

THE ELCA AND THE JUST WAR THEORY:
PACIFISM AS A NECESSARY SUBSTITUTE

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PACIFISM AS A NECESSARY SUBSTITUTE

"Make us peacemakers and reconcilers. Give us ears to hear the cries of our sisters and brothers at home and around the world who live without security or other necessities of life. Give wisdom and compassion to the leaders of this nation and all nations that they may lead us in the ways of peace and justice. Protect those who serve in the armed forces. Teach us to use our might for the greater good of all humanity and of this fragile planet."

Presiding Bishop of the ELCA Mark S. Hanson's Prayer for Peace on Easter 2004

Some Lutherans listened to Bishop Hanson's Easter Prayer and heard a justification for war because it acknowledges our armed forces. Other Lutherans heard a justification for pacifism because it acknowledges a petition for us to become peacemakers and reconcilers. The question that is key in Bishop Hanson's prayer is whether his words; "our might for greater good," are meant to express the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America's traditional explanation for just war or whether they are a call for something better for humanity such as pacifism.

I know from personal experience that using one's strength for the greater good of humanity is powerful and can be life changing. Grace Lutheran Church, an ELCA congregation in Minneapolis, annually awards a prestigious award in honor of the late Pastor Vincent L. Hawkinson. Hawkinson served Grace for over thirty years and worked tirelessly for human rights throughout his career. The award in 2000 went to Marv Davidov, a man who has dedicated his life to the hope of creating a world of peace and justice. During more than 47 years as an activist, Davidov marched with Martin Luther King Jr., launched several peace organizations, and performed countless acts of nonviolent civil disobedience. He was arrested dozens of times and spent six months in jail making a case for peace and justice.

I met Davidov because I was among four college students the activist shared his Hawkinson Award with for justice and peace work. I found myself in company with an honored peacemaker and elite group of scholars in 2000 even though I never marched in Selma, Alabama, committed an act of nonviolent civil disobedience, or served any time in jail for a just cause. Five scholarships were awarded to five different people with five different ideas on how to foster peace and justice, but we all claimed faith, as the inspiration for the way we helped our neighbors and communities. We claimed to Romans 12: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed... live in harmony with one another... Do not repay evil for evil... If your enemies are hungry, feed them."

Thesis

My own church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, agrees with the just war theory, which I believe is in conflict with the peace and the pacifist ideals of Jesus. This church claims to hold true to the ideal of justice and peace. However, the church contradicts fundamental Christian principles in supporting just war. It is imperative that the ELCA recognizes pacifism as the sole replacement to just war, and it should rethink adopting section 4A, regarding just war, found in the church's 1995 statement: A Social Statement for Peace in God's World: "We seek guidance from the principles of the 'just/unjust war' tradition."¹

Pacifism is a viable substitute to the just war theory. More specifically, pacifism is a logical fit for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The ELCA's mission statement is, "Marked with the cross of Christ forever, we are claimed, gathered, and sent for the sake of the world." This statement does not specifically address peace and justice,

¹ Evangelical Church in America, "A Social Statement For Peace in God's World," 20 August 1995, <<http://www.elca.org/dcs/peacein.html>> (17 February 2004).

but once pacifism and just war are examined, the case for pacifism emerges as suitable with the ELCA mission more than the just war theory.

This discussion is broken into three components. An overview of pacifism and just war are explored. ELCA history in terms of pacifism and just war are considered and the rationale for the just war theory is discussed from the early church perspective. Jesus and the gospel of his teachings are examined.

These components argue that the ELCA must reconsider its position on just war. Specifically, the Christian church is called to emulate Jesus' model of pacifism. Politics, society, and culture in the Christian church have "watered down" and manipulated aspirations for peace and blinded Christianity from its original morals founded in the Gospels. Finally, the ELCA's support of the just war theory is measured inadequate because it promotes killing and contradicts the church's mission for peace.

Overview of Pacifism and the Just War Theory

At the outset, a definition of pacifism and its counterpart of just war are helpful to solidify the argument on specific terminology for the conversation. Pacifism is defined by Webster's Dictionary as "opposition to war or violence as a means of settling disputes; specifically refusal to bear arms on moral or religious grounds founded in an attitude or policy of nonresistance."²

There are many definitions that are specifically tied to the Christian Church including that of Peter Brock in Dictionary of Christian Ethics. Brock holds that contemporary pacifism, "combines advocacy of personal nonparticipation in war of any kind or in violent revolution with an endeavor to find nonviolent means of resolving

² Merriam Webster Online, 2004, <<http://www.merriam-webster.com>> (29 April 2004).

conflict.”³ Cofounder of The Catholic Worker and the “grand old lady of pacifism,” Dorothy Day defined pacifism as a way to show the face of Jesus by helping the poor and powerless.⁴

Pacifism for this discussion will be defined by Charles Lutz, retired director of the former American Lutheran Church’s Church in Society Unit, who outlined four Christian stances on pacifism’s opposition to war or violence in his book, Peaceways: 16 Christian Perspectives on Security in a Nuclear Age. Lutz defines the Christian pacifist as having, “uncompromising refusal to use armed forces and consistently seeks nonviolent alternatives.”⁵ This claim of pacifism is that violence in any form is foreign to the Christian life.

Pacifists have a strong dedication to the promotion of peace and therefore do not participate in war and avoid violence at all costs. Central to this claim are the New Testament commands to offer no physically violent resistance to evil, to turn the other cheek, and to love one’s enemies. These commands express Jesus’ own selfless love for humanity, which is evident in the work of his mission founded in mercy and forgiveness.

This resolution of conflict has resulted in many different strategies under the umbrella of pacifism. A champion of nonviolence, Martin Luther King Jr. made clear his own definition of pacifism, believing that nonviolent, civil disobedience provided the best way to achieve equality in society. Anti Vietnam War activists Daniel and Philip Berrigan, both Roman Catholic priests, illustrated pacifism through their demonstrated of

³ Peter Brock, Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics, ed., John Macquarrie (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986), 446.

⁴ Beth Randall, Illuminating Lives: Dorothy Day, February 2003, <http://www.mcs.drexel.edu/~gbrandal/illum_html/Day.html> (2 May 2004).

⁵ Charles Lutz, Peaceways: 16 Christian Perspectives on Security in a Nuclear Age, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, March 1983), adopted by Chris Johnson Rel. 244.

removal and burning of draft board records.

Edgar M. Carlson, former President of Gustavus Adolphus College, wrote about a strategy for pacifism in an article titled, "If War Comes: A Defense of Christian Pacifism." Carlson supposed that if war comes, there are three alternatives open to Christians, "Mere passivity, that is, do nothing. Second, join the army, navy, air force, or some non-combatant service to help 'win the war.' Third a policy for pacifism, that is, active participation on the principle of love."⁶

Violence and physical force in any form are unsuited to Christian life, but Christian pacifists must also actively extend peace and nonviolence. Pacifism should not be confused with passivity, another approach to war in which humans "sit back" and refrain from active, creative initiatives. Action is central to pacifism by joining others with like imagination and creativity to address disagreements politically. Examples of creative solutions could include offering food relief to almost seventy percent of the world who go hungry at night or diplomatic solutions that rally peaceful nations in search of nonviolent compromises to ensure all action is disengaged from any act of violence.

Just War Theory: When All Other Options Have Been Exhausted

The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms defines the approach to conflict as, "Morally justifying war by the theory that, despite its evils, war may be necessary and justifiable under certain conditions and within certain limitations. Conditions for entering and conducting wars are constructed."⁷

According to Lutz, there are Christian factions that believe that war or violence is

⁶ Edgar M Carlson, If War Comes: A Defense of Christian Pacifism. (St. Peter, MN: Gustavus Adolphus College, 1938), 2.

⁷ Donald K. McKim, Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 152.

justifiable in certain circumstances once certain criteria are met: just cause, comparative justice, right intention, legitimate authority, and last resort.⁸ Adolf Hitler justified the genocide of millions of Jews and the Nazi invasion of Europe in World War II because he envisioned himself and Germany legitimate authorities. Osama Bin Ladin justified killing 3,000 people in the World Trade Center Twin Towers because this symbol of western capitalism is offensive to his Islamic beliefs. The United States government justified obliterating Iraq in order to establish their American version of democracy and freedom in the Middle East. The problem then with these rationalizations for violence is that each is subjective.

