to our service to God and all of his children in the world is created, sustained, nourished, formed and strengthened in and through God's work in the Christian community—through the Christ-centered and cross-centered worship, teaching, preaching, receiving and sharing of God's gifts in the church:

“Lutheran” faith goes to work—in confidence that the God who is present in Word and Sacrament creating faith is also present in human lives which operate responsibly in the horizontal relationships which God has designed for carrying out His will, for delivering His care and concern, in this world. Faith relies solely on God's promise that our vertical relationship is secure in His hands, the pierced hands of the God who died and came back from the dead. Faith recognizes that the Christian life is a life which has died to sin in Baptism and risen to new life in Christ as it emerges from the baptismal water. Faith is supremely confident that this water drowns the sinner and gives life to him as a babe in God's arms. Faith recognizes that the Lord who gave His body on the cross incorporates His people into Himself through the Holy Supper, of which He is both meal and chef. Faith recognizes that the God who created all reality with the word, “Let there be,”—and there was—still sustains His people through His presence in His recreative Word of promise, spoken in the Word made flesh.⁶⁴

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 465.

⁶⁴ “God Calling,” 10.

This faith created in baptism and nourished in Word and sacrament sends us back out into the world, to serve God our neighbor in whatever callings God (in his wisdom and mercy) has assigned to us. These callings becomes the very means, or “masks,” through which God accomplishes his work in the world:

Faith finds its sphere of activities in the horizontal relationships which the Creator established as His own means of being present through the love of His people. Faith serves God by performing well those economic tasks which feed, clothe, and comfort others; faith’s service in the economic sphere extends to support and help given to fellow workers and to all with whom we have contact on the job, in school, as we conduct our business and offer our labor. Faith serves God by meeting the needs of neighbors and fellow citizens in activities ranging from painting the neighbor’s fence or mopping up his vomit as he lies dying, to participation in the activities of community organizations and political parties. Faith serves God by teaching and ushering and painting at the church building as well as by singing hymns of praise and sharing the message of Christ across the assembly line or the garden fence.⁶⁵

And faith also serves God, Luther was convinced, through the vocation of soldier or “just warrior”: the “office of those who are gifted and equipped to be used as “God’s hand” and “God’s instrument” in God’s strange and wrathful work of restraining and punishing those who seek to stir up strife and wreak havoc and chaos in the world. This strange and alien work always has as its loving and merciful purpose the maintenance of peace, the preservation of order, and the sustenance of God’s creation, which remains (until the Last Day) the context in which God’s holy community, the church, bears witness to God’s love in Christ.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁶ For further discussion of Luther’s concept of the “two kinds of righteousness,” see Charles P. Arand, “Two Kinds of Righteousness as a Framework for Law and Gospel in the Apology,” *Lutheran Quarterly* XV (2001), 417-439; also Arand’s (unpublished) essay, “Our Theology: Two Types of Righteousness.” See also Biermann’s dissertation referred to earlier, which draws on Luther’s further distinction between the “three kinds of righteousness” (two of which apply only to Christians by virtue of their “vertical” relationship to God and their “horizontal” relationship to their neighbors, and one of which applies also to non-Christians by virtue of their ability to perform acts of “civil righteousness.”

Constantinian Temptations in the Church's Witness to the World

In the closing pages of *The Politics of Jesus* Yoder speaks of the closing days of an era, the passing of which may seem regrettable to many Christians but which (he suggests) may actually portend a new and desperately-needed recognition of the church's true nature and radical calling in its relationship to the world:

Perhaps Christians in our age are being made ready for a new awareness of the continuing relevance of the message of the Apocalypse. There is a widespread recognition that Western society is moving toward the collapse of the mentality that has been identified with Christendom. Christians must recognize that they are a minority not only on the globe but also at home in the midst of followers of non-Christian and post-Christian faiths. Perhaps this will prepare us to see how inappropriate and preposterous was the prevailing assumption, from the time of Constantine until yesterday, that the fundamental responsibility of the church for society is to manage it.⁶⁷

Earlier in this chapter we discussed various trends within American Lutheranism that manifest this tendency to take on characteristics of what Hauerwas called "the activist church." We noted that such tendencies can be found within Lutheranism both sides of the theological and political spectrum, patterned either along the lines of a Niebuhrian liberal Protestant social activism or along the lines of a Puritan-Reformed conservative evangelical political program. We voiced our agreement with Hauerwas that in either case the very real danger exists for the church to lose sight of its unique theological identity, to qualify and compromise its ultimate loyalty to God for the sake of its responsibility to the world, and to forsake its true calling to serve as the one and only witness to the world of the radical and revolutionary love of God revealed in Jesus Christ and his cross and exemplified in the community of the cross.

⁶⁷ *PJ*, 248.

We have also observed that, unfortunately (but perhaps not surprisingly), contemporary Lutheran attitudes toward war and peace often appear to be rooted in one or the other of these Constantinian perspectives. In his essay on “On the Viability of the Just War Theory” Paul Jersild observes that:

Eckehart Lorenz, secretary for social studies in the Lutheran World Federation’s Department of Studies, argues that on the basis of documents emanating from the LWF, from Lutheran churches, and from several Lutheran theologians, there is a new “Lutheran peace ethic” emerging in our time, one that needs more explicit formulation. These statements and writings reflect the conviction that in the nuclear age war is no longer an acceptable way of defending our rights and freedoms. The just war criteria are not to be applied to determine which anticipated war may be just. . . . Rather, the purpose of the just war criteria now should be to establish the impossibility of “meaningful” warfare in the presence of nuclear weaponry.⁶⁸

“Striving for peace,” says Jersild, “is not primarily a matter of military strategizing but a political, social, and economic task” in which the church must be intimately involved, as it seeks to make clear on the basis of the just war theory itself “the total unacceptableness of nuclear warfare.”⁶⁹

Jersild speaks of striving for peace as a “political, social, and economic task;” Hauerwas would no doubt ask: “What about the church’s *theological* task in bearing witness to the peace that Jesus demonstrated in his life and in his death?” Not insignificantly, Jesus is mentioned only twice in Jersild’s essay, once in connection with his (one-sentence) summary of Bainton’s work and once in connection with his questioning of Ramsey’s assertion that just war theory originates from “Jesus’ ethic of love.”⁷⁰ We recall Hauerwas’s judgment concerning the fact that:

Christians, we have been told recently, should work for peace. But what good is a peace movement that works for peace for the same idolatrous reasons we build

⁶⁸ *PWJT*, 77.

⁶⁹ *PJWT*, 78; 86.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 70-71.

bombs—namely, the anxious self-interested protection of our world as it is? ... Our hope is based not on Caesar's missiles or Caesar's treaties, but on the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth. People often work for peace out of the same anxieties and perverted views of reality that lead people to build bombs.⁷¹

It seems safe to assume that Hauerwas would respond to Jersild's nuclear pacifism in much the same way that he responds to the nuclear pacifism of the United Methodist Bishops in their statement "In Defense of Creation:"

One cannot help but think the Bishops are trying to slip in a Jonathan Schell-like argument—namely, since war continues to protect a nation's right to build nuclear weapons, then war (and nations, according to Schell) must go. This is clearly utopianism, but even at that it is not pacifism, much less Christian pacifism. Rather it presupposes that if we could eliminate nuclear weapons then war might again be a viable institution. ... The peace that is sought is not the peace that has been given by Christ. Instead, it is a peace that encourages us to put our faith in the threat of nuclear war, for it is assumed that threat is frightening people to the extent that they may finally come to their senses and realize that they stand on the brink of annihilation.⁷²

One the other hand (as we have seen), Hauerwas is no less patient with or approving of just war thinking that (from his perspective) is devoid of serious theological (Christological) grounding and merely seeks to justify national policy on the basis of the need to defend allegedly virtuous American values and goals. Hauerwas's review (with Paul J. Griffiths) of Jean Bethke Elshtain's book *Just War Against Terror* is (if possible) even more scathing in its tone and content than his review of the "semi-pacifist" statement of the Methodist Bishops:

Jean Bethke Elshtain is rightly admired for her courage, for her trenchant critiques of peculiarly American pathologies, and for the wisdom of her political judgment. We think, however, that her current attempt morally to justify the Bush presidency's "war against terrorism" along with its entire National Security Strategy...is nothing more than an uncritical justification of the ideology of America as empire. It is itself a deeply ideological work rather than one of careful and critical thought.⁷³

⁷¹ *RA*, 89-90.

⁷² *Speak Up*, 156,

⁷³ *FT* 138 (October 2003), 41.

The basic problem with Elshtain's book, says Hauerwas, is its assumption

...that good Christians simply accept the American solution to the church-state question and to the complexities of how best to advocate Christian teaching in a pluralist society. But as Elshtain knows perfectly well, not all Christians do (these two [Hauerwas and Griffiths] don't, for different reasons and in different ways), and her elision of the boundary between the category "Christian" and the category "American" is another feature of the book's grammar never explicitly addressed or shown for what it is.⁷⁴

"In the end," therefore,

...the use of Christian language and ideas in this book is nothing more than window-dressing for a passion to impose America upon the world. It is not a book whose argument should convince Christians; it is not a book whose argument should convince anyone thoughtful; it is a book—and here, out of respect for its author, we do not mince words—informed by jingoistic dreams of empire. Clarity about Elshtain's question, the question of the burden of American power, can only be had if clarity is gained about America. That clarity has both a theological and an empirical aspect. Neither is present in this book.⁷⁵

Whether or not (or to what extent) Elshtain is guilty as charged (it should be noted that she defends herself equally passionately in the same issue of *First Things*) is a question that we will leave others to discuss and determine. There is little doubt, however, that there are American Lutherans who are guilty (in varying degrees of seriousness and with various degrees of awareness) of eliding the distinction between "American" and "Christian" and accepting governmental decisions about war on the basis of political views and nationalistic biases rather than on the basis of the theological principles and presuppositions that we have discussed in this paper as forming the true basis for a Lutheran perspective on war and peace. The solution to both varieties of Lutheran Constantinianism, we would once again suggest, is a return to the thought and writings of Luther himself on war and peace. However Hauerwas (or anyone else) might

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

judge Luther's theological presuppositions and conclusions in this regard, it is hard to see how the charge of Constantinianism (in the Yoderian and Hauerwasian sense of the term) can be leveled or sustained against Luther on the basis of his own treatment of the issue of war and peace.

Obviously, Luther lived and wrote in a historical, political context when the lines between church and government were not clearly drawn. The affairs of the church were inextricably tied to the exercise of political authority in both church and state, and activities and authority in both spheres had crucial and concrete implications for the daily life of nearly everyone in society. Christendom in this historical and political sense was certainly an inescapable social and ecclesial reality in Luther's day.⁷⁶ As Lewis Spitz cautions, however, "how much reality the concept of Christendom"—as a "religious-meta-physical entity"—actually "had in the minds of medieval men is difficult to determine."⁷⁷ It is quite clear that for Luther (contrary to Verduin's argument) the use of the term and concept of "Christendom" did not imply that all christened people living in a certain geographical reality were simply to be regarded as "good Christians," no matter how they lived and conducted themselves. Over and over again in his writings in war and peace he laments the fact that "a Christian is a rare bird:" "the world and the masses are and always will be un-Christian," says Luther, "even if they are all baptized and Christian in name. Christians are few and far between."⁷⁸ Luther's writings express

⁷⁶ For a helpful summary, see "The Concept of Christendom" in Lewis W. Spitz, *The Renaissance and Reformation Movements*, Vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 21ff.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁷⁸ *Temporal Authority*, 91.

strong and consistent agreement with Yoder's statement that "Christians must recognize that they are a minority not only on the globe but also at home."⁷⁹

But what about governmental leaders as God's representatives on earth? Yoder sharply criticizes Luther's "positivistic" view of government and governmental authority, claiming that "Luther gave to government a degree of divine sanction independent both of Christ and of justice which has been a problem to Protestantism ever since."⁸⁰

Summarizing "The Classical Lutheran View," Yoder writes:

With reference...to the maintenance of justice, the insight into human sinfulness does not lead to any doubts about whether the standards of justice defined for the statesman in his station can be attained; Lutheranism traditionally places considerable confidence in rulers.⁸¹

Such trust and confidence, in the view of Yoder and Hauerwas, leads directly (even if unwittingly) to the type of "quietistic Constantinism" discussed earlier. "The prince of whom Luther thought in the sixteenth century," says Yoder, "is replaced today by the professional politician, to whom the simple Christian should in a similar way entrust his political judgment."⁸²

One can hardly deny that Luther's concept of the two realms has been used—we would argue, *abused*—to support various historical manifestations of Constantinian quietism (it should be noted that even Yoder is not willing to blame Luther for the *extreme* abuse of this concept that took place during the time of Hitler⁸³). At the same time, it is difficult, if not impossible, to harmonize Yoder's comments about Luther's

⁷⁹ *PJ*, 248.

⁸⁰ *Christian Witness to the State*, 82.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 74.

⁸³ See *Christian Witness to the State*, 82; see also the discussion "The Failure of Two Extremes" and "The German Church Struggle Against Naziism" in *Render*, 55ff.

positivistic view of government and Lutheranism's historic "confidence in rulers" with the essays of Luther himself on war and peace. Statements such as the following abound in these essays:

You must know that since the beginning of the world a wise prince is a mighty rare bird, and an upright prince even rarer. They are generally the biggest fools or the worst scoundrels on earth; therefore, one must constantly expect the worst from them and look for little good. . . . If a prince should happen to be wise, upright, or a Christian, that is one of the great miracles, the most precious token of divine grace upon that land.⁸⁴

Such comments hardly reflect "considerable confidence in rulers." Nevertheless, says Luther, God has his own strange, wise, and sovereign way of using such "fools" and "scoundrels:"

They are God's executioners and hangmen; his divine wrath uses them to punish the wicked and to maintain outward peace. Our God is a great lord and ruler; this is why he must also have such noble, highborn, and rich hangmen and constables. He desires that everyone shall copiously accord them riches, honor, and fear in abundance. It pleases his divine will that we call his hangman gracious lords, fall at their feet, and be subject to them in all humility, so long as they do not ply their trade too far and try to become shepherds instead of hangmen.⁸⁵

Lutherans honor earthly rulers, therefore, not on the basis of some simplistic assumption about their personal goodness, wisdom, honesty, or competence, but on the basis of our *trust* in *God's* ability to use even fools and scoundrels to carry out his work in the world—a trust generated by their knowledge that God used even the fools and scoundrels who nailed Christ to the cross to accomplish our salvation. George Forell summarizes Luther's views as follows:

If the rulers were virtuous they would avoid war and work for peace. But Luther has no illusions about the sincerity of their desire for peace. He had said that, "everybody ought to know that a prince will be venison in heaven." He was sure that there would not be many rulers present "when the roll is called up yonder." Yet God had made provisions for peace, not through the moral excellency of

⁸⁴ *Temporal Authority*, 113.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

princes but rather through the balance of power which is the result of the multitude of peoples and interests in this world.⁸⁶

God takes care of wicked, selfish, tyrannical rulers

“...by seeing to it that others, too, have fists, and that there are people on the other side of the mountain as well. Thus one sword keeps the other in the scabbard.” Thus peace is the result of the multiplicity of forces and interests which tend to check each other and prevent even a wicked and foolish ruler from dominating everybody else. Not in the goodness of man, who wants peace, but in the goodness of God, who has created this variety of interests and pressures which require compromise and make war risky, rests our hope for peace. Luther carries his basic ideas through with amazing consistency. The powers of this world have to play God’s masquerade. Through them He punishes evil-doers and presses toward peace. Even in the international relationships of the nations God rules and accomplishes His own ultimate purposes.⁸⁷

There is more than a hint of sarcasm in Luther’s comments above regarding the “copious honor” due to the “highborn hangmen” who serve in civil government. This serves as a reminder of authentic Lutheranism’s realism about the fallen nature of governmental structures and leaders, and (therefore) the need to guard against any and all idolatrous estimations of them. While it is true, as John Stephenson says, that “Luther regards secular government...as an integral part of the good divine work of preservation,” it is equally true that:

Perception of the divine benevolence which undergirds the exercise of order-creating authority in all spheres of life ought not, however, to lead to an unbalanced, “enthusiastic” and ultimately idolatrous estimate of the function and competence of secular rule. The business of government at all levels is to patch up and preserve a non-ideal reality, and were its task to be compared with that of a modern hospital, then it might more properly be likened to the casualty department than to that of plastic surgery. That is to say, as a preservative of the fallen Creation secular authority operates under the law, being only indirectly related to the gospel which, as the life-giving message of the forgiveness of sin for Christ’s sake, plants the new Creation in the midst of the old.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ George W. Forell, “Luther and Politics,” in *Luther and Culture*, co-written by Forell, Harold J. Grimm and Theodore Hoelty-Nickel (Decorah, Iowa: Luther College Press, 1960), 38.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Luther's basic conservatism regarding existing political structures, therefore, stems not from positivistic convictions about their reliability and trustworthiness but, in sense, from just the opposite: from his realism about the balance of power created by competing interests and from his skepticism regarding our *human* ability to effect lasting, positive changes in the realm of government in this fallen world. Since we cannot and must not "put our trust in princes" (Psalm 146:3) or in our ability to change the world, we must put our trust elsewhere:

There is as great a difference between changing a government and improving it as the distance from heaven to earth. It is easy to change a government, but it is difficult to get one that is better, and the danger is that you will not. Why? Because it is not in our will and power, but only in the will and hand of God.⁸⁹

We are back once again, therefore, to that operative word of Luther's: *faith* or *trust* in *God* rather than in human strength, efforts, wisdom, power, rulers, governments, or anything else that can be named. And it is this same simple faith, not illusions of "creating a just and perfect society" or "controlling history" or "changing the world" that underlies Christians' decisions about supporting or participating in what they believe to be justified acts of governmental violence and war. According to Luther, we are not even to trust in the apparent justice of the cause or reason for going to war, even though we are to do our best to determine it: "Fearing God means that we do not rely on the justness of our cause, but that we are careful, diligent, and cautious, even in the very smallest details, in so small a thing as a whistle."⁹⁰ The considerations of the just war tradition as articulated by Luther are crucial questions for determining the boundaries within which war can be viewed as an acceptable means of participating in God's work of pursuing

⁸⁹ *Whether Soldiers*, 111-112.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 125.

peace, but they are not infallible principles for determining the justness of a particular ruler or nation or policy. When Christians go to war, they trust in the goodness, justice and mercy of God with which they have become so intimately acquainted on the basis of the work of Christ and his cross: “In this faith,” says Luther, “I will live, die, fight, and do everything else. Dear Lord God the Father, preserve and strengthen this faith in me by your Spirit. Amen.”⁹¹

In view of everything that is said above, Lutherans in America—influenced as they undoubtedly are by non-Lutheran notions of America as “God’s chosen nation” or as a new “promised land” that God has promised to bless in some specially favored or even predestined way—need to be especially attentive to a necessary corollary of Luther’s teaching on government, namely that

No one form of government, no one form of economic system, can ever become a “Christian” system; that is true not only because each system will be permeated by human sinfulness. We have no ultimate stake in determining whether capitalism, socialism, feudalism, or a barter economy is eternally best. Luther preferred feudalism to the incipient capitalism of his day. He may have been right in his historical situation; this judgment would be impossible in ours. But no such political or social system can ever become an end in itself. The end and goal of all political, social and economic activity is the welfare of our fellow creatures, the effective working of society, which God designed to be the place in which human needs are met through His human “masks,” who deliver care and concern.⁹²

Christian willingness to serve as such “masks” in whatever ways necessary is an expression of Christian love, motivated by Christ’s own loving suffering on the cross. When we serve in such ways, we do not leave our Christian convictions behind, nor do we lose sight of our ultimate loyalty:

Religious convictions are most powerfully useful to democracy when they, in fact, disturb the consensus because they raise a higher standard against which the

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 135-136.

⁹² “God Calling,” 29-30.

democracy ought to be judged. Certainly in the abolitionist movement or the civil rights movement the relevance of religious convictions was apparent because they troubled the consensus. The idea is that as Christians we are in the world but not of the world. We are committed to the good creation into which God has placed us, and that includes the good order that government provides. But we should never confuse that order with our ultimate loyalty, which is to God in Christ. Therefore, we can be involved in it [democracy] without idolizing it, without making the democracy into a false idol.⁹³

James Neuchterlein argues that because they have been so carefully schooled (at least in theory) regarding the penultimate nature of politics and human government, Lutherans more so than many other Christians—and particularly Missouri Synod Lutherans—have been “made safe for patriotism.”

We [LCMS Lutherans] could love America—feel toward it all that respect, pride, and affection that is natural for people to extend to their homelands—without being tempted to the idolatrous nationalism that has deformed modern history. How could American Lutherans make an idol of a nation whose philosophical assumptions (enlightenment liberalism) and dominant religious tradition (revivalist Calvinism) were so fundamentally at odds with their most basic understandings? Because we were at the deepest level of our beings strangers in America, we could be safely at home there. We could affirm all its good gifts without making of them more than they warranted.⁹⁴

This does not mean, of course, that Lutherans are immune from and therefore have no need to guard against Constantinian temptations to idolize the state or to seek to take control of government for what appear to be good and godly reasons. It means remembering that for Lutherans who are genuinely faithful to the theology of Luther, the cross—not some temporal or temporary human institution—truly is the meaning of history. The message of Christ’s cross and resurrection delivers Lutherans from delusions of control and false hopes centered in transforming society, and frees them to

⁹³ Ronald Thiemann, quoted in “Raise Your Political Voice” by Rob Blezard (*The Lutheran*, September 1996), 28-29.

⁹⁴ James Neuchterlein, “Heaven is My Home: Memoirs of a Lutheran Boyhood” (*First Things*, October 1990), 32; cf. his essay “Must Lutherans Be Political Conservatives?” reprinted in *Forum Letter* (December 1998), 7-8.

offer themselves in service to God and to country in whatever ways their vocation demands—even in vocations that may require the use of violence as part of God’s strange and merciful work of creating and preserving order, security and peace.