Some extreme situations in history have called for the taking of human life in the hope of restoring peace. For example, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the famous professor and minister in Nazis Germany, was a Christian pacifist but quickly altered course when he witnessed the sufferings of the innocent. Bonhoeffer writes:

The followers of Christ have been called to peace... And they must not only have peace but make it. And to that end they renounce all violence and tumult. In the cause of Christ nothing is to be gained by such methods... His disciples keep the peace by choosing to endure suffering themselves rather than inflict it on others. They maintain fellowship where others would break it off. They renounce hatred and wrong. In so doing, they overcome evil with good, and establish the peace of God in the midst of a world of war and hate.⁹

The horrific events during the time of Bonhoeffer's pacifist remarks quickly transformed when civilians had to be defended and assassinating Hitler was the only way towards that goal. Bonhoeffer's aspirations for pacifism were set aside in order to advance peace in his native land. Bonhoeffer may have never supported the just war theory, however his

⁸ Lutz, Peaceways: 16 Christian Perspectives on Security in a Nuclear Age.

⁹ Kate Reuer, ed., Peace Points, adopted by the ELCA Task Force on the Decade for Peace, 2004.

actions in addressing the need to protect the innocent are central in justifying war.

The just war theory envisions the following scenario: a nation state, confident with a strong military and an arsenal of weapons, threatens national security. Just war then consists of the following: war must be a proportional response to an evil offensive force; war only occurs when all other avenues of diplomacy are exhausted in protecting the innocent; force is used as the last resort in hope that the evil created by war will be overcome by the good that will eventually develop; and finally, the action taken must be targeted with no civilian casualties.

Another great proponent for the Just War Theory, Paul Ramsey, lays out other key arguments in supporting intervention during desperate times. In certain circumstances, power is necessary as a tool for peace, intervention is ethical, and a war can be justifiable. Other familiar tenets underlying the argument for just war are that war solves conflict, war brings about peace, and war maintains order.

St. Thomas Aquinas agrees with Paul Ramsey and his support of the just war. Aquinas identifies three characteristics of a just war. Thomas wrote Summa Theologica and lived from 1225-1274. His main goal was to fit together all of the Catholic theologies, like a puzzle, within this extremely lengthy project. The just war theory stood among this holistic document of theology. We will analyze Thomas' 3-step approach in identifying a just war. His just war looks to defend the common wealth, uplift the good, and restrain evil for the great good.

First of all, a legitimate authority must be the sole institution that wages war. "The authority of the sovereign by whose command the war is to be waged," according to

Thomas.¹⁰ The business of the authority is to watch over the city, kingdom, and province given by God. Psalm 81:4 reads, "Rescue the poor: and deliver the needy out of the hand of the sinner."¹¹ Rescuing the poor is central to the responsibility found within the authority directly given from God. Thomas is very Augustinian because Augustine also has the stance (*Contra Faust.* xxii, 75): "The natural order conducive to peace among mortals demands that the power to declare and counsel war should be in the hands of those who hold supreme authority."¹²

Second, the war must have just cause. Those who attacked "should be attacked because they deserve it on account of some fault."¹³ Again Augustine supports Aquinas with his remarks (*Questions. in Hept., qu. X, super Jos*):

A just war is wont to be described as one that avenges wrongs, when a nation or state has to be punished, for refusing to make amends for the wrongs inflicted by its subjects, or to restore what it has seized unjustly.¹⁴

Finally, right intention for war must exist. It must be the intention to advance good and avoid evil. Aquinas emphasizes the importance of right intention, "for it may happen that the war is declared by legitimate authority, and for a just cause, and yet be rendered unlawful through wicked intention."¹⁵

Martin Luther is yet another voice in support of the just war theory. Luther is extremely important to refer to because of the ELCA's Lutheran affiliation. Luther's

¹⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), Part II, Section II, #40:1

¹¹ All scriptural references, unless in the original language, are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

¹² Quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* Part II, Section II, #40:1.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Quoted in Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Whether Soldiers, too, can be saved was written in response to a letter Martin received from a Christian soldier. This letter became the typical Protestant understanding for the use of force in order to bring about good in the world. Luther believed most professions were ordained by God, even the profession of a soldier. If one was a soldier, in order to please God, the soldier must carry out his duty to the fullest extent for the glory of God. His duty is to protect his community, specifically his neighbor, from harm. Luther pleaded in his letter to the soldier:

To sum it up, we must, in thinking about a soldier's office, not concentrate on the killing, burning, striking, hitting, and seizing. This is what children with their limited and restricted vision see when they regard a doctor as a sawbones who amputates, but do not see that he does this only to save the whole body.¹⁶

He urges this Christian soldier to perceive war with an adult mindset in viewing the ultimate effectiveness of such a just action:

We must look at the office of the soldier, or the sword, with they 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 and drinking or any other work.¹⁷

A soldier's office is as godly, needful, and useful as drinking water.

Joining Luther, Augustine and Aquinas are some Old and New Testament scriptural themes that help explain the existence of the just war theory in the church. These possible claims may not specifically be the claims of Luther, Augustine, and Thomas but aid in understanding the strong support for just war: violence to defend God is just, one should not make God angry or one will face the consequences. Some say just war theorists extract sayings from their context and thus warp the meaning. Specifically,

¹⁶ "The Christian in Society." Luther's Works Robert C. Schultz, ed., Volume 46, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press) 97.

¹⁷ "The Christian in Society." Luther's Works 97.

some Christians can construe the actions of Jesus to support the mission of the just war. Just war theorists disagree and attempt to explain Jesus as in support of just war in his actions of the cleansing of the temple. They move on to address his apocalyptic judgment and his actions in spiritual warfare of casting demons into animals. Finally, Jesus words in Matthew 10:34, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." have often used as evidence in support of the just war theory.

The Bible is sometimes used by Christians to support justification for war.

Romans 13:1-2,6 reads:

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ⁶ For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, busy with this very thing.

Another frequently quoted verse that shows aggression is John 2:15:

Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.

Pacifists are sometimes given argument that Jesus himself justified war because of a quote in Matthew 22:21 which reads, "Then he (Jesus) said to them, 'Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's and to God the things that are God's.'"

Probably the most frequently quoted bible verse cited by Christians that support just war comes from Luke 22:36, "He said to them, 'But now, the one who has a purse must take it, and likewise a bag. And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one.'"

Lactantius wrote in the third century and taught rhetoric during the time of

Constantine's conversion to Christianity. Lactantius worked to explain Christianity in the world and defended it against nonbelievers. In regards to just war, specifically preceding the Constantine's conversion to Christianity, Lactantius held that peace by force was labeled as being approved by God and the mentality of strong government:

And as bravery, if you fight in defense of your country, is a good, if against your country, is an evil, so the passions, if you employ them to good purposes, will be virtues, if to evil uses, they will be called vices.¹⁸

Lactantius' support the idea of just war helps in understanding why institutions like the ELCA devote attention to protecting neighbors and furthering the cause of defending good with force.

Predecessor Churches of the ELCA and Its Just War History

Looking at predecessor churches of the ELCA and its just war history is important. Edward Schneider from the Journal of Lutheran Ethics writes, "another review may help us to determine at least the broad outlines and salient points of view which either reflected or helped to shape the thinking of early church members from preceding ELCA churches in this critical area of ethical reflection."¹⁹

The ELCA's conversation between pacifism and just war was established in the many of its predecessor churches including the American Lutheran Church, United Lutheran Church in America, Augustana Lutheran Church, and the Lutheran Church in America. Historical standpoints of pacifism and just war within these churches illustrate the ELCA's background in accepting the just war theory.

¹⁸ "Lactantius: The Divine Institutes." The Fathers of the Church Roy Joseph Deferrari, ed., Books I-VII, (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press) adopted by Mark Granquist, Religion 344.

¹⁹ Edward Schneider, "War and Peace: A Review of Relevant Statements by Church Bodies Which Preceded the Founding of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America." Journal of Lutheran Ethics. 1 (2001): <<http://www.elca.org/scriptlib/dcs/jle/article.asp?aid+133>> Section 1.