Issues Needing Further Clarification and Exploration

Just War and “A Just Nation”

With regard to the church and its struggle against the temptation of Constantinianism, one issue that needs clarification (and again, we would suggest, even correction) is Hauerwas’s consistent characterization of virtually any and all forms of the just war tradition as based on (unreal and unfounded) assumptions about the “just character” of the government waging a “just war.” As we have seen, Hauerwas credits (and commends) Ramsey for attempting to defend and articulate a theological understanding of the just war tradition that takes seriously the person and work of Jesus Christ: “Unlike those Catholics who continue to base just war on natural-law assumptions of self-defense, Ramsey has from the beginning argued that just war is the disinterested love taught by Christ now institutionalized in the state. Just war is love-transformed justice through which the justice of the earthly city is elevated.”⁹⁵ For Ramsey, says Hauerwas (and once again he means this as compliment), “just war is not a casuistical checklist to determine when violence might be used; it is a theory of statecraft.”⁹⁶ But hidden in this very compliment is serious mischaracterization of Ramsey’s position, which leads Hauerwas to conclude:

Both the Bishops and Ramsey remain committed Constantinians. By that I mean they argue presuming Christians not only still rule but can and should rule. It is

⁹⁵ *Speak Up*, 169.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 167.

therefore their task to show that Christians can develop an ethic sufficient to sustain a civilization. This is a particular temptation for Christians (and even more for Methodists) in America, where the idea has long persisted that there is a close connection between Christianity and democracy. The Bishops clearly assume that if they could simply get the American people concerned about the nuclear crisis the issue would be resolved, ignoring entirely that our current situation has little to do with the good or evil will of either the American or Russian people as people.⁹⁷

Ramsey, says Hauerwas, is “much less susceptible” to this criticism. However,

Ramsey’s argument that just war is generated and sustained by Christian love would seem to commit him to the view that those civilizations and correlative states that are not formed by Christian presence cannot sustain the ethos necessary to make war an option for Christians; or that those states of modernity that have explicitly rejected their Christian heritage cannot command Christian conscience to fight in their wars since Christians can have no confidence that the wars of such states can be kept limited.⁹⁸

The word “seem” in the quotation above is critical, however, because it signals Hauerwas’s own (and we would argue, unjustified) *interpretation* of Ramsey’s position, not the position as articulated by Ramsey himself (see below). Thus Hauerwas concludes:

Even if the broad outlines of Ramsey’s defense of the state as the embodiment of love-transformed justice are correct, we must ask if the concrete states we have in fact fit Ramsey’s moral condition for sustaining a just war. My judgment is that they do not.⁹⁹

Here it is perfectly proper for Hauerwas to offer his judgment, but it is a judgment based on assumptions about Ramsey’s position that (we would argue) cannot be sustained on the basis of Ramsey’s own (quite carefully nuanced) argument.

Ramsey (in *War and the Christian Conscience* and elsewhere) does express the view that Christianity has had a profound (and positive) influence on Western society and

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 171-172.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 173.

politics in many ways, one of which is its inheritance of the just war tradition with its concern for “rules of war” and limitations on war.¹⁰⁰ This is true, suggests Ramsey, even if and when various political expressions of the just war tradition do not recognize or explicitly acknowledge its Christian roots. But (*contra* Hauerwas) Ramsey does not argue that the particularly Christian understanding of the just war tradition assumes (much less is tantamount to) a particular theory of statecraft, or that it necessitates for its viability particular moral conditions existing in a particular state. As the title of Ramsey’s book makes clear, Ramsey is not primarily concerned with “War and the Just State” (even if Hauerwas would argue that this *should be* his primary concern); he is concerned with “War and the *Christian Conscience*.” In its classical Christian form, says Ramsey,

The just war theory did not rest upon the supposition that men possess a general competence to discriminate with certainty between social orders at large by means of clear, universal principles of justice, so as to be able to declare (without sin’s affecting one’s judgment of his own nation’s cause) one side or social system to be just and the others unjust. This was not the premise by which Augustine came to a confident enough judgment as to a Christian’s responsibility in justifiable (if not unambiguously just) war. My contention is that Christian ethics may attribute to ordinary men, and to their political leaders, a capacity to know more clearly and certainly the moral limits pertaining to the armed action a man or a nation is about to engage in, than they are likely to know enough to compare unerringly the over-all justice of regimes and nations. There is still more reason to believe that men know something of moral significance about proper conduct than to believe that they are able to count up all the remote effects of their actions, so as to measure their actions by the standards of any consequentialist system of ethics.¹⁰¹

The reason this is significant for our study is that Ramsey’s position in this respect corresponds exactly to Luther’s. As we have seen, Luther’s primary concern was to offer advice and counsel to *Christians* who were confused and/or troubled in conscience about

¹⁰⁰ See, e.g., *War and the Christian Conscience*, xxi.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

the circumstances under which they might obey or disobey governmental authorities by participation in war. It was not Luther's purpose to develop a theory of statecraft nor to set forth certain moral qualifications necessary for a state's ability to wage a just war. Service in a just war is service to God for the sake of peace, regardless of the personal faith of the ruler or the moral or political characteristics of the temporal authority to which one is bound to submit. Christians may, of course, and even should, be concerned to critique and seek to enhance the moral condition of the government in which they live. But from Luther's perspective, any Christian living in virtually any state at any time might conceivably participate in a justifiable war in obedience to earthly authorities—and finally (for Luther) this decision must remain in the realm of personal Christian conscience, not in the realm of a supposed "just war theory of statecraft." For Luther, as Maurer says,

The question about the justness of a war thus concerns a monarch's military subordinates and not just the monarch himself. Each must make his own decision. Here again the judgment about whether a war is just is made personal; there is no blind obedience. But all this presupposes that the individual soldier is set within a previously existing ethic of orders that is *by no means exclusively Christian in its expression*. It is, however, to be practiced by a Christian when it can be done with a good conscience. Everything done in that way is justified by the divine demand for obedience.¹⁰²

We recall Luther's words that "even if I served a Turk and saw my lord in danger, I would... stab and hew as long as my heart beat. If I were slain in so doing, I should go straight to heaven."¹⁰³ It seems clear that *Hauerwas* believes that the viability of the just war theory is inextricably tied to the concept of the just state, but if honest and meaningful dialog is to take place between *Hauerwasians* and Lutherans, then this

¹⁰² Maurer, 142; emphasis added.

¹⁰³ *Open Letter*, 81.

personal belief must be distinguished from the actual position of Luther, historic Lutheranism, and the classic Christian just war tradition itself on this issue.

Distinguishing Between “Trust” and “Control”

A second issue that needs clarification (and in this case further exploration) is the extent to which Hauerwas is truly able to acknowledge the possibility that limited, justified violence might be used by Christians not as a sinful way of “exercising control” over others or over their own lives but as a genuine act of selfless service to their neighbor in need. At times he seems to deny this very possibility: “Our need to be in control,” says Hauerwas, “is the basis for the violence in our lives.”¹⁰⁴ As we observed in chapter two, however, Hauerwas singles out Enda McDonagh as a particularly persuasive representative of the position that this need not *always* be the case:

No one can easily dismiss the power of this position....Can Christians ever be justified in resorting to arms to do “some good?” Are Christians not unjust if they allow another person to be injured or killed if they might prevent that by the use of violence? Indeed should not Christians call on the power of the state to employ its coercive force to secure more relative forms of justice? Such action would not be a question of using violence to be “in control,” but simply to prevent a worse evil.¹⁰⁵

This, of course, is the classic Christian (and Lutheran) just war perspective on the use of violence—not just some exceptional or anomalous version of it. Hauerwas claims to have sympathy with this perspective and admits that “it certainly cannot be discounted as a possibility for Christians.” And yet he insists that

...the problem with these attempts to commit the Christian to limited use of violence is that they too often distort the character of our alternatives. Violence used in the name of justice, or freedom, or equality is seldom simply a matter of justice—it is a matter of the power of some over others. Moreover, when violence is justified in principle as a necessary strategy for securing justice, it

¹⁰⁴ *PK*, 47.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 114.

stills the imaginative search for nonviolent ways of resistance to injustice. For true justice never comes through violence, nor can it be based on violence. It can only be based on truth, which has no need to resort to violence to secure its own existence. Such a justice comes at best fitfully to nation states, for by nature we are people who fear disorder and violence and thus we prefer order (even if the order is built on the lies inspired by our hates, fears, and resentments) to truth. The Church, therefore, as a community based on God's kingdom of truth cannot help but make all rulers tremble, especially when those rulers have become "the people."¹⁰⁶

Despite the validity of these concerns, however, this response is not very satisfying to just war Christians who sincerely seek honest and forthright dialog with Hauerwas on the questions he himself raises (above) as a summary of McDonagh's position. Instead of addressing these questions, Hauerwas simply shifts the debate back to the question of "the just character of the state," which (as we discussed above) is clearly not the central question for classical just war thinking (even—again—if Hauerwas believes it is or should be).

Christian and Lutheran just war thinkers can certainly affirm Hauerwas's plea to search "imaginatively" for nonviolent ways of resolving conflict: this is the primary purpose of the just war criterion of "last resort," which may well require more careful and creative consideration in numerous instances. Just war thinkers can also affirm Hauerwas's call to the church to remind the state (including the democratic state) that it has reason to tremble under the ultimate sovereignty of One who is greater than the state. But they would also undoubtedly appreciate a clearer Hauerwasian response to the central question of the possibility of Christian participation in justified violence as a bona fide and even self-sacrificing act of loving service to one's neighbor in obedience to Christ, as opposed to his typical shifting of the question to other issues that reflect Hauerwas's

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

particular convictions and concerns (however valid these may be). Hauerwas frequently affirms Yoder's conviction that

The resurrection is not the end product of a mechanism which runs through its paces wherever there is a crucifixion. There is about the Christian hope in the kingdom that peculiar kind of assurance which is called faith, but not the preponderant probability of success which is called for by the just war theory or by a prudential ethic.¹⁰⁷

As should be clear by now, however, a truly *Lutheran* approach to just war is not based on “the preponderant probability of success” or a prudential, pragmatic ethic rooted in confidence in our ability to control history. Rather, it too is grounded in “that peculiar kind of assurance which is called faith”—faith that the God who brought the greatest good out of the greatest evil in the history of humankind (the cross) also has the ability to bring great good out of the evil of justifiable war.

Pacifism and Patriotism

Finally, even Lutherans who share many of Hauerwas's concerns about the dangers and temptations of Constantinianism for American Christians and Lutherans might wonder to what extent Hauerwas would be willing to acknowledge the possibility that an overly narrow focus on this particular danger and temptation may not result in our ignoring other dangers and temptations—such as the failure to be sufficiently thankful to God for the blessings (however imperfect) that he provides through earthly government (including the imperfect government under which we live in the United States of America) and the failure to express (in obedience to the clear commands of Scripture) proper honor and support for government and governmental leaders as they carry out their God-given vocations.

¹⁰⁷ *Nevertheless*, 126-127.

We recall Elshtain's comment in the introduction (page two) that Hauerwas disdains virtually all distinctions between "any and all forms of patriotism, nationalism and state worship." Even while granting the necessity of the prophetic witness and existence of the church in its relationship to the state, does Hauerwas allow any room at all for genuine Christian affirmation of and heartfelt support for the positive functions of the state in promoting order, safety, justice, freedom and peace? Hauerwas warns incessantly (and often stridently) against the "tribalism" of America, the "murderous intensity" of its megalomaniac obsession with "policing the world" and "controlling history," and its idolatrous demand that we "qualify our loyalty to God" in the name of lesser loyalties and causes (freedom, justice, etc.) that require us to kill (rather than forgive) the enemies that threaten us.¹⁰⁸ One looks in vain for any indication that Christians in America, in addition to critiquing American faults and guarding against false loyalties, might actually offer a prayer of sincere thanksgiving to God for the positive features of American government—including the freedom (fully taken advantage of by Hauerwas) that allows them to criticize their own nation openly and harshly without any fear of governmental reprisal.

In response to Hauerwas's and Griffith's scathing critique of her book *Just War Against Terror*, Elshtain responds in a way that may draw sympathy from many readers of Hauerwas who may wonder if they should repent of any patriotic thought or impulse:

Looking out at a world filled with violence and oppression, they (Hauerwas and Griffiths) have nothing to offer their fellow citizens but denunciations of their own society. The crude message of this screed suggests to Americans that they are essentially deluded by their leaders, even as it simplistically indicates to the Christians among them that in finding something worth defending in their society they are thereby being untrue to the demands of their faith.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ See, e.g., *RA*, 33; cf. also the collection of essays on war and peace in *HR*.

¹⁰⁹ *FT* 138 (October 2003), 46.

In a thoughtful article on “Christians as Patriots” that might well serve as a fruitful talking point for Hauerwasians and Lutherans, Peter Meilaender draws on the writings of Bonhoeffer to make the argument that:

It is true that Christians inhabit the world “like a pilgrim in a foreign land,” longing for that city where we will find our perfect rest. But our loyalties are not thereby divided; they are multiplied. The one who learns to love the great Giver of all life will not suddenly forget how to love his gifts; nor will he who worships the God who is Love find his own capacity for love diminished. In Bonhoeffer’s wonderful image from the passage at the head of this essay, “Where the ground bass is firm and clear, there is nothing to stop the counterpoint from being developed at the utmost of its limits.” Christians, then, are precisely the kind of patriots that a decent polity should want to have. They know that their country has its faults. But they do not imagine that it can earn their love only by becoming faultless. They love their country, not because it is good, but because it is given.¹¹⁰

Stephen Webb has suggested that the nature of Hauerwas’s continual “screed” against America Hauerwas actually demonstrates (ironically) how “very American” he really is:

Hauerwas is typically American in his insistence that Christian theology be translated in American politics in direct and aggressive form, without much reflection on the various ways in which democratic structures mediate moral action. For Hauerwas, the church is not merely a passive sign of God’s grace, but an active body that accomplishes God’s will. Hauerwas is missing an ironic sensibility that understands how our best intentions often end up subverting the good we hope to achieve, and how, therefore, even prophetic utterances should normally result in reform, rather than revolution.¹¹¹

Despite his constant insistence that the pacifism he so passionately defends must not be judged by its effectiveness, Hauerwas’s strong and strident writing and speaking (suggests Webb) often belies a very American insistence that what we are *saying* must somehow be translated into *action* and visible *results*:

¹¹⁰ FT 130 (February 2003), 35.

¹¹¹ “The Very American Stanley Hauerwas,” FT 124 (June/July 2002), 17.

Americans, as Tocqueville noted long ago, do not trust thinking that does not lead immediately to some kind of action. We are stirred by extravagant rhetoric, and we like to think that we can remake the world in the image of our words. We are an impatient people, and we like results. Hauerwas praises the virtue of patience in his work, but he is also drawn to the grand gesture of sacrificial witness and the hope that, even at this late hour, America can still be redeemed by the morally pure. In a word, he wants pacifism to pay. Irony is missing from Hauerwas precisely because, in spite of his many protestations, he is so perfectly American.¹¹²

Even if this characterization of Hauerwas seems rather forced and unfair, it seems as though it would be hard for Hauerwas to deny—in view of his strong emphasis on the reality-making power and presence of narrative in our lives and world—that “being an American” is also part of his story, part of the narrative of his own thinking and identity—and that this is reflected in his thinking, writing and speaking in ways that perhaps he himself is not fully aware. In any event, the question of whether or to what degree it is possible to be *both* “a good and faithful Christian” and “a good and grateful American” is one that would benefit from further explication by Hauerwas. His valid criticisms and cautions regarding Christians and government would be even more compelling, we would suggest, if they demonstrated a greater awareness of the (less than perfect) ways in which God uses government—even American government—to preserve and promote the conditions under which Christians like Hauerwas can articulate their passionately-held religious views so freely, clearly, and strongly.¹¹³

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ For further elaboration of Hauerwas’s specific views regarding democracy, see his review of Jeffrey Stout’s book *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004) in *Performing the Faith*, 215-241.

CONCLUSION

One of the things that makes it difficult to offer final or definitive conclusions regarding the views of Stanley Hauerwas (including his pacifism) is his consistent reluctance to describe his views as positions which themselves seek to offer final conclusions.

I do not write because I am interesting in trying to develop another “position” to populate the academic landscape. I am trying to foment a modest revolution by forcing Christians to take themselves seriously as Christians. Such an ambition means that I am not simply trying to give new answers to old questions, but I am trying to change the questions. This forces me to develop new, or at least different, ways of putting matters that are not easily learned—particularly by me.¹

William Cananaugh observes:

Some people have grown impatient with Hauerwas’s reliance on short essays and await a magnum opus from his pen that will lay down his position in definitive form. Such a book or books is unlikely to be forthcoming, however, as Stanley does not believe that he has a position.... This is why Hauerwas relies on short essays done primarily over pastoral problems, such as marriage, education, war and health. To write this way risks not being read for very long, because particular pastoral problems quickly shift. But Hauerwas claims that a theologian should not write for the ages, for to do so is to try to secure a position against the movement of the Spirit through time.²

“Hauerwas’s gift,” says John Berkman, “is not to give the Christian community tidy solutions.” Rather, “he wants to transform the way his readers and listeners live and think. He is not unlike the tent evangelist; he will draw the lines and seek to have his readers and listeners live anew. Hauerwas leaves it to others to tidy things up and work out problematic details.”³ This explains why Berkman is able to conclude his own introduction to Hauerwas’s work in such open-ended fashion:

¹ *IGC*, 12.

² *HR*, 31.

³ *Ibid.*, 5.

We look to some to trace his steps more carefully and precisely; to others to explore a direction in which Hauerwas has merely pointed; and finally, to others to articulate why Hauerwas's route is not to be followed. May these debates be of service to the pilgrim people of God.⁴

In this respect, it is as easy as it is difficult to respond to Hauerwas's pacifist views, since one is not challenged to provide final answers but simply to participate in the journey and to join (and seek to elevate) the debate. For Hauerwas, to seek to offer the last word on any issue is to kill the community in which and through which this vital dialog takes place:

It is...true that I do not try to write "the last word" about anything. That is partly because I do not believe in the last word about anything, but also because I find the politics of such scholarship offensive. "Perfection" kills community. To try to write to anticipate all possible criticism, to qualify all strong claims in the name of "scholarship," protects authors but too often produces work that serves to defeat the necessity of community. That it does so is not surprising, since that is exactly what it is meant to do. In contrast, I assume the point is to write in a manner that invites others to care about what I care about because they sense there is so much to do given the incompleteness of what I have done.⁵

This does not mean, of course, that Hauerwas does not often articulate strongly held views—including views on war and peace!—that make it clear that he definitely has a "position" on specific issues. His own approach, however, suggests an openness to continuing dialog, criticism and clarification concerning such matters—for Hauerwas, the least helpful criticism (and the one most harmful to the communal life of the church) is to be told to "shut up." "I do not want to be told that I write too much," says Hauerwas in *In Good Company*. "Tell me what you want left out and why."⁶ In a review essay published in *First Things*, Gilbert Meilaender tries to respond to this challenge by offering suggestions about what Hauerwas should "leave out" in future books and

⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁵ *IGC*, 13-14.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

essays.⁷ When it comes to Hauerwas's writings on war and peace, however, Lutherans who take seriously the just war tradition will very likely be left looking for more, not less: more clarity regarding Hauerwas's own understanding and characterization of the just war tradition; further discussion of the specific texts of Scripture that offer support for the theological principles underlying this tradition; more explicit and direct responses to aspects of the just war tradition that attempt to take seriously the very themes that Hauerwas emphasizes; more positive efforts by Hauerwas to elevate the debate with just war thinkers in a way that shows respect for the integrity of their convictions without caricaturing their views or simply changing the questions.

On the basis of the evidence provided in this study, we have come to the conclusion that despite the many common theological concerns shared by Luther and Hauerwas on the issue of war and peace, their positions on this issue are finally incompatible because of differing presuppositions about the nature of the person and work of Jesus Christ and (in turn) about the character and calling of the church. In other words, we agree with Hauerwas that "you simply cannot mix just war and pacifism and have a consistent position"—at least not if your own conclusions are consistent with their presuppositions, as is the case (we have argued) with both Hauerwas and Luther. At the same time, we have argued that meaningful conversation and dialog can and should take place between committed Hauerwasians and Lutherans on issues of war and peace, not by ignoring or caricaturing the presuppositions and positions on either side but by acknowledging them, taking them seriously, and seeking to discover what might be learned from each other's valid insights and concerns, even when these stem from differing presuppositions.

⁷ *FT* (October 1996), 51-58.

Any concluding word regarding Hauerwas's pacifism, therefore, must include a word of gratitude for challenging Lutherans (among others) to take their own tradition and theology more seriously, and to continue to wrestle with how to articulate it and apply it in a world in which the threat of war and its horrors and its complexities continues to loom larger than ever. We conclude, therefore, with a non-comprehensive summarizing list of some of the challenges discussed in this study that Lutherans face in this regard—challenges which the work of Hauerwas can help us to identify and confront:

1) The need for Lutherans to re-dedicate themselves to serious study and discussion of the issue of war and peace as a *theological* issue in the face of temptations such as (for example): quietism (viewing war and peace as an essentially political issue which can be safely ignored by a church dedicated to the “spiritual” task of proclaiming the Gospel); survivalism (viewing the “survival” of humanity as an “end” in itself, and advocating and pursuing peace on that basis); misguided activism (viewing the church as bearing primary and ultimate responsibility for managing society and controlling history); and nationalism (failing to question or challenge governmental decisions and authority on the basis of an idolatrous patriotism or a faulty understanding of Romans 13).

2) The need for Lutherans to recover and take more seriously the implications of Scripture's teaching (as reflected so clearly in the writings of Luther) regarding God's great gift of temporal peace, and to re-affirm the historic Lutheran view that war is justifiable *only* as an instrument of peace. This means also taking seriously the special challenges involved in applying the peace-prizing principles of the just war tradition in today's military context of nuclear warfare and weapons of mass destruction.