Given Martin Luther's view of war, it is not surprising that the roots of the just war theory flow deep within ELCA's history. Edward Schneider in "War and Peace: A Review of Relevant Statements by Church Bodies Which Preceded the Founding of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America," recognizes the just war theory is heavily represented within each church's statement. Schneider found in explaining the history of the ELCA, "war was understood to be always wrong but sometimes necessary to prevent even greater evil."²⁰ The predecessor churches of the ELCA recognized the importance of limiting particular wars, called selected conscientious objection, but at the same time agreed that the principles of a just war cannot always be easily applied to modern wartime conditions. Obviously, all preceding Churches of the ELCA grappled with the question of whether or not war was justified.

The American Lutheran Church's most comprehensive statement on the just war is titled "War, Peace, and Freedom" and was adopted by its 1966 General Convention. The ALC declared war a denial of God's central commandment of love, "a consequence of a world estranged from God, a fruit of sinful man's passions."²¹ War undermined God's creation and righteousness by denying injustice and human rights. This denial proved to be a powerful force that the ALC worried would spin out of control by bringing the world to an end. This church was not about to justify war and subsequently separated themselves from the act of taking lives in the battlefields by being conscious of "man's passions" and refrain from violence. Regardless of this strong emphasis on peace, the ALC still found a loophole for justifying coercive action. According to Schneider, the

²⁰ Ibid., Section 1.

²¹ American Lutheran Church, "War, Peace, and Freedom," 25 October 1966, as quoted in *ibid.*, section 4 <http://www.elca.org/jle/alc/alc_war_peace_freedom.html> (15 March 2004).

ALC argued, "even though war was declared to be contrary to God's plan and purpose, it could still be used by God."²²

The ALC's "War, Peace, and Freedom" declaration states,

When man's disobedience brings war, God can transform it into a chastening of sinful, rebellious men and nations that deny His Lordship and defy His demands for justice and mercy.²³

While the ALC wrestled whether to engage in just war, the United Lutheran Church in America also struggled with its own attempt to sort out pacifism and just war. The ULCA emphasized the importance of being cautious what sort of war was justified. It affirmed that God would judge his followers if an unjust war were deemed just. God would hold his people responsible. The ULCA declared that:

Nations, no less than individuals, are bound by the moral law and are responsible to God for their actions. It also declared that the maintenance of great standing armies and navies was an appalling waste of economic resources and a menace to peace.²⁴

The ULCA moved on to consider the adequate sizing of armies and navies. Large armies and navies were unnecessary and a hindrance to peace. This institution did not support wars that were considered unjust. However, if the force was an adequate size and the cause was just, the ULCA approved military.

Now, what if parishioners of this congregation were to disagree on whether or not the war was just? One who chooses not to participate or support a war based on moral guidelines is called a conscientious objector. The church addressed the rights of conscientious objectors in their conventions of 1940, 1944, and 1946. They did not go so

²² Ibid., Section 4.

²³ Schneider, "War and Peace: A Review of Relevant Statements by Church Bodies Which Preceded the Founding of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America," Section 5.

²⁴ Ibid., Section 6.

far as to approve of the action of conscientious objectors but did respect the individual's devotion to scripture. According to Schneider, the church "in 1946 urged the granting of amnesty and restoration of civil and political rights to all men imprisoned because of conscientious objection to war."²⁵ Not until 1950 did the church start to entertain the possibility of pacifism in the church. The 1950 resolution by the ULCA declared:

War to be evil "at its roots and in its fruits," and asserted "the Christian, therefore, seeks war's abolition, seeing in every war a violation of the spirit and teachings of Jesus." "God's love for all men implies a world-wide community in which each man seeks the good of all." It declared that the Christian emphasis on repentance and forgiveness forbids retaliation and vengeance.²⁶

A 1960 resolution continued to discount war as a viable means of solving conflict and specifically banned nuclear weapons.

Another church previous to the ELCA was the Augustana Lutheran Church. It also dealt with the debate regarding pacifism and the just war theory. Its first bold move in the conversation was to support conscientious objectors in 1941:

We believe the government should not violate the Christian conscience by seeking to compel conscientious objectors to engage in combatant military service. We ask exemption from all forms of combatant military service for all conscientious objectors who may be members of the Augustana Synod.²⁷

The Augustana Lutheran Church started to be creative in dealing with conflict in society. They were not apt to support just war, but used their imagination in supporting an important peace organization, the United Nations. When difficult tension arose internationally, they urged the U.S. government to make use of this influential

²⁵ Ibid., Section 74.

²⁶ Ibid., Section 78.

²⁷ Quoted in Ibid., Section 80.

organization:

The 1956 resolution called upon our government to make use of the United Nations in resolving difficult tensions wherever they may threaten world peace; to insist that our western allies recognize the rights of colonial peoples to liberty and self-government; to work progressively toward universal disarmament, including an international agreement to ban the use of atomic weapons; and to take steps to bring about an end to the present practice of drafting young men for the armed services during peacetime..²⁸

The American Lutheran Church was also concerned with the well being of the world as a community. There seems to be little room in this church's resolution for war. If an institution is concerned with the well being of the whole family of peoples and nations, peace must be a primary concern. In 1960, the Board for Christian Social Action of the American Lutheran Church, in the statement entitled "The Christian in His Social Living," stated:

Our nation's policies, domestic as well as foreign, should be designed to further purposes consistent with the well being of the whole family of peoples and nations. In the long view her true "national interest" is best served by advancing the "international interest," the common well being of the whole community of nations.²⁹

It is the history of this pacifism and the just war theory, in the American Lutheran Church, the United Lutheran Church in America, and the Augustana Lutheran Church , that built the foundation of the evolving ELCA's position on justifying war.

Contemporary ELCA and the Just War Theory

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America opens its peace statement, For Peace in God's World, with, "we of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America share

²⁸ Ibid., Section 83.

²⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*, Section 85.

with the Church of Jesus Christ in all times and places the calling to be peacemakers.”³⁰

The ELCA most definitely has strong convictions for peace in God’s world.

Significantly, this statement recognizes the Church has fallen short of God’s expectation for peace and the institution prays for forgiveness and ask for guidance in searching for peace in all times.

This institution also recognizes its God as a God of peace. How does the church justify this claim? God’s promise of peace is found in Jesus. The church goes on to describe four ways Jesus brought peace to the world: “Jesus taught love for one’s enemies; he reached out to the oppressed, downtrodden, and rejected of the earth; he prayed for his enemies while himself being rejected on the cross; above all, through Jesus’ violent death, God redeemed the world.”³¹ God’s yearning for peace includes now and into the future. His faithful love acts for peace. This faithful love calls congregations not to harm others and to help those in every need. An incredible responsibility exists to be the Christian with willing hands to help the oppressed. The Lutheran background addresses this responsibility in The Augsburg Confession, Article XVI: “we affirm that governments may legitimately employ such measures as law and its enforcement, police protection, provisions for the common defense, and resistance to aggression.”³² Defense from evil and resistance to hostility are unfortunately necessary. However, seeking alternatives to war and preventing wars is central to the ELCA’s commitment to the love of neighbors. Nevertheless, helping and loving a neighbor in

³⁰ Evangelical Church in America, “A Social Statement For Peace in God’s World,” 20 August 1995, <<http://www.elca.org/dcs/peacein.html>> (17 February 2004) Introduction.

³¹ Ibid., Section 2.

³² Quoted in *ibid.*, Section 4A.

need also expects resistance to evil. Section 4A of the ELCA's social statement explains what it mean to help a neighbor:

Helping the neighbor in need may require protecting innocent people from injustice and aggression. While we support the use of nonviolent measures, there may be no other way to offer protection in some circumstances than by restraining forcibly those harming the innocent. We do not, then--for the sake of the neighbor--rule out possible support for the use of military force.³³

The ELCA seeks guidance from the just war tradition. As long as the war fits within the guidelines of the just war tradition mentioned earlier, this institution will accept just war as a viable approach to conflict in protecting a neighbor.