3) The need for Lutherans to identify more clearly the specifically *Christian* elements of the just war theory (e.g., participation and/or non-participation in war as an act of love in service to God and neighbor which is motivated by faith in Christ and by a desire to conform our lives to Christ's perfect and normative example of absolute obedience to God no matter what the cost), so that the just war tradition is not seen or used by Christians merely as a rationalistic or nationalistic justification for war. Hauerwas's cautions and warnings can be especially salutary here, despite his sensitivity to being viewed and used merely as a reminder of the potential dangers accompanying Christian strategies that take seriously their responsibility for the world. This also necessitates dealing with and clarifying "lesser evil" views of just war—clearly distinguishing the historic Lutheran view from the Niebuhrian view so strongly (and properly) criticized by Hauerwas.

4) The need for Lutherans to take more seriously the possibility and reality of unjust wars and to emphasize the critical role of Christian conscience in responding to (i.e., refraining from participation in) such wars in obedience to God. Here the concerns of Lutherans such as Hütter, Lutz and Bouman about the need for greater Lutheran awareness of and activism regarding the current illegality of selective conscientious objection are both timely and appropriate.

5) The need for Lutherans to take seriously Hauerwas's valid (if at times overstated) concerns about the dangers of Constantinianism and the temptation of competing loyalties, misplaced priorities and false views of the church's responsibility for the world, even as we guard against dangers on the opposite extreme.

6) The need for Lutherans to take seriously the nature of the church's witness *as church* in and to society—to respond to the very real challenge to present to the world a radical and peaceable alternative to the world's violence, discord, and disunity. Here Hauerwas's emphasis on character, community, the virtues, Christian *practices* (not just beliefs), and the normative (not merely salvific) significance of the life, sufferings, death and resurrection of Christ can also be very helpful.⁸ How effectively, as an ecclesial community, are we demonstrating to the world the peace that the world lacks and that is available only in and through Christ and the church? On the other hand, it seems necessary (especially in today's ecclesial context) to emphasize that acknowledging the necessity and urgency of a peaceable witness on the part of the church does not necessarily mean embracing a pacifist position, nor even conceding the high moral ground to pacifists. Christian just war thinkers honestly and sincerely view war, when just, as a divinely-appointed and divinely-approved means for achieving or maintaining peace. They should not be expected to compromise this conviction, any more than pacifists like Hauerwas should be asked or expected to compromise their own views. Nor should pacifists like Hauerwas be shocked and offended when they are assailed by just war thinkers—just as they assail just war thinkers!—as taking a position that (from the just war perspective) ultimately undermines the cause of peace.

7) The need for Lutherans to engage in honest, substantive dialogue with other Lutherans and other Christians on issues of war and peace in order to better understand

⁸ In the January 2003 issue of *Theology Today*, Mark Douglas offers an intriguing proposal for “Changing the Rules: Just War Theory in the Twenty-First Century” in which he suggests that (given the drastic social, historical, political, economic and technological changes in modern times and their impact on the nature and conduct of war) just war thinkers would do well to focus less narrowly on the specific, historic criteria for determining “just war” and more broadly on the *virtues* that underlie those criteria, which may lead to a re-thinking and more creative application of the criteria themselves. This proposal for a “virtue-based” approach to just war thinking merits serious consideration and begs further development.

competing positions, to clarify and sharpen their own position(s), and to seek and suggest creative alternatives to resorting to violence as a solution to societal, national and global tensions and conflicts.

8) The need for Lutherans to engage in conversation with those outside the church on issues of war and peace as a way of affirming the Lutheran conviction that such conversation is not only *possible* on theological grounds but *necessary* precisely in order to head off the violence that is implied and/or fostered by a lack of such conversation.

9) The need for Lutherans to understand more fully and clearly just how radical the Lutheran position really is in its readiness and willingness to trust in God as the Lord of the church and of history: a God who accomplishes his purposes in ways that are often hidden from our understanding and beyond our control, a God who has revealed himself paradoxically yet unambiguously through the violence of Christ's cross, a God who calls us to trust and obey him (just as Jesus himself trusted and obeyed) even amidst the inevitable uncertainties and ambiguities of life in this world. As we have emphasized, Lutherans seem especially well-positioned to demonstrate and articulate how a radical theology of the cross offers a way of addressing troublesome issues such as the question of war as a lesser evil, God's ability to use even his wrath in the service of his mercy, and the Christian's ability and responsibility to exercise Christ-like love even in the service and support of a law-based and imperfect justice in the civil realm (over which God also rules as Sovereign and King).

10) The need for Lutheran pastors, church workers, congregations, and laity to engage in and support more careful, deliberate, and sustained catechesis on the issue of

war and peace and on the theological presuppositions underlying the historic Lutheran position on this issue (Luther's teachings concerning the two realms, the theology of the cross, Christian vocation, the two kinds of righteousness, etc.), and to support this catechesis with authentically Lutheran liturgical practices that faithfully reflect the historic Lutheran teaching on these issues. Ultimately, as Hauerwas rightly recognizes and emphasizes, the church's calling in this world is simply to *worship* the Lord and Creator of all things—the Creator of the church and of the world, and the Creator and Preserver of every kind of peace. Therefore, despite the significant areas of disagreement identified in our study between Luther and Hauerwas on issues of war and peace—and in light of the significant areas of common conviction and concern—surely Hauerwas and all Hauerwasians can join Lutherans in praying and singing:

Grant peace, we pray, in mercy Lord; Peace in our time, oh, send us!
For there is none on earth but you, None other to defend us.
You only, Lord, can fight for us. Amen. (*Lutheran Worship* 219)

APPENDIX I:

STATEMENTS AND RESOLUTIONS OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH— MISSOURI SYNOD ON WAR AND PEACE

To Encourage Peacemaking and the Study of Problems Concerning the Church and Nuclear Arms

1983 RESOLUTION 3-06A

Report 3-01, I, B, 8 (*CW*, p. 91); App. 3-01A (*CW*, p. 97); Overtures 1-42—1-47, 3-31 (pp. 39—41, 106)

WHEREAS, It is God's desire that all people of the world live in peace with one another (Rom. 12:18; Heb. 12:14); and

WHEREAS, Christians are called to be peacemakers and reconcilers in the world (Matt. 5:9); and

WHEREAS, The state has a divine mandate and responsibility to defend the life, welfare, and property of its citizens (Rom. 13:1-7); and

WHEREAS, The nations of the world are involved in a massive buildup of armaments, thereby creating tensions and international concerns about the risk of nuclear war and causing concern among many about the most effective use of our limited resources; and

WHEREAS, Many churches and church leaders have been promoting highly specific political policies and judgments regarding national defense, nuclear weapons, and disarmament; and

WHEREAS, Various individuals and groups have raised questions about the possibility of conducting "just wars" in an age of nuclear weaponry, as well as the justification for civil disobedience; and

WHEREAS, "The Gospel does not legislate for the civil estate but is the forgiveness of sins and the beginning of eternal life in the hearts of believers" (Apology XVI, 6); and

WHEREAS, The CTCR in its report to the Synod entitled "Guidelines for Crucial Issues in Christian Citizenship" (1965, p. 7) states the following: "The destructive potential of modern weaponry and the impersonality of contemporary techniques of warfare lay upon the Christian citizen the special burden of reminding himself and others that human life is a sacred trust from man's Creator and that the temptation to rely on and resort to the kind of massive violence made possible by these inventions has introduced into the human situation a new factor of incalculable moral magnitude. It is therefore imperative for him to work together with all men of goodwill for the responsible limitation of armaments, the eradication of sources of conflict, and an aggressive interest in the preservation and expansion of the conditions of peace"; and

WHEREAS, Responsible judgments about the global complexities of foreign and defense policies require exact information in fields in which church leaders generally enjoy no special competence; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Directors and the President of the Synod have requested that the Commission on Theology and Church Relations and its Social Concerns Committee review the whole matter of church-state relationships in the light of issues which have surfaced in contemporary debate about tuition tax credits, prayer in public schools, increased support in the voluntary sector, and “peace” questions; therefore be it

Resolved, That we acknowledge the cause of all human contention and war to be man’s sinful nature, and that we therefore intensify our efforts to call all people to repentance and to proclaim reconciliation in Christ as the only means of achieving true and lasting peace with fellow human beings; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod urge its congregations and members

a. to study what the Scriptures and the Confessions have to say about world peace and the respective responsibilities of the state and its citizens, giving special attention to Luther’s doctrine of the two kingdoms and the nature of just wars (AC XVI, XXVIII, Ap. XVI);

b. to carry out their duty as Christian citizens by becoming knowledgeable about issues such as the arms race, the nature and the results of the use of nuclear weapons, and the state of world affairs and by working within the framework of responsible participation within the political process to effect those policies which enhance the prospects for world peace;

c. to support the efforts of our duly elected and appointed governmental authorities to carry out their constitutional and God-given responsibility to provide for the safety and welfare of the citizens of our country;

d. to pray, both as individual Christians and in our congregations, that God in His mercy spare humankind from the horrors of nuclear war and guide the rulers of the nations to lead us in the way of world peace; and be it further

Resolved, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in principle oppose the adoption of conscience-binding pronouncements which are not based on the clear teachings of Holy Scripture; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Synod request the Commission on Theology and Church Relations and its Social Concerns Committee to carry out a basic study of the various aspects of the relationship between church and state, giving special attention to issues such as “who speaks for the church,” “when,” and “on what basis.”

To Adopt a Statement on Conscientious Objection

1969 RESOLUTION 2-28

Overtures 2-37 to 2-43 (*CW*, pp. 85—88)

WHEREAS, The Holy Scriptures teach that “every person be obedient to the governing authorities” (Rom. 13:1) but recognize the right and duty of the individual to obey God rather than men when the civil authorities demand obedience contrary to God’s will: “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29); and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran Confessions teach that Christians may without sin engage in just wars and serve as soldiers (A. C. XVI; Apology XVI, Tappert, pp. 37.2 and 222.1); and

WHEREAS, The theological position of the Lutheran Church declares the individual’s right to refuse participation in unjust wars (CTCR’s “Guidelines for Crucial Issues in Christian Citizenship”; “A Christian’s Attitude Toward War,” CTM, Feb., 1955; CTCR’s “Civil Obedience and Disobedience”); and

WHEREAS, The present military draft law exempts only those objectors who on the basis of conscience oppose war in every form and allows them a 1A O status (military noncombatant) and a 1 O status (nonmilitary service) and does not recognize objection to a specific war where the individual conscience is convinced that the government is engaged in an unjust war; therefore be it

Resolved, That the Synod encourage its members to pledge themselves anew to loyalty and obedience to the government also in the matter of military service; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod reaffirm its historic theological position whereby it recognizes that conscientious objection to a war which an individual considers to be unjust is a valid stance; and be it further

Resolved, That the members of the Synod respect an individual’s decision not to engage in a war which his conscience, enlightened by the Word of God, considers to be unjust; and be it further

Resolved, That the pastors and congregations of the Synod be urged to make use of the CTCR’s documents “Guidelines for Crucial Issues in Christian Citizenship” and “Civil Obedience and Disobedience” in providing a counseling and supporting ministry to those who conscientiously object to military service as well as to those who in conscience choose to serve in the military; and be it further

Resolved, That the Synod petition the government to grant equal status under law to the conscientious objector to a specific war as it does to a conscientious objector to all wars; and be it further

Resolved, That the Board of Social Ministry study the matter of amnesty for those who have refused to serve in the armed forces for reasons of conscience and report its findings to the President of the Synod as soon as possible; and be it finally

Resolved, That this present resolution replace Resolution 2-35 of the New York convention (*Proceedings*, 1967, p. 96).

2003 Statement of President Gerald Kieschnick on "Peace"

These are trying times for all Americans and for people around the world. In confronting Saddam Hussein, and others like him, we face a new kind of danger--a danger threatening the disruption of the pursuit of a life of peace, a danger placing not only our own citizens but also those of other nations under the anxious pall of terror.

War, terrorism and fighting have characterized this world's history and are clear testimony to the imperfection of the human race. In fact, human nature has a desperately evil side, which draws people into quarrels that can eventually develop into war.

Many wonder how to reconcile the teachings of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, with the horrors of war. In the early centuries of the Church, this very question arose and was addressed by one of the great church Fathers, St. Augustine. He understood that flawed human hearts sometimes pursue the path of evil, seeking to oppress and even destroy one's fellowman. Can there be times when people of good will may resist such evil? What is the role of the state in protecting its citizens from aggression, whether within its own borders or from another country?

St. Augustine understood that the state is a God-ordained institution and that its primary leader is 'God's servant...who does not bear the sword for nothing...but is an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the evildoer.' He wrote that nations, in defense of their own people and in order to preserve the peace, may declare war in the case of a just cause and for the purpose of self-defense.

Martin Luther, the great 16th century Christian reformer, spoke of the reality of this tension in terms of two kingdoms, both under the rule of God but each ruling differently. The kingdom of the left hand is the secular kingdom ruled by kings, presidents and governors. Its guiding principles are human reason and the sword. The kingdom of the right hand is the Church, whose power lies in the forgiveness and mercy won by Christ's death and resurrection.

All people live in the kingdom of the left, whether they are or are not believers in Christ. It is here that our elected officials rule by reason and, when necessary, by the sword. President Bush faces a great challenge when confronting a new kind of evil that no longer is neatly contained or defined by political borders. He is charged with protecting American citizens and American interests from those who would destroy the peace and terrorize.

Our President has been entrusted with the sword. He may have to use it. We pray for God's wisdom to guide him in the execution of his duty, that peace may prevail for us and for all people.

The Bible tells of a peace in Christ that gives confidence and hope for the future. It is a peace borne of His mercy and forgiveness. We pray this peace for all people everywhere and that our world may be spared the crucible of war.

APPENDIX II:

SAMPLE SERMONS ON ISSUES RELATED TO WAR AND PEACE

Alien Citizens¹
Matthew 22:15-21

Part of my job at the so-called “purple palace,” the LCMS headquarters in St. Louis, is to respond to requests for information about what Lutherans believe and why and how we as a church body try to put our beliefs into practice. A number of years ago I received a phone call from a young woman who was, to use a technical theological term, “as mad as hell” and who obviously wasn’t going to take it any more. To be honest, she sounded at times as if she were on the verge of a nervous breakdown. This woman was so upset, so enraged and outraged at all the problems and evils in our society, the moral and political scandals being reported in the media at that time, the lack of honest and courageous and trustworthy leadership in our nation. She admitted that she’d been spending a lot of time lately listening to various political talk radio programs, and now she was making the move from education to action. She felt she just had to try to “do something” about all these problems, and what she decided to do on this day was to call the headquarters of her church body and give somebody there a piece of her mind. Because you see, as angry as she was with the leadership in our nation at the time, she was just as angry, if not more, with the leadership in the church, *her* church, The *Lutheran* Church—Missouri Synod, because at least from her perspective the church didn’t seem to be doing much of anything about all of these problems that were destroying our society. “Doesn’t the church care about these things? What are you people doing there in that building in St. Louis? You can talk all you want about ‘saving souls,’ but isn’t anybody trying to save our country from being swallowed up by the evil of this world?”

I listened as she talked and cried and shouted and vented for about 15 or 20 minutes, and when I finally got a chance to respond I tried to assure her, first of all, that nearly all the concerns she had raised were concerns that I shared personally and that our church also shared in one way or another. And I agreed with her that we have often failed, as a church body and as individual members of the church, to respond to those problems as pro-actively and as passionately as we should. And I tried to explain what a difficult and complicated task that is for a church that wants to be about God’s business, and we’ll be talking more about that in our adult forum this morning. But after I was done with all my assuring and explaining, I did something that I rarely do as part of my “day job” at the International Center. I spoke to this woman as if I were her pastor, and I told her as gently as I knew how that as much as I sympathized with her concerns, I also had a concern for her: for her spiritual and emotional health and well-being.

I said, “I commend you for your deep concern for the health and well-being of our nation and society. I wish every Christian had your passion for wanting to make a difference as a Christian in this world and in this country which we love. But as you wrestle with these

¹ Written by Joel D. Lehenbauer and delivered on a number of occasions in various LCMS congregations.

important issues and try to decide how best to respond to them, God also wants you to have peace, he wants you to have joy, he wants you to be thankful for all the blessings he has given you: the heavenly blessings that are yours through faith in Jesus Christ regardless of any earthly circumstances; and also the earthly blessings he has given you, including the many good things he provides even through a less-than-perfect earthly government. And God wants you to have faith—faith in his promise that all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to Him and that he has the power to cause all things to work together for the good of his church.”

Now the last thing I want to do this morning is to convey any sense at all that I am judging this woman or belittling her or patronizing her for her deep and sincere struggle with these very important issues. There are many Christians, many Lutherans—including myself—who probably don’t struggle nearly enough with this question of what responsible Christian citizenship is all about. Jesus clearly teaches in Matthew 22 that we Christians do have a debt to pay to the government in which we live: “Render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s,” says Jesus. Other passages of the Bible, like Romans 13, help us to understand more fully what this means. It means, among other things, that we are to respect those in authority, even when we may not agree with what they are doing or saying: we are to respect them for the office that they hold. It means that we are to pay our taxes, to give the government the money that it needs to do the things that God established government to do: to protect and defend the innocent, to restrain and punish those who seek to do harm to others or to society as a whole, and to promote the common good. It means that we Christians are to obey the laws of the land, unless we are forced to do something that is clearly contrary to the Word of God. And, in a democratic system, it also means that we have both the privilege and the obligation to work for and support better laws, better leaders, better social and political programs and policies and institutions, so that we and all citizens can live in greater peace and harmony, justice and freedom.

But this same passage of Scripture contains a warning as well. And the warning is this: No matter how things are going in the social and political realm, whether they’re going great or terrible from your perspective, you are never to render unto Caesar what you should be rendering unto God. You are never to give to Caesar what God says belongs to Him and Him alone: your faith, your trust, your ultimate loyalty and love and allegiance. And you are never to try to get from Caesar what you can only get from God: perfect and lasting peace, true and enduring joy, real and unshakeable security and stability and identity, for this life and the life to come.

The Bible says in Psalm 146: “Put not your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save.” Whether we agree or disagree with the particular decisions made by people in the White House or in Congress or wherever, the Bible warns us not to trust in them for the things that they have not been gifted by God to give. As much as we try to select and support good, fair, honest earthly leaders, we dare never forget that every one of them is still a poor, miserable sinner like you and me, and not one of them can solve the “real problem” in our country and in our world: the problem of sin, the problem of people who worship themselves instead of God, the problem that was solved once and for all by a

very different kind of prince—a prince who ruled from a cross— whose greatest victory was gained not by force of law or threat or show of strength but by an act of sheer grace and willing surrender. A Prince who lived and toiled and slaved and died in this world, but who said: “My kingdom is not of this world.”

A long time ago, when Christians were a small, hounded, persecuted minority in the vast, mighty, sprawling empire of Rome, a Christian whose name has been lost to history wrote a letter to a non-Christian friend named Diognetus, trying to explain who these Christians were and how they lived in this world. This is what he wrote:

Christians cannot be distinguished from the rest of the human race by country or language or customs. They do not live in cities of their own; they do not use a special form of speech; they do not follow a strange manner of life. This doctrine of theirs has not been discovered by the ingenuity or deep thought of inquisitive men, nor do they put forward a merely human teaching, as some people do. Yet though they live in both Greek and barbarian cities alike, as each man’s lot has been cast, and follow the customs of the country in clothing and food and other matters of daily living, at the same time they give proof of the remarkable and extraordinary nature of their own kingdom. They live in their own countries, but only as aliens. They have a share in everything as citizens, and yet they endure everything as foreigners. Every foreign land is their fatherland, and yet for them every fatherland is a foreign land. They marry, like everyone else, and they have children, but they do not cast out their offspring. They share their table with one another, but not their marriage bed. It is true that they are “in the flesh,” but they do not live “according to the flesh.” They busy themselves here on earth, but their true citizenship is in heaven.

The great “faith chapter,” Hebrews 11, catalogues the heroic exploits of some of the greatest saints of the Old Testament, and then says this: “All these people (Abraham, Noah, Enoch, Abel) admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.” As much as we love our own nation, our own homeland, our own fatherland, Scripture reminds us that we can never really call it our own in the deepest sense of the term. It doesn’t belong to us as Christians, and we do not fully or completely belong to it. “All these people,” says the writer to the Hebrews, “were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a (country) for them.”

During these challenging days in the life of our nation and our world, we realize perhaps like never before how much our country means to us, how blessed we are to be citizens of a nation that places, at least in principle, such high value on principles like freedom and justice and human rights, especially in contrast to many other nations around the world. But even as thank God for those great blessings and embrace the great responsibilities that go with them, we also realize that as Christians we march to the beat of a different drummer, we get our primary marching orders from above. And here they are, straight from the top, from Matthew 28:

“All authority,” says Jesus, “All authority in heaven and on earth belongs to me. Therefore go and...do what?” “Therefore go, and defend the rights of the oppressed and persecuted and needy!” That’s a good thing, that’s a godly thing—but it’s not the specific thing commanded by Jesus in this all-important passage of Scripture. “Therefore go, and join in the struggle for justice and freedom for all people everywhere!” That’s a good thing, it may well be a godly thing, but it’s not the specific task that Jesus lays upon us in his final moments on this earth. “Therefore go, and change the world and make it a better place to live!” That, too, is a good thing, and something God surely wants us to do. But none of these things is the unique and primary mission of Christ’s church on earth. They are not the primary reason God called his church into existence. They are not the reason God calls pastors to serve his people with words and water and bread and wine in the shadow of a cross. The parting mission Jesus gave to his church on earth is this: “Therefore go, and make disciples of all nations (all nations!!!), baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I will be with you, to the very end of the age.” That’s our commission in the service of our Master and King, those are our marching orders as a church, that’s the reason for our existence on this earth. If we ever forget that, if we ever allow our good and proper allegiance to any earthly person or institution or denomination or nation to deter us or distract us from this heavenly work, we have lost our way as Christians and we’ve forgotten our reason for existence as a church. We are looking for another country—a country that we can truly call our own in every sense of the word. And we are trying to bring as many people with us to that country as we possibly can.

If we stay focused on that heavenly mission, something very interesting will likely happen. The Christian author and apologist C. S. Lewis once wrote: “If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought the most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English evangelicals who abolished the slave trade, all left their mark on earth precisely because their minds were occupied with heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this one. Aim at heaven and you will get earth ‘thrown in.’ Aim at earth, and you will get neither.”