The Unfair Question

Before refuting the arguments made for just war and against true pacifism, one must examine what John H. Yoder, a Mennonite professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame, calls the "unfair question." Some pacifists find themselves confronted with a question from curious opponents as to the depth of their commitment to non-violence. The idea is that a position of pacifism is acceptable in some cases for some people, but that the pacifist is compelled to change their philosophy in dire personal circumstances. A typical question is articulated in Yoder's book, What Would You Do? The author asks, "What would you do if a criminal pulled a gun and threatened to kill your wife, daughter, sister, mother?"³⁴ Another example is that of the man standing in the middle of the bus with a bomb and threatening to blow up forty passengers and the pacifist has a choice whether to shoot the man and save forty lives or not kill the man and allow forty people to die. The pacifist is depicted as a killer in some sense either way.

³³ Ibid., Section 4A.

³⁴ John H. Yoder, What Would You Do? (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1984), 11.

Yoder says these types of questions and situations are not relevant in a discussion on pacifism and just war because they only raise more questions. He quotes Leo Tolstoy's response to one such hypothetical situation where a criminal is killing a child and one can only save the child by killing the criminal. "He needs to know what will become of the child whom he saves, and what, had he not killed him, would have been the future of the assailant,"³⁵ Tolstoy contends. These questions, Tolstoy asserts, come from:

People who profited by violence and who did not wish to give up their advantages took on themselves a monopoly of Christian preaching and declared that, as cases can be found in which nonresistance causes more harm than the use of violence. Therefore Christ's doctrine of nonresistance need not always be followed; in that one may deviate from his teaching to defend one's life or the life of others; or to defend one's country, to save society from lunatics or criminals, and in many other cases.³⁶

Yoder's final analysis of the unfair question is summarized with:

The Christian does not choose a nonviolent approach to conflict because of assurance it will always work. The Christian chooses that approach because of commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Yet we can also ask the practical question: Does it work? The answer: Yes, often.³⁷

Pacifism as a Necessary Substitute to Just War

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America embraces just war, but there is another necessary approach. Pacifism is the necessary substitute that the ELCA should adopt. This is the right course of thought and action because any church which proclaims the teaching of Jesus Christ, as ultimate authority cannot justify war.

Most people who suggest just war agree that war is wrong. However taking a

³⁵ Ibid., 46.

³⁶ Ibid., 49.

³⁷ Ibid., 88.

human life, whether on a street or a battlefield, is an aberration of the commandment given in Exodus 20:13, "You Shall Not Murder," and Jesus' teaching in the New Testament.. Jesus reminds people of the commandment in Matthew 5:21, "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'"

A debate about killing in just war not meaning murder is only an exercise in semantics. Jesus is specific about his condemnation of violence, even anger in subsequent verses. He says, "But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell." One can argue that accidental killing as a result of an automobile crash for example is not murder unless negligence is involved because it is not the taking of life intentionally, but murder and killing remain synonymous however in a discussion relating to pacifism and just war.

The ELCA cannot profess the teaching of Jesus and at the same time rationalize for just war. Jesus speaks against dispute as is read in Matthew 5: 25:

Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. But I say to you, do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well.

"But I say to you, do not resist an evildoer," challenges all Christians to cling to love and not force. When evil threatens innocent neighbors, pacifists are challenged to obey Jesus and love their enemy or let evil reign. One must understand pacifism does not mean Christians should not protect their neighbors. It simply means they are unwilling to kill to do so. Protecting a neighbor is continually possible through Christian

peacemaking of active nonviolence. It should be understood pacifism is not weakness or passive submission, but rather a kind of persistent, disciplined, and often-courageous goodwill. It is active confrontation with conflict or evil that respects the humanity of the opponent and seeks both to end a threat or injury and to reconcile the adversary. Through pacifism, the ELCA's neighbors are still protected, yet, fortunately the church stays clear of the spiral of violence: violence only causes more violence. Protecting a neighbor is a noble act, however, protecting a neighbor with force only instigates more violence. Paul writes in Romans 12:19, "Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord." Like the just war theory, pacifism is also focused on helping neighbors in need who require protection from injustice and aggression, just with a different method. The heated debate develops where the two sides branch out: pacifism as staying nonviolent in all situations and just war supporting violent measures when necessary. The ELCA states:

The use of nonviolent measures because there may be no other way to offer protection in some circumstances than by restraining forcibly those harming the innocent. We do not, then—for the sake of the neighbor—do not rule out possible support for the use of military force. We must determine in particular circumstances whether or not military action is the lesser evil.³⁸

Do humans even have the capability to determine in particular circumstances whether or not military action is justifiable? This ELCA answers "yes," confidently that humans in fact have the ability to determine if war is justifiable. It should be a concern that the ELCA seeks guidance from the principles of the "just/unjust war" tradition. It is fully understood "while permitting recourse to war in exceptional circumstances, these principles intend to limit such occasions by setting forth conditions that must be met to

³⁸ Evangelical Church in America, "A Social Statement For Peace in God's World."

render military action justifiable.”³⁹ However the church goes on to state, “we begin with a strong presumption against all war; support for and participation in a war to restore peace is a tragic concession to a sinful world. Any decision for war must be a mournful one.”⁴⁰ The ELCA does in fact characterize all war as “mournful” and that a decision for war should be a “mournful one.” The ELCA has no place in making a decision classified as a “mournful one.” The notion that a church sometimes needs to make a mournful decision should be rejected. Why? If the ELCA truly states a stand with a “strong presumption against all war” then it should hold that same position when a dispute is eminent. If war becomes an acceptable an option in the end, obviously the “strong presumption against all war” was not strong to begin with but incessantly weak. War does not allow for the pursuit of peace, but only encourages more violence in society. Furthermore, there is the question if protecting with violence is inherent in Christianity. Luke 3:14 reads, “Do neither violence nor injustice to any one, and be content with your wages.” The peace statement in Luke calls for Christians to do no violence to any one. Jesus has taught and shown that violence to any one in any circumstance is unacceptable. Jesus was a pacifist and did not support violence in his teachings. Christians therefore are called to emulate his model of pacifism and live for Christian peacemaking.

Human experience can manipulate Christianity away from Christ’s original teachings. The human experience remains an abstract and inadequate tool in support of the just war cause. As soon as a Christian relies on experience more than on scripture, Christian teachings in one’s life takes a back seat to worldly morals and experiences. It is promising to note that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America does not manipulate

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

and interpret scripture to support the just war theory. The ELCA mission statement of peace explains:

The Scriptures provide us direction. Yet we do not possess uniquely Christian international policies or a divine or biblical politics for our nation. For political guidance we also must rely upon reason and compassion, and examine and draw upon common human experience through which, we believe, God is at work creating and preserving the world.⁴¹

Scriptures do provide a direction much stronger than human experience or reason. War does not exist in the Gospels. Despite the fact that these recorded words support peace, just war theorists continue to use these chapters to reason war.

Edgar Carlson refutes the Gospel verses used earlier in support of just war. For instance, Matthew 10:34, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." Carlson urges the reader to understand the context and the figurative nature of this expression.⁴² Carlson explains:

If the sword spoken of is a literal one, the killing which is sanctioned is the killing of one's family, rather than of one's political enemies. If, furthermore, Jesus meant it to sanction the political use of the sword against the Romans, He was a political revolutionist and they were right in their charge against Him. The meaning of the passage is made very obvious in Luke where "division" is submitted for "sword." If the passage is relevant to the war situation at all it might rather be a source of comfort for one who for conscience' sake finds himself ostracized by family and community.

John 2:15 is the other well known verse used in support of just war. Carlson once again aids in refuting the use of this verse. Just war theorists often use this verse to show Jesus' action as violent in the temple. Carlson argues:

First, it should be noticed that the best scholarship, as indicated in the American Standard Version, indicates the use of scourge on the animals,

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Edgar M Carlson, The Evangelical Christian and the Pacifist Commitment, ed. Fredrik A. Schiotz, (Chicago: American Lutheran Conference. 1941), Vol. IV.

rather than the people. Furthermore, the word which is translated, 'cast forth', as used elsewhere in the New Testament does not indicate particularly violent action. Jesus' answer, moreover, is really a protest against nationalism since He argues that his Father's house was a house of prayer 'for all the nations.' At any rate, there does not seem to be any very close connection between chasing cattle out of the temple precincts and modern warfare.⁴³

Carlson uses the American Standard Version of this scripture. However, the same argument can be made about John 2:15 with the use of the New Revised Standard Version:

Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.

"Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and cattle." Jesus at first sounds like the whip of cords is directed at the people. However, the verse goes on to be more specific on who the cords were intended for. "Both the sheep and cattle," is the crucial section of this scripture. Jesus clearly directs his passion towards the animals and not the people. Furthermore one must agree with Carlson, "driving all of them out of the temple," does not seem to be a very convincing argument with close connection to justifying war.

Finally, pacifists must recognize the reason why just war theorists use Luke 22:36 to support war. Jesus said to his disciples, "But now, the one who has a purse must take it, and likewise a bag. And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one."

Carlson refutes the use of Luke 22:36 with:

The most significant part of the passage is the answer of the disciples that they have two swords. Apparently they carried swords, and Jesus did not deny them the right to do so. It would have been quite the accord with Jesus' method, however, not to deal with this problem by rules any more than he solved other problems by passing a rule that prohibited a particular

⁴³ Ibid.

course of action. The method of Jesus was rather to live by love until His followers saw the perversion of their own way without a rule. Furthermore, it should be remembered that when Peter attempted to use one of the swords in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus forbade him. If at any time, Jesus actually sanctioned the political use of the sword by the people of His day, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that He was an insurrectionist, and thus rightly convicted as such before the Roman Court.⁴⁴

The Christian church is obligated to embrace pacifism since these Gospel recordings clearly direct pacifism. The integrity of the ELCA is compromised when it ignores the absence of war in the Second Testament and continues to support war.

Fortunately, the ELCA states:

Wars, both between and within states, represent a horrendous failure of politics. The evil of war is especially evident in the number of children and other noncombatants who suffer and die. We lament that the Church has blessed crusades and wars in the name of Jesus Christ. We recognize with sorrow that too often people formed in the Lutheran tradition have passively accepted their government's call-to-arms or have too readily endorsed war to resolve conflicts.⁴⁵

If the justification of war is a mournful one, why does the church continue to support the just war theory? The church's motto should be "love your neighbors/ enemies-sometimes." The ELCA claims to be founded in "love your enemy." Matthew 5:44 states, "But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." However they continue to argue, "wars and their threat still thrust themselves upon us, and we cannot avoid making decisions about them." The ELCA must remember that a pacifist approach does not avoid making decisions about war; it is just an approach to conflict that is often forgotten.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 8.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Why Pacifism?

God is peace, who gives peace, and calls us to peace through justice. Peace is living out Jesus' teachings and bearing witness to the presence of God. The ELCA must find their way back to Dietrich Bonhoeffer's support of pacifism before the times of the holocaust:

the followers of Christ have been called to peace... And they must not only have peace but make it. And to that end they renounce all violence and tumult. In the cause of Christ nothing is to be gained by such methods... His disciples keep the peace by choosing to endure suffering themselves rather than inflict it on others. They maintain fellowship where others would break it off. They renounce hatred and wrong. In so doing, they overcome evil with good, and establish the peace of God in the midst of a world of war and hate.⁴⁶

Here are the three reasons why the ELCA should honor God's call to peace and begin a journey back to Bonhoeffer's convictions of peace: First of all, Jesus was a pacifist; therefore if one practices Christianity, specifically in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, pacifism should be the church's final approach to conflict in the world. Secondly, politics, society, and culture are to blame for the feeble support for pacifism in the ELCA and will continue to threaten the bond between Christianity and peace if not thoughtfully addressed. Finally, the just war theory is inadequate during this time of nuclear threat and is outdated in guiding the ELCA toward peace.

Edgar M Carlson, former president of Gustavus Adolphus College, guides the claim against the familiar just war phrase, "I believe that war is wrong, but-."⁴⁷ Carlson's phrase regarding war, "I believe that war is wrong, but-" encapsulates the dilemma in

⁴⁶ Kate Reuer, ed., Peace Points. 2004 .

⁴⁷ Edgar M Carlson, If War Comes: A Defense of Christian Pacifism. (St. Peter, MN: Gustavus Adolphus College, 1938), 1.

regards to Christian's struggle as peacemakers in a sinful world. When war comes, what are Christians to do? When Pearl Harbor struck the U.S. what did Dorothy Day do? She held true to her Christian pacifist roots. Day did not let the time of war persuade her away from her morals. Simply put, a Christian's approach to peace is "watered down" by adding "but" to the phrase, "I believe war is wrong." Carlson states:

Most agree that war is unfortunate and will be admitted by all. That it is unnecessary will be admitted by most. Many will admit that it never accomplishes its purpose. That war is a crime in which the Christian can under no circumstances take part, is admitted by only a few.⁴⁸

Carlson and I wonder if those few are wrong? Should a Christian fight? We are prepared to contradict Luther and the ELCA and say no. Why? The answer is simply because we are Christian. Carlson argues:

As a Christian I accept the Ten Commandments as a minimum of Christian morality. They are God's law. Not one of them can be amended by any one except God himself. No Government has the right to amend a law of God. "Though shall not kill" is not a law which permits any exceptions.⁴⁹

If this commandment was to be followed only some of the time, God would have made sure we were aware of his intentions regarding this commandment. "Jesus had a chance to amend that commandment if it had been in accordance with God's will."⁵⁰ Carlson describes the state of Judaism, a religion in turmoil during the time of Jesus. Most assuredly, the Jews would have expected an exception. Carlson explains Judaism as a group that "favored violence and sought to gain Jesus' approval, but he refused to give it."⁵¹ Does this disapproval of violence make Jesus a pacifist?

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Jesus the Pacifist

Christians are called to live out their lives using the works and words of Jesus as blueprint to follow because He was a pacifist. Christians need to base their morals on the example of Jesus' life. Therefore, Christians should embrace pacifism. Romans 12:17 reads that love seeks to "overcome evil with good" rather than return evil for evil.

William Dranahan in the article "Pacifism, Just War and the Limits of Ethics," states when Jesus introduced this distinctive notion of love, he also established renewal in God's creation.⁵² Found in the promise of peace are Old Testament verses such as, "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah. 2:4). Of course this prophecy of Isaiah's has yet to happen, but in waiting, Christians pass the time faithfully by living the model of Jesus until the fulfillment of the prophecy. This section will be divided into the following questions in support of a pacifist ELCA: Was Jesus a pacifist? Are Christians called to follow His model? How should Christians actively engage in imitating Jesus? Is this task of replicating Jesus even possible?

The gospel clearly illustrates Jesus as a pacifist by addressing His actions in response to different situations that arose during his life. Father Cordaro of the Des Moines Catholic Worker simply stated, "Call me crazy, but I do not see anywhere in the Gospels where Jesus justifies killing."⁵³ Indeed, Christ was a man of peace and called for nonviolent action. He overcame death with his resurrection and refused to advocate the need for killing. The importance of loving his enemies and turning the other cheek

⁵² Quoted in William J Dranaher, "Pacifism, Just War and the Limits of Ethics." Journal of Lutheran Ethics 3(2003): <<http://www.elca.org/scriptlib/dcs/jle/article.asp?aid+20>>

⁵³ Frank Cordaro, presentation on "Pacifism and Christians" at Gustavus Adolphus College on March 11, 2004.

towards aggression were central to his mission. He was willing to lay his life down, but would not kill to advance God's purpose. He was against stoning the adulteress. Jesus did not resist evil with force, but nevertheless broke the cycle of violence in society. His moral teachings and the crucifixion illustrate his pacifism and join in his actions of challenging the social powers and the status quo of violence. He submitted to ruling authority and exemplified being a suffering servant. In all of these recorded incidents, the Bible portrays Jesus, first and foremost, as a pacifist. Jesus' nonviolent actions in the Garden of Gethsemane and his teachings of love, peace and justice on the Sermon on the Mount are perhaps the greatest examples of his pacifist conviction.