Dear friends in Christ, may all of us who live in this foreign land which is also our cherished fatherland, busy ourselves on earth by embracing with utmost seriousness our responsibilities as Christian citizens (especially during these critical days in our life together as a nation). And as we do so, may we never forget who is in control, and may we never lose sight of our ultimate goal: to spread and proclaim the reign of our crucified and risen King, who rules by grace alone, whose kingdom is not of this world and will never, ever come to an end. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Prayer and Politics²

1 Tim. 2:1-4

The theme of this morning's sermon is "Prayer and Politics." Just in case that title or topic makes you a little nervous, let me assure you right off the bat that you are not going to hear a political commentary from the pulpit this morning. This is not Pastor Lehenbauer's version of "Crossfire" or "Meet the Press" or "Face the Nation." Pastors in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod are trained to be very careful not to mix matters of faith with matters of politics, not to tell people how to vote or how to think on social or political issues that are not clearly or specifically addressed in the Word of God.

At the same time, however, we cannot ignore the fact that God does have some very clear and crucial things to say, at least in general, about Christian concern for and involvement in the affairs of government—and so does the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. In 1986, for example, our church body adopted a resolution called "To Encourage Political Involvement of Individuals as a Christian witness," and I thought it might be appropriate on this July 4 weekend to read this resolution to you (read 1986 Res. 2-19).

As this resolution rightly states, we Christians have a God-given responsibility to be politically informed and politically involved—in appropriate ways—for the sake of our church and our nation. This morning I'd like to focus on just one of those ways, one "little thing" that you and I and all Christians everywhere can do for our church and for our country, one "little thing" that just might be the most important thing of all. It's mentioned in the very first resolved of this resolution: "That we as a Synod be mindful of the need for continued prayer...on behalf of both our Synod and our nation."

There's no Bible passage listed at this point in the resolution, but there certainly could be; and the one that comes first to mind is 1 Timothy 2:1-4, where St. Paul writes:

I urge then, first of all [and in the original language this means first in importance, first in priority], that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Paul urges us here to pray for all people, but what I find striking about this text is that he mentions by name only one group of people: not mothers or fathers or children or families, not friends or neighbors or fellow-Christians, not pastors or teachers or missionaries, not even the sick or suffering or needy—not that these people aren't important, not that we shouldn't pray for them, but the fact is that Paul does not single them out for special mention in this text. Instead he holds up, of all people, political leaders: "Pray for kings," he says, "and all those in positions of authority."

² Written by Joel D. Lehenbauer and delivered on a number of occasions in LCMS congregations.

Now, I guess the first question is: How often do you actually do this? How do politicians rate on your personal prayer list? When is the last time you got down on your knees and fervently prayed for the president, the vice-president, for potential candidates for those high offices, for the members of congress, senators, Supreme Court Justices, governors, mayors, and so on—much less for political leaders around the world, in Africa or Europe or the Middle East? Well, let me be the first to admit my failures in this area. Number one on my personal prayer list, if I were to be completely honest, is probably me, then comes my wife and family, close friends and fellow Christians, various people who I know have special needs. Since the tragic events of nine-eleven and wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, I think I've gotten a little bit better about remembering government leaders in my prayers. But I've still got a long way to go: I don't pray nearly as often or as fervently as I should for political leaders, even though Paul says that such people ought to be at the very top of my prayer list—and of yours.

The second question is, Why—why is this so important? And I think the Bible gives us some pretty good answers to that question. First of all, it's important to pray for those in authority, because in doing so we express our conviction that good leaders and good government are great gifts from God Himself.

One of the most tragic consequences of the moral and ethical scandals that so often seem to surface in the world of politics is that they tend to feed our natural tendency to become suspicious, even cynical about politicians and politics in general. If one politician is dishonest, almost all of them must be dishonest; if so-and-so can't be trusted to do what he said he was going to do, then how can we trust anybody who holds a political office?

Notice what Paul says in our text: "I urge then, above all, that requests, prayers, intercession *and thanksgiving* be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority." Now obviously, God doesn't expect us to be thankful for everything that every political leader does or stands for; that's just not possible for us as Christians. But he does expect us to be thankful for the many blessings that he himself gives us in and through the government in which we live. He expects us to be thankful for the peace and freedom, justice and protection, safety and security and opportunity that we so often take for granted as American citizens. And he expects us to be thankful for the many capable and courageous and trustworthy leaders who serve us and represent us in various ways and places in our state and community and nation, and to honor them and support them however we can—including through our prayers.

Whether we realize it or not, we do this every time we pray the Lord's Prayer, whenever we say, "Give us this day our daily bread." Do you remember from your confirmation days how the catechism explains this fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer? Daily bread, says the catechism, includes "everything that belongs to the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, a faithful spouse, faithful children, faithful rulers good leaders and good government." Obviously our government is not perfect—a lot of things and a lot of people could be a whole lot better than they are, and in a government like ours, we share responsibility for striving to make things better through our involvement in the political process. And yet it's also important to realize that through it all God

continues to answer most abundantly our prayers for daily bread, and I think we need to say "Thank you" a little more often than we do, so that we don't lose the joy of knowing just how blessed we are by God as a nation, despite the many problems and challenges that still exist.

Reason number two: It's important to pray for those in authority, because in doing so we express the conviction that even in times of bad government and bad leadership, God is still in control. Today's text takes on a whole new meaning when we realize that Paul wrote these words to young pastor Timothy right around the time of (perhaps even during) the reign of one of the most vicious, godless, immoral kings who ever lived: King Nero. No one persecuted the Christian church more savagely and sadistically than Nero. He actually enjoyed burning Christians alive and eating dinner while listening to their screams. It was under Nero's reign that both Paul and Timothy were eventually tortured and executed for their faith. And yet Paul says to Timothy, during the reign of this very king, "I urge, then, above all, that prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority."

How in the world could Paul say this in light of the political circumstances under which he lived? Because Paul, by the power of the Holy Spirit, knew something that only we Christians can understand. Paul knew that King Nero wasn't really in control—God was in control. Paul knew that King Nero wouldn't be anything and couldn't do anything unless God allowed him to be it and to do it. So why did God allow Nero to be king, why did he allow him to do the things he did? I really don't know the answer to that question, and I suspect that Paul himself didn't know for sure what God was doing or why in the case of King Nero. But Paul also knew very well the story of Jesus: he knew how unwise and unjust officials had condemned the innocent Son of God to death on a cross, and how God had used those horribly wrong decisions to accomplish the salvation of the world. Paul knew that his business was not to try to figure out God's business, but simply to do what God had called him to do: to preach the Gospel, to love his neighbor, to stand up for what was right, to work, to trust and to pray. And that's our business too, in times of good government and in times of bad government, remembering at all times that God is in control, that someday the scales of justice will be balanced, and that on that day all people—including King Nero and all political leaders—will stand before God's throne of judgment and answer to God for how they exercised the authority which God himself entrusted to them.

Now I suppose someone might say, "Well, if God is in total control, I guess it really doesn't matter what I do or don't do as a Christian citizen." But that attitude ignores what the Bible teaches about the responsibility that God has given to us as Christians living in this world, and how God often chooses to use us and work through us to accomplish his will. And that brings us to point number three: It's important to pray for those in authority, because in doing so we express our conviction that our prayers really do make a difference; as James says: the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

I heard a story once about a small church whose members were greatly distressed because a tavern was being built right next door to the church. Some of the members got together to

pray to the Lord for some solution to this problem, and lo and behold, a few days later the tavern was struck by lightning and it burned to the ground. The tavern owner, who had heard about the prayer meetings, brought a lawsuit against the members of the church, claiming that their prayers were responsible for the destruction of his business. The church members adamantly denied the charge. At the initial hearing the judge said: "I don't know how this case is going to come out, but it seems to be that we have on the one side a tavern owner who firmly believes in the power of prayer and on the other side a group of church members who don't."

I'm not encouraging you to pray for lightning to strike undesirable places or persons—political or otherwise—but I am encouraging you to pray: pray for our nation, pray for its present and future leaders, pray about moral and social issues that are or ought to be of grave concern to us as Christians today, pray that God would guide you and others to make wise and God-pleasing political choices, and pray firmly believing that your prayers will make a difference, that God hears and answers the heartfelt requests of his people.

Martin Luther had some remarkable things to say about the power of prayer, also in the realm of government and politics. Luther wrote, "In human affairs we accomplish everything through prayer. What has been properly arranged we keep in order through prayer. What has gone amiss we change and improve through prayer. What cannot be changed and improved we bear through prayer, overcoming all the trouble and sustaining all the good through prayer." Elsewhere Luther said: "If any good is to be done today and any evil is to be prevented, it must be accomplished by prayer. Every Christian should say to himself: Since prayer is so pleasing to God and so necessary...for the church and for the temporal government, I intend to pray as much as I can, for I know that my prayer will not and cannot be offered in vain." And finally, this gem: "Our prayers and the prayers of all God-fearing people in the world do the work. If Christians were to stop praying, God have mercy on the world."

Before I close, let me raise one final question. All of this talk about prayer for those in authority is well and good, someone might say, but what does it have to do with the Gospel and the church's primary mission, which is to bring people to saving faith in Jesus Christ? Well, that's a pretty good question, and I think Paul gives us the answer in our text: "I urge you to pray for all those in authority," he says, "so that you may live quiet and peaceful lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Do you see what Paul is saying here, do you see the connection? When we pray for our country and its leaders, says Paul, we help bring about and preserve peace and order and harmony in our nation and in our communities. This, in turn, allows us as Christians to bear witness to our faith in Christ without fear of opposition or persecution or restriction. And this witness, in turn, is used by God to bring more and more people to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Nothing could be more urgent or important than that, and according to Paul, it begins with and is centered around the simple act of prayer: prayer for all people, but especially for those in authority.

Of course, it's one thing to talk about prayer, in a sermon or wherever—it's another thing to actually do it. Therefore, dear friends in Christ, I'd like to close this morning by asking

you to bow your heads and join me in a prayer for our nation and its leaders: Lord God, our heavenly Father, You said in Old Testament times that if your people who are called by your name would humble themselves, pray, seek your face and turn from their wicked ways, you would hear them and forgive their sin and heal their land. We acknowledge, Lord, the many blessings that You have so graciously and abundantly poured out upon us in and through our nation, and for these blessings we thank and praise You. But we also recognize that the citizens of this country, including those who call ourselves Christians, are constantly in need of repentance, renewal and guidance. And so we pray, Lord, bless our nation, its present and future leaders, and its citizens. Give them and us wisdom to make wise choices and courage to stand up for what is right. Help us to trust you, because often the condition and direction of our country deeply concerns and disturbs us, and we need You to help us remember and believe that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to You. Help us to go about our business of spreading Your Gospel with renewed excitement and zeal, and in your grace preserve for us the freedom to worship You and to bear witness to You in ways that bring glory to your name and blessing to our land. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The Same Old Story³

Text: “Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

“Things will never be the same again.” That’s been a common refrain since the horrific events of last Tuesday, and it’s hard not to take it seriously. Our conception of war and of peace will probably never be the same. Our assumptions about safety and security in the air, on the ground, even in the workplace will never be quite the same. Our understanding of the nature of freedom and how to protect and preserve it without sacrificing it or compromising it will never be the same. And the list goes on of the ways that the events of one day have changed irreversibly our lives and perhaps the whole course of human history.

At the same time, from another perspective, we might say that the events of last Tuesday have demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt that nothing has changed. Just a few weeks ago in church the appointed Old Testament lesson came from Ecclesiastes 1 and 2, which includes these inerrant words of God: “What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one can say, ‘Look! This is something new’? It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time” (1:10-11).

In his statement last week President Kieschnick observed: “The monstrous attacks on New York City and Washington D.C. are an astounding example of mankind’s fall into sin and the forces of evil at work in this world. The fall was not [merely] a one-time event. It continues to happen. It is an ongoing process, a downward trajectory, that

³ This sermon was written by Joel D. Lehenbauer and delivered on September 19, 2001 in chapel at the International Center of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

shapes every moment of our lives.” Although we are rightly shocked and deeply saddened by the horrible events of recent days, we who know what God’s Word teaches ought not be shocked at the depth of human sin and depravity and the capacity of fallen human beings to think and act in ways that are so completely contrary to God’s good and perfect will. It’s really the same old story—the story that goes back to Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel and Sarah and Hagar and Isaac and Ishmael and Jacob and Esau and on down through the generations of all those born in the image and likeness of Adam. And we know that story so well not only because we read about it again and again and again in the Scriptures but because we see it and feel it again and again and again in our own hearts and in our own lives and in our own families and in our own church and in our nation: pride, envy, anger, greed, hatred, hostility, jealousy, the lust for power and position and control, the stubborn, hard-hearted refusal to love and forgive and live together in God-pleasing harmony and humility and unity and diversity and peace.

In the chapel service that was held here at the International Center last Wednesday, the Gospel reading was from Luke 13, where Jesus says: “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered in this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.” As Americans, we puff out our chests at a time like this to show the world how much our country means to us—and well we should. And even as we puff out our chests as Americans we beat our breasts as Christians. Even as we sing “God bless our native land,” we cry out “Kyrie eleison: Lord have mercy on us all—and on me, a poor, miserable sinner.”

It’s the same old story—the story of human sin and its awful consequences, the story of our desperate need for repentance, and the old, old story of a Savior who came to rescue a world gone wrong. Last Tuesday changed everything, and yet last Tuesday changed nothing, because Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever.

What does this mean? It means that when we are horrified and terrified by the sin and evil of this world, we turn and run where God’s people have always run: to the shelter and safety of Christ’s cross, to the One who knows more about the horror of sin and evil than anyone who has ever lived, because he took it all upon himself when he hung on Calvary’s cross. When we feel crushed and suffocated by the filthy soot of our own sin, we cry out to the one who became sin for us on the cross, and who continues to call out to us, saying: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” When we are overwhelmed by human need and pain and grief unlike anything we have ever seen before, we respond as God’s people have always responded: with simple acts of love and service and kindness that reflect God’s loving-kindness toward us in Christ.

In his address to the seminary community last week, President John Johnson quoted these words of Martin Luther: “Christians are wise when they persevere in believing God’s promises. His promises are dependable and lasting. The Lord’s own pledge is permanent, as we read in the Psalms: ‘Indeed, the Guardian of Israel never rests nor

sleeps' (Psalms 121:4)." Some things, it is true, may never be the same again. Other things, the things that matter most, have not changed at all: Our need for God. His love for us in Christ. The stability and reliability of His Word and His promises. The responsibility and opportunity that we have as God's people to share His Word and His love with all people everywhere, until that day when we are assembled with that great multitude beyond counting from every nation, tribe, people and language, worshipping the Lamb on his throne as he wipes away every tear from our eyes. When that day comes we may truly say, "Things will never be the same again," for "there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." To which we say: "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!" Amen.

Christian Knights⁴

Eph. 6:10-20

Introduction

Today our land stands on the brink of war.

On Monday evening President Bush announced to the world that Saddam Hussein had 48 hours to "Flee or Fight." Approximately 36 of these 48 hours have elapsed, after which, if the Iraqi dictator does not step down and leave, war is set, as the *Wall Street Journal* put it yesterday, "for a time of our choosing."

People all over the world, although divided over many aspects of this impending war, are united in the tension of getting ready for it. Will there be a war? When will it start? How long will it last? What will be its consequences? Will it provoke another terrorist attack? Have all possibilities of resolving this conflict diplomatically been exhausted? Can Christians go to war and fight to kill and still be faithful to the teachings of Christ who commanded us to love one another?

These are questions being discussed wherever I have been in the last couple of weeks—

- from Buenos Aires, Argentina to Porto Alegre, Brazil
- from last weekend's meeting of the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches in Washington, D.C. to Immanuel Lutheran in Washington, Missouri where my family worships
- from the discussions at our dinner table at home to the hallways of the IC.

The position of Lutherans on war is well known. Martin Luther wrote an essay in 1527 titled "Whether Soldiers Too, Can Be Saved." "Of course," he answered. A soldier does a good work when he serves his government in carrying out its God-given task of maintaining the peace. Luther writes: "Every lord and prince is bound to protect his

⁴ This sermon was written by Dr. Samuel H. Nafzger and delivered in chapel at the International Center of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod on March 19, 2003.

people and to preserve the peace for them. That is his office: that is why he has the sword.”

A soldier serves the needs of his neighbor and pleases God when he goes into battle to kill—but this is not always so, as Luther is quick to point out. “No war is just. . . unless one has such a good reason for fighting and such a good conscience that he can say, “My neighbor compels and forces me to fight, though I would rather avoid it.”

The Lutherans gathered in Augsburg, Germany in 1530 agreed with Luther, as the Augsburg Confession states: “Christians may without sin. . . engage in just wars, serve as soldiers. . . condemned are those” who teach that Christians may not serve in the military.

Does this mean that all Lutherans believe that war with Iraq is justified at this point in time? Not at all. Since God’s Word does not address this specific question, Lutheran Christians may and in fact do come to different conclusions about this.

But there is one thing about which the Scriptures are quite clear. Long before there was a Saddam Hussein, we Christians were already involved in a war far more serious, far more difficult, more far reaching in its consequences than the present crisis in the Middle East. And it is this war which St. Paul describes in the reading from Ephesians Chapter 6.

I. The Enemy

First of all, the Apostle tells us who the real enemy is. He writes: “Finally, be strong in the Lord. . . that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” He continues: “We are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places.”

Our opponent in this war is one whose craft and deceit we underestimate to our own peril. Like a roaring lion he prowls about, eager to devour us. He has allies all around us, and he even has a “fifth column” well entrenched deep inside each of us. He’s good at quoting—or should we say misquoting—Scripture to seduce us. He often masquerades as an angel of light, but he is always a liar and a murderer. He has only one ultimate goal—to get as many of us human creatures as possible to spend eternity with him in hell.

And, we should point out, he is at his crafty best during those times when God’s special creatures are at warfare and engaged in bloodshed, in times like the present moment. So watch out. Be careful. Get ready for battle, says the Apostle.

II. The Armor

Against such an enemy, Paul has only one word of advice: “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand. . .” The Apostle repeats himself: “Therefore take the

whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.”

My wife is a 5th grade teacher at Immanuel Lutheran in Washington, Mo., where we have lived for the past seven years. Two weeks ago, as a part of its celebration of Lutheran School’s Week, the Immanuel Lutheran student body was enthralled by an hour long presentation by a real live knight dressed in his suit of armor. The real knight was actually a resident of Webster Gardens here in the St. Louis area by the name of Karl M. Kindt III, who had been dubbed a knight by the Mayor of St. Louis on November 10, 1999.

Mr. Kindt told a fascinating story as he described the \$4,500 suit of armor he was wearing piece by piece, using the language of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6. He was born four months after his father’s death in 1945 near the close of the 2nd World War in France. Shortly before his death, he wrote a letter to his soon-to-be-born child, should he not return from the war, to be delivered to his mother with a dozen roses. In this letter he expressed his great love for his child and how he longed to hold him and tell him how much he loved him. And how he wanted his unborn child to be a strong Christian man or woman.

Everyone who knew him, Mr. Kindt told the Immanuel student body, described him as a Christian knight, a man who was a manly soldier, a courteous gentleman, a man of sterling character, and a strong Christian.

Piece by piece he illustrated the armor which a Christian knight has at his disposal. There was

- the belt, or girdle fastened around his waist. The belt was extremely important to brace up the knight’s arms for action and to provide a place to which the sword and breastplate could be attached. The Apostle calls it “the girdle of truth,” the sincerity of mind and heart with which to oppose the deceit of the enemy.
- the breastplate of righteousness which covers the body from neck to thigh. It consists of two parts, front and back, and Paul describes it as the holy life and moral rectitude which serves to guard against Satan’s accusations. The Apostle calls upon Christians who have been declared holy by God to live lives worthy of their calling, as children of the light.
- the feet of a Christian knight, says the Apostle, are shod with the equipment of the Gospel of peace. Knights don’t go barefoot. Proper footwear made a knight ready to fight. The Good News of the Gospel of forgiveness through the blood of Christ gives the Christian knight the peace of mind to fight the good fight with a singleness of heart.
- the shield of faith. The purpose of the shield is to protect the body and especially the vital organs of the heart and the lungs from the fiery darts of the enemy. The shield, about 4 foot by 2 foot, was covered by leather soaked in water and served to blunt the sharp points of flaming arrows. Similarly, the

faith which God gives us through Word and Sacrament blunts the fiery bolts of the devil's tricks of anguish, tribulation, doubt, fear, hate, lust, ambition, greed, and mistrust of our fellow knights.

- the helmet of salvation, language which the Apostle borrows from Isaiah who describes the Messiah as wearing such headgear. In his letter to the Thessalonians (1 Thes. 5:8), Paul identifies the helmet with "the hope of salvation." It is this hope which gives the Christian knight the courage to persevere when the fighting gets tough and he is battle weary.
- last of all is the most conspicuously offensive weapon, "the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God." Paul has in mind here the short sword, the one carried by every armed Roman soldier. With it the knight can not only defend himself, but with it he can actually go on the offensive. This sword is the Word of God which stands forever, which the very gates of Hell cannot overcome. And it is the gift of the Spirit to every Christian knight.

So equipped, the Christian knight will be able to stand, to prevail, to defeat the devil and win the victory.

Conclusion

We are living in uncertain times. Today is a moment of truth, for it really describes every day in the life of a Christian knight. We do not know what tomorrow may bring, to say nothing of next week, next month or next year.

As President Bush has told us over and over again, we Americans and indeed the whole world are fighting a new kind of enemy since 9/11. As citizens of a state where we have a government of the people, by the people, for the people, we have a God-given duty to be informed and involved.

But even as we do so, Christian knights continue to fight against an Old Enemy. But thanks be to God, we have a knight's armor, we have the equipment necessary to win the victory as we move into the future, carrying out our callings where God has placed us. We go into the future even in times of war and rumors of wars, with confidence, a confidence which comes not from underestimating our real enemy and his craft, but with a confidence founded on the cross of the one who suffered and died on it, whose blood forgives us, and whose resurrection makes us more than conquerors, come what may.

Therefore, to use the words of the 1864 hymn written in 15 minutes for children to sing in a Sunday School procession, "Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus, going on before." Amen.

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