In the Garden of Gethsemane he refused to defend himself or let his disciples defend with violence. Edgar Carlson cites Matthew 26: 52 when Jesus instructs Peter not to rely on the sword when the Romans come to capture Jesus: "Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take to the sword shall perish with the sword."⁵⁴ This instruction of pacifism not only puts His one life at stake, but also his disciple's lives are endangered. Carlson argues, "he preferred to die and to risk the lives of His friends, rather than kill."⁵⁵ But are Christians called to follow this enormous feat of laying our own lives down so that others may live?

The Sermon on the Mount undeniably portrays intensely Jesus' passion for pacifism. Matthew 5:9 stresses the importance of Christians to be peacemakers, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." The ELCA is a peacemaker institution, but falls short of Matthew 5:38-48 because of its lack of full conviction to pacifism:

⁵⁴ Quoted in Carlson, If War Comes page 1.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' ³⁹But I tell you do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴²Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one whom wants to borrow from you. ⁴³You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Jesus specifically teaches not to resist evil. 1 Peter 3:9 also states, "Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing." Over and over he urges his followers to be active supporters of nonviolence. Loving your neighbor is not enough; in addition he advocates caring for enemies.

The most crucial verse in support of our claim is Matthew 5:48, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Sure Jesus was a pacifist, but are Christians truly called to follow his example? One cannot forget Christ's divine nature and humans cannot even come close to the level of Jesus. Regardless, Matthew 5:48 calls Christians to walk the pacifist path of Jesus.

Jesus: A Model for Pacifism

This prophetic kingdom mentioned earlier by Isaiah, of course, has not yet come in its fullness. Christians live in anticipation by witnessing to this future reality through following the peaceful example of Jesus. Moreover, the duty of the church is to live out this witness in its communal life. The fundamental identity of the church is to live as a peaceful community so that the love of Christ and his coming kingdom are made visible to the world.

In this time of waiting, are Christians truly called to use Jesus as a model for pacifism? It is not possible to reach the level of pacifist action that Jesus emulated, so why are Christians even encouraged to imitate Jesus? Menno Simons writes in his treatise, Foundations of Christian Doctrine, that “now is the time to arise with Christ in a new, righteous, and penitent existence, even as Christ says, ‘the time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent and believe in the Gospel’” (Mark 1:15).⁵⁷ Jesus provides “an example of pure love, and a perfect life”⁵⁸ that Christians must follow. John Howard Yoder in The Politics of Jesus agrees: “the central task of the Christian community is to provide a suffering witness borne of the refusal to live by the sword.”⁵⁹ Numerous times in the Gospel, Jesus himself was confronted by the temptation to rely upon violence to accomplish his purpose. During the time of Jesus, the pressures of the Roman Empire were prevalent. Even with all his popular support, did Jesus encourage the crowds to overcome the Roman soldiers and authorities in order to establish his own rule? The simple answer is no. Yoder goes on to discuss, “The one temptation that the man Jesus faced—and faced again and again—as a constitutive element of his public ministry, was the temptation to exercise social responsibility, in the interest of justified revolution, through the use of available violent methods.”⁶⁰ Therefore the “believer’s cross” is not defined in terms of any and every kind of suffering, or sickness, but rather in

⁵⁷ Quoted in Dranaher, “Pacifism, Just War and the Limits of Ethics,” <<http://www.elca.org/script/lib/dcs/jle/article.asp?aid+20>>

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ John Howard Yoder, The Politics of Jesus, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972) 96.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

terms of the suffering we experience when we, like Jesus, pay the "price of social nonconformity" by renouncing the "legitimate use of violence."⁶¹

How is one to emulate the model of Jesus? The model is founded in the all too familiar phrase, "What Would Jesus Do?" Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King Jr, Mahatma Gandhi, and Father Frank Cordaro are wonderful examples of Christian pacifists. We are going to adopt the Lutheran Peace Fellowship mission statement in order to understand what the ELCA would look like if this institution decided to adopt pacifism: What is the Lutheran Peace Fellowship?

We re-affirm our faith in Jesus Christ as the savior and we are willing to be guided by his spirit in our daily lives. As Lutherans, we re-affirm our faith set forth in the 7th article of the Augsburg Confession. We recognize that a Christian has obligations to civil authority, but when commanded to sin he should obey God rather than man. This is in accordance with the close of the 16th article of the Augsburg confession. We believe war is a sin against the fifth commandment of God as interpreted in Luther's small catechism. In addition we believe that war is totally opposed to the Gospel which Christ came to proclaim. As followers of Christ, we believe that we cannot participate in war or preparation for war. We believe that Christ referred to all men when he said, "love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you," and "whosoever hits thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." We believe that we can best serve God and our fellowmen by taking a firm stand against war and by refusing to participate in any part of it. This necessitates our taking a stand against military killing. We recognize that sincere Christians may hold points of view different from our own. We do not condemn them. We commend the Lutheran Church for their great interest in the spiritual welfare of her members who are also members of the United States armed forces. We believe at the same time that there is a great danger of our church thereby appearing to bless certain wars. We believe that the church out to be equally concerned and sympathetic with those of her members who feel, as we do, that Christians cannot participate in war or in military training.⁶²

The ELCA should guide their fellow Lutheran colleagues into advocating for Lutheran pacifism. Lutheran pacifism is contradicting in nature. One must remember

⁶¹ Ibid..

⁶² Lutheran Peace Fellowship, May 2004, <www.LutheranPeace.org> (3 May 2004).

however, even Luther and the authors of the Augsburg Confession stood squarely opposed to an unjust war. Lutheran pacifists are just taking it a step further, by arguing all war is unjust. Paul Kuenning, in his article "Lutheran Pacifism," explains in 1974, statements of the Lutheran Council in the USA and the Lutheran Church in America, "honored the right of the individual to take a pacifist stance as a matter of conscience, but considered pacifism outside the theological traditions of Lutheranism."⁶³ Kuenning does mention one church deviating from the notion of separating Lutheranism and pacifism. The American Lutheran Church referred to "pacifism as a valid historic Christian tradition" but did not however "justify pacifism by an appeal to a specifically Lutheran ethic."⁶⁴

Lutheran pacifism defends others from harm. Kuenning describes Lutheran pacifism as:

not opposed to the use of police, disciplinary, or defensive non-lethal force, so long as its intention is never simply to harm or to kill. Lutheran pacifists are opposed to war and to participation in war, and above all to the use of nuclear weapons. However, its practitioners could participate in politics and support the services provided by government so long as the state fulfills its service for good.⁶⁵

Pacifists have a strong commitment to the will of God before recognizing their political responsibility. It is then assured; God is central and the foundation of morality instead of government. If government is central, God and the sincerity for peace are secondary.

⁶³ Paul Kuenning, "Lutheran Pacifism," Currents in Theology and Mission V. 14 (1995): 259.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Political Responsibility

Political manipulation is yet another call for pacifism in the ELCA. We must discuss the importance of understanding this paper's goal is not to call for all Christian politicians to resign from office because their work is engaged in supporting violence. Lobbying for nonviolent action should be central to their conversations with the government. Interactions with the government do not decrease with pacifism, but increase in an attempt to find peace in all situations. Regardless of how the church feels about a war, no church should refrain from conversations with governments around the world and especially in America. Fortunately, the ELCA is a "Church in Society" and fully comprehends the importance of being engaged in society.

The ELCA addresses the very real scenario of Christian involvement in politics and its responsibility within by "recognizing the awesome responsibility political leaders, policy makers, and diplomats have for peace in our unsettled time and encourages participation by Christians in the affairs of government."⁶⁶ Christians should not take up their homes and move to the wilderness in search of place to practice perfect law. However, one must understand the implications and disadvantages that develop when forming a relationship between the two groups. Unfortunately, when Christian political leaders are engaged in politics, the Christian teachings of peace, specifically pacifism, are diminished greatly due to the pressures of Christians in power. It is natural for those engaged in government to seek guidance from Christianity. Though, we will see political responsibility pressures the church into leading this institution away from the ideals of pacifism. The powers of government wrongly utilize Christian teachings to support the cause of war.

⁶⁶ Ibid., Section 1

Kruenning argues, "the possibility of a pacifist ability to modify on a political level what they refuse to compromise on a personal one. A pacifist could consistently choose to work within the political system in order to help effect change in the direction of its ultimate goals."⁶⁷

Father Frank Cordaro of the Des Moines Catholic Worker takes a different approach than Kruenning. Cordaro describes himself as a functioning Christian anarchist. He begins by describing Jesus as a leader who was never ordained. Besides the fact of being sometimes referred to "Rabbi" in the Gospels, Jesus never officially had membership within the "powers that be" of the religious circles. His unique teachings caused great disorder to the status quo. "The cops were after Jesus frequently," according to Cordaro. Jesus' political parade on Palm Sunday mocked the powers in the area. His following was in great numbers and that concerned the Romans. How could a carpenter's son, the lowest level of peasantry, have such an influence? Jesus viewed the world through the eyes of the poor. He saw the world from the bottom up without institutional support.

Cordaro follows Jesus' example to the extreme. He characterizes Rome as the real enemy, the rich as self-serving, and President Bush misguided. He calls for our government to put an end in using religious texts to support war. He asks the powers that be to stop the lying and the repression of its citizens. The critical issues that have encouraged citizens to blindly follow their government without a care must be shed. There is simply too much faith in the state and not in God. Cordaro may be the extreme, but the man lives out his faith. I have faith and hope that the government accomplishes

⁶⁷ Ibid.

good, but Cordaro's message brings up some interesting issues about the separation of church and state.

I believe the church should be involved in government in order to bring about positive change, but it must be conscious of being manipulated by the state.

Undoubtedly, characterizing government as manipulating upsets people who have their feet both in politics and religion. William J Danaher states in his article "Pacifism, Just War, and the Limits of Ethics:"

we should be conscious in avoiding alienating believers, particularly those who try to live both as faithful Christians and as dutiful soldiers, politicians, judges, lawyers, and police officers.⁶⁸

Danaher seems to walking on eggshells when it comes to not alienating the opposition who view war as a justified method. However, it is extremely alarming to witness the strength of the powers in the world. For example, Herman Goering, Hitler's Reich-Marshall understood the government's ability in influencing the people and institutions in Germany. He writes:

The common people do not want war... voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. All you have to tell them they have been attacked, and denounce the pacifist for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in every country.⁶⁹

"The powers that be" are unfortunately very effective in manipulating pacifists by labeling them as unpatriotic. This alarming effectiveness must be addressed by the ELCA. Even after numerous decades, the Nazis' ability to move a country towards violence so effectively is alarming. Christians, including the ELCA, need to keep the governments of the world in check. They should continue to rock the boat and stand for

⁶⁸ William J. Dranaher, "Pacifism, Just War and the Limits of Ethics," Journal of Lutheran Ethics, 3(2003): <<http://www.elca.org/scriptlib/dcs/jle/article.asp?aid+20>> (2 May 2004).

⁶⁹ Quoted in Frank Cordaro, ed., "We Shall not be intimidated," Via Pacis 28 (2004): 8.

their beliefs of peace and nonviolence. Christians should not be worried about alienation, but worried about not bringing this discussion to all active citizens who call themselves Christians. This is their responsibility.

The question is not whether the ELCA has a responsibility to the political and social order, but exactly what that responsibility is. Pacifism is the responsibility of the ELCA. The ELCA can be an example of social consciousness in the world by holding true to the Gospel. If any social organization should be an outspoken leader of pacifism, it should be the ELCA because of its passion and support for the teachings of Jesus. The ELCA needs to rely on secular government to protect them. Some would classify this act as "aiding and abetting." Regardless of the synod's acceptance of the importance of the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, the ELCA contradicts their support of peace with their ties to a government in which force is used and lives are lost.

A Christian's stride for peace is watered down by political affiliation, political responsibility, and politics. Lactantius and Luther are examples of Christian morality ideals influenced by government relations. For example, before the time of Constantine, Lactantius supported the cause of pacifism, but we can see by his writings that he changed when Christianity became the official Roman religion. The third century was a pivotal time in church and state relations. Father Frank Cordaro described it as a time when "Christianity jumped into bed with Rome."⁷⁰ They were independent of the state before Constantine. Let's look at the effect it had on Lactantius' writings in regard to war:

For when God forbids us to kill, He not only prohibits us from open violence, which is not even allowed by public laws, but He warns, us

⁷⁰ Frank Cordaro, presentation on "Pacifism and Christians" at Gustavus Adolphus College on March 11, 2004.

against the commission of those things which are esteemed lawful among men. Thus it will be neither lawful for a just man to engage in warfare, since his warfare is justice itself, nor to accuse any one of capital charge.⁷¹

Lactantius believed, before Constantine, that all life is sacred to God. Therefore killing is unjust. Governments were seen as a problem in the eyes of Christianity. These two views quickly changed in the time of c. 315-20 when building a society became more important than following the original morals of the church. Peace by force was labeled as being approved by God and the mentality of strong government proclaimed by Lactantius:

And as bravery, if you fight in defense of your country, is a good, if against your country, is an evil, so the passions, if you employ them to good purposes, will be virtues, if to evil uses, they will be called vices.⁷²

There is a definite change from Lactantius "the pacifist" to Lactantius the "just war theorist." Political responsibility is to be blamed for this change. Luther is another great example illustrating pacifism being suppressed by political affiliation. Paul Koenning argues:

Luther was naturally interested in protecting his reformation of the church and biblical doctrine from both the challenge of Rome on the right; and the radical reformers on the left; and his formulation of just war served his purposes well.⁷³

Lactantius and Luther demonstrate through their writings that their interest in just war and pacifism is directly related to their connections with government of their time. If Christianity is truly influenced by government, what is the place of Christ in culture? H. Richard Niebuhr addresses this very issue in his book, Christ and Culture.

⁷¹ "Lactantius: The Divine Institutes," Books I-VII, The Fathers of the Church Roy Joseph Deferrari, ed.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Kuenning, "Lutheran Pacifism," 261.

Niebuhr describes different positions of Christ in culture and how the church should address society: Christ against culture, the Christ of Culture, Christ above culture, and Christ the transformer of culture. Christ against culture emphasizes “loyalty to Christ and the rejection of cultural society.”⁷⁴ A clear separation between God and the world is solidified. Niebuhr reports this placement of Christ “rejects the world of darkness, into which the citizens of the kingdom of light must not enter.”⁷⁵ “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them,” is found in the Gospel of John. Christ has come to destroy the devil’s worldly hate and lies. Therefore, one must reject the devil of the world and turn one’s focus to Jesus. I believe Niebuhr thinks the weakness to this scenario is when the Church is reduced to a culture of its own, which will then in the long run affect the community negatively. Besides, the ELCA and I believe Christians are to be in society, not separated.

The Christ of culture stresses an involved Jesus in society, paralleling with Christianity in society. This scenario no longer rejects society in support of the morality of Jesus. Niebuhr describes the place of Jesus and Christians in society as “not rejecting social institutions for Christ’s sake, but they are far removed from those cultured among the despisers of Christian faith who reject Jesus for the sake of their civilization.”⁷⁶ This setting seems to foster community and is comfortable in the community of culture. “There is no great tension between religion and the state, the law and the Gospel, grace and human effort, salvation and progress.”⁷⁷ Niebuhr simply states that the Christ of

⁷⁴ H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), 47.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 48.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 83.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

culture position interprets "culture through Christ and on the other hand understands Christ through culture."⁷⁸ The danger is when Jesus becomes manipulated by culture.

The third option is Christ above culture, according to Niebuhr. This scenario describes Jesus as not opposed to the world, but above culture. God and the law transcend society and encourage Christians to support the expectation of Christ being placed over society. God's transcendence is recognized and encourages Christians to change their societies according to God's transcendent moral law.

Niebuhr calls the final approach, Christ the transformer of culture. Christians, in this view, are to be engaged in their cultures actively working to correct the evils of their societies while, at the same time, being distinct from those cultures. It is important the church does not become a cultural follower; rather, the church must move to offer life support for the sinful world. The duty of Christians to influence culture in the direction of God's will. The church should influence the world, not the world influencing the church.

Inadequacy of the Just War Theory in the Contemporary World

As understood earlier, the justification of war does not exist in the Gospels. In extension, due to nuclear capabilities- just war does not even exist today. No war can fit perfectly under the principles of the just war theory because of the inevitable loss of the innocent. The just war theory may have worked in the medieval times, but now in times of nuclear warfare, the just war is irrelevant. "Acceleration of the nuclear arms race has brought into question the adequacy of 'just- war' doctrines,"⁷⁹ states Paul Kuenning.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Kuenning, "Lutheran Pacifism," 260.

Scientists widely agree a nuclear exchange could result in a “catastrophic devastation of the entire earth and the possible extinction of all human life.”⁸⁰

For example, World War II was thought of a “good” war, the “just” war, but fifty million lives were lost, including a great portion lost in nuclear conflict. Many innocent lives were lost within this great proportion. The spiral of violence was out of control. The atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki killed 130,000 innocent lives in hopes of saving millions of other lives. This logic is accepted by many; including the ELCA. Nuclear war is not acceptable. Nuclear war is unjust because of the catastrophic number of innocent lives lost in battle. War cannot be won by even nuclear capabilities. Jeannette Rankin states in the Lutheran Peace Fellowship website, “You can no more win a war that you can win an earthquake.” Society and governments are skillful in making the world believe wars can be won; however anyone can make war sound like a quality decision through rhetoric.

However, in the end contemporary war does not meet the guidelines of just war principles. First of all, war must be a proportional response to an evil offensive force. If an evil force is to strike, they are likely with today’s technology to strike with great force. Therefore, under the guidelines of the just war, one is able to oppose the strike with just as much force, causing much havoc in society. If a country strikes with nuclear force, the victim may also strike with nuclear arms, bringing the world to an end.

Second, war only occurs when all other avenues of diplomacy are exhausted in protecting the innocent. In today’s setting, with the help of communication- diplomacy is much more realistic. Diplomacy allows for a worldly conversation and forms many other avenues of addressing conflict. War and passivity are no longer the only two options. In

⁸⁰ Ibid., 260.

today's setting, force should no longer be used as the last resort in hopes that the evil created by war will be overcome by the good. Thirdly, the action taken must be targeted with no civilian casualties. The development of the smart bombs aid in arguing for just war. The technologically advanced bombs allow a military to hit only a specified target with few casualties. However, targets usually place themselves around schools, hospitals, and daycares. The smart bomb unfortunately misses the intended target and inevitably innocent lives are lost.

Finally, as stated before in the Just War section, Adolf Hitler justified the genocide of millions of Jews and the Nazi invasion of Europe in World War II because he envisioned himself and Germany legitimate authorities. Osama Bin Ladin justified killing 3,000 people in the World Trade Center Twin Towers because this symbol of western capitalism is offensive to his Islamic beliefs. The United States government justified obliterating Iraq in order to establish their American version of democracy and freedom in the Middle East. The problem then with these rationalizations for violence is that each is subjective.

A Final Call for Pacifism in the ELCA

Frank Cordaro emphasized the importance of human equity when he visited Gustavus earlier this spring semester. By human equity he means "personal sacrifice for peace must be equal to those who fight in war for the sake war makers."⁸¹ According to Cordaro, loss of status, life, property, reputation, and job in the name of peace should be expected of Christians. Cordaro asked individuals and Christians to step up to the plate and actively rid society of violence. Too many times, we fail to use our imagination in response to conflict and automatically take up arms. The dichotomy of evil verses good

⁸¹ Cordaro, presentation on "Pacifism and Christians."

and the good conquering over evil is the only way the world thinks. Good conquering over evil with violence is imbedded in our society. We have not even tried to put pacifism to practice. Christians need to save the planet from our own violent ways. If anyone in the world should be a pacifist, it should be the ELCA. We need change.

Change for the good in the world can occur through politics, especially, when individuals of great moral character are in power. However, coercive violence unfortunately is an essential element in government. We have shown it is not the place of the ELCA to justify war. War is wrong, regardless if necessary in certain circumstances, and one who is engaged in war must realize if human life is taken, this is a sin; therefore the Church has no business supporting such a cause.

Institutionally, governments unfortunately do not have the capability of being peaceful. So therefore, I call for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to separate from the violent ideals of government while finding their way back to the morality of pacifism. This however, is not a call to all Christian political leaders to drop their vocation, but Christians must strive to be a part of the system without being tainted. It is a call to the political leaders of the Christian faith to move to support a government that progresses peace. In reality, an absolute pacifist government may not be the ultimate outcome, but we as Christians, regardless if we are political leaders, are called to live as pacifists.

Loss at all levels is inevitable; Whether one chooses to follow passivity, use force, or pacifism. The question is, which one of these approaches is the appropriate answer for the ELCA?

Passivity, the doing nothing approach, undoubtedly would result in defeat, invasion, loss of sovereignty, and loss of liberty. However, despite the loss, "there would

be no conflict,”⁸² according to Carlson. The loss of lives would be very low, but the loss in many other ways would be vast. If the second alternative is chosen, then what happens? “Millions are dead, ruined cities, homeless children, and tremendous loss of moral and spiritual stature.”⁸³ In this scenario, Carlson would have liked to see our ideals preserved rather than our national honor defended. “War is the denial of every Christian idea,”⁸⁴ proclaims Carlson. Carlson goes on to dispute that a peace treaty brought about from a war inevitably does not bring peace, because the unsuccessful winner of the dispute will eventually come back and challenge the victor. War does not end in peace.

Fortunately for Christians, Carlson offers a third option to war:

Christians may participate on the basis of love. That will mean the refusal to kill. Christian pacifists will make every effort to gain an understanding for the enemy. We will seek to destroy the enmity, rather than the enemy.⁸⁵

Christian love, justice, mercy, and compromise will challenge the hatred manifested in society. This goal will only be accomplished with a significant backing in the world. Using the words of Father Cordaro, “call me crazy” but it seems as if the ELCA, as a Christian institution, should lead the way. Carlson calls the Christian community to “influence the governments of our nations to seek other means to settle their disputes, even though it could involve sacrifice in territory, in money, in prestige, shall we have not gained?”⁸⁶ I call the ELCA to do the same. It is no crime to give one’s life; against that there is no commandment.

⁸² Carlson, If War Comes; page 2.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Edgar M. Carlson realizes the action of killing is contradictory to Jesus' teachings. Edgar is an inspiration for pacifism in the ELCA:

Though pacifism in the world seems to be the minority, we will eventually draw others into this fuller allegiance to Christ. We are on the side of the right, and, though we may lose in this generation, we will win in another. If war comes... God keep it from us; but, if it does come, the Way of the Cross may lead through sacrifice and death, but never through murder and bloodshed.⁸⁷

According to the Lutheran Peace Fellowship, news captions in the last three years have read: "America Strikes Back" and "Bush Says War on Terror Will Take Years." The attack on the World Trade Center, the revenge on Iraq, and the bombing of Afghanistan are similar in that they support the spiral of violence. The spiral seems not to end. Violence follows violence. Is there any hope?

A statement of the Lutheran Peace Fellowship board, March 2002 proclaims YES!

As Christians, we know that we do not have to rely on human efforts alone to stem the tide of violence. We know a God who chooses life over death, who raised Jesus from the dead in the ultimate act against violence. When the Roman officials gave the spiral of violence one more spin, Jesus did not die on the cross to become a martyr whose disciples would seek revenge for his death. Rather, he was raised to life in order to show that God reigns beyond all death and violence. God counteracts violence and death in the world by upholding life. Think about it: God did not seek revenge for the death of an innocent son.⁸⁸

Pacifists must find hope in Jesus; "they must find hope in the creativity and discipline of active nonviolence as taught by Jesus, Gandhi, King, Day, and many others."⁸⁹ It is time to interrupt the power of violence. The Lutheran Peace Fellowship wisely ends its own mission statement for peace with Walter Wink's The Powers that Be.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁸⁸ Lutheran Peace Fellowship, "We are called to be peacemakers," March 2002. <http://members.tripod.com/~lutheran_peace/board_stmnt2002.html> (29 March 2004).

⁸⁹ Lutheran Peace Fellowship, "We are called to be peacemakers," <http://members.tripod.com/~lutheran_peace/board_stmnt2002.html>

We too will do the same. "The church's own witness should be understandable by the smallest child: we oppose violence in all its forms."⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Ibid., 1.

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