

Core Convictions for Engaged Pacifism

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“One of the most pressing questions facing the world today is, How can we oppose evil without creating new evils and being made evil ourselves?”¹ These words opened Walter Wink’s *Engaging the Powers* nearly twenty years ago – and voice the concern that remains at the center of many peacemakers’ sensibilities. Wink’s question about resisting evil without adding to it points in two directions at once, thereby capturing one of the central tensions we face. On the one hand, we human beings of good will, especially those of us inclined toward pacifism, assume that at the heart of our lives we have a responsibility to resist evil in our world, to seek peace, to be agents of healing – that is, to enter into the brokenness of our present situation and be a force for transformation. On the other hand, we recognize that efforts to overcome evil all too often end up exacerbating the brokenness. We recognize that resisting evil can lead to the use of tactics that add to the evil and transform the actors more than the evil situation.

So, how might we act responsibly while not only remaining true to our core convictions that lead us to seek peace, but also serving as agents of actual healing instead of well-meaning contributors to added brokenness?

In recent years, various strategies with potential for addressing these issues have arisen. These include efforts to add teeth to the enforcement of international law (the International Criminal Court) and the emergence of what has come to be known as the “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P) doctrine affirmed by the United Nations Security Council in 2006. In this general arena of seeking to respond creatively to evil, we could also include creative thinking that has been emerging out of peace church circles related to themes such as restorative justice,² “just policing,”³ and projects such as the 3D Security Initiative⁴ and Mennonite Central Committee’s “Peace Theology Project.”⁵

The tension seemingly inherent for peacemakers in these efforts at responding to evil appears in the tendency to incline either towards “responsibility” in ways that compromise our commitment to nonviolence

and the inherent worth of all human beings, even wrongdoers, or towards “faithfulness” in ways that do not truly contribute to resisting wrongdoing and bringing about needed changes. We face a basic choice. Will we understand this tension as signaling a need to choose one side of it over the other – either retreating into our ecclesial cocoon and accepting our “irresponsibility,” or embracing the call to enter the messy world in creative ways that almost certainly will mean leaving our commitment to nonviolence behind? Or will we understand the tension as a call to devote our best energies to finding ways to hold *together* our nonviolence with creative responsibility?

I affirm the need (and the realistic possibility) of taking the “tension-as-opportunity-for-creative-engagement” path. A number of the people and writings cited in notes 2 through 5 below have been embodying just this kind of path; I do not mean to imply that peace church practitioners haven’t make significant progress in understanding and applying our peacemaking convictions to the “real world.”⁶ However, I am not content that we have yet done the necessary work at sharpening our understanding and articulation of the “faithfulness” side of the responsibility/faithfulness dialectic. Our creativity in engaging these issues may be drawing on increasingly depleted traditions of principled pacifism that found their roots more in traditional communities than in carefully articulated theological ethics. We may not have the resources to live creatively with this dialectic unless we do more work on clarifying and solidifying our understanding of our peace ideals.

With this essay I will articulate a perspective on pacifism that might be usable for thoughtfully engaging human security issues. My contribution is mostly as a pastor and theologian, not a practitioner. My hope is to help with the philosophical underpinnings, not to direct a program of engagement – though I will conclude with a few thoughts on how I see the pacifist perspective outlined here possibly applying to our present situation.

What is Pacifism?

The word “pacifism” has the virtue of being a positive term, connoting the affirmation of peace more than simply the opposition to violence. It is quite recent in English, dating back perhaps only about 100 years. It was not listed in the 1904 *Complete Oxford Dictionary*. According to the Supplement to the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1982, the first occurrence came in 1902 at

an international peace conference as an English version of the French word *pacifisme*, used to express opposition to war.⁷ However, the French term originally had the meaning of “making peace,” not simply “opposing war.”

The root word is “*paci*” (from *pax*), “peace.” If we take the word “pacifism” literally, we could define it as love of peace, or devotion to peace. We might best think of pacifism as the conviction that no other value or necessity takes priority over the commitment to peace. Hence, pacifism is more than simply approving of peace (which everyone in some sense would do). It also includes the conviction that peace stands higher than any commitment that could justify the use of violence. We will need to flesh out much more what we mean by “peace,” of course. The kind of peace that pacifism values as the highest of values is widespread well-being in human communities, peace with justice, peace with equality, peace with health for all.

In what follows, I will sketch a fuller understanding of pacifism and present it as a foundational orienting point. What are the key elements that make up this orienting point? What are the key convictions that provide a pacifist context for discerning how to respond to evil?

Core Pacifist Convictions

(1) *Love of neighbor is the heart of being human.* At its very core, pacifism follows from the conviction that as human beings our central calling is to love our neighbors. The Bible emphasizes this call in numerous places in both Testaments. One of the strongest statements comes in Luke’s Gospel. A teacher of the Law asks Jesus what a person must do to attain eternal life – that is, what is the highest calling for human beings. Jesus asks him to answer this question himself, drawing on the core teachings of his tradition. The teacher responds, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27).

Jesus strongly affirms the teacher’s response: “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live” (10:28). In the version of this encounter reported in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus adds an important assertion concerning Torah: “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matt. 22:40). If you were to boil the Old Testament Law down to

just a few words, this would be it: Love God and love neighbor. As Luke tells the story, the teacher then zeroes in on implications of the Love Command. “And who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29). He recognizes that love of God and love of neighbor belong inextricably together. If you don’t love the neighbor, you simply are not loving God (see affirmations of this point in 1 John 4:20-21 and Romans 13:8-10). However, the teacher’s challenge to Jesus has to do with the definition of “neighbor.”

Jesus takes the challenge, and makes it unalterably clear that “neighbor-love” is indeed directly a call to pacifism. Imagine a friend of yours, he says to the teacher, a fellow Jew traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho (a steep, winding, dangerous trip), and imagine your friend is attacked, beaten, robbed, and left for dead. Now comes the provocative part. As the traveler lies there bleeding, a couple of people pass by and notice the victim. Rather than help, they sidle to the far side of the road and continue on. These are not just random passers-by; they are the very people a Jew would consider “neighbors”: a priest and a Levite, two embodiments of the faith community. Finally, someone comes by who is willing to help – extravagantly, as it turns out. This “Good Samaritan” was in fact a Samaritan. Shocking, because Samaritans were the last people the teacher of the law would ever imagine being “neighbors.” They were enemies, members of a rival clan.

Jesus’ story clearly defines “neighbor” as the one who cares for others in need, including those labeled as enemies. To find eternal life (to fulfill our highest calling as human beings), we must practice this kind of neighbor love. This is the only way we can embody (and validate) our claim to love God. This articulation of what it means to be fully human centers on a vision of each human being linked with each other human being. Pacifism, in light of this vision, has to do with loving each particular person – certainly the extreme cases such as the Samaritan loving his Jewish enemy but everything less extreme as well. Jesus gives us our marching orders for every relationship, every aspect of life.

(2) *No value or cause takes precedence over love of neighbor.* If we understand love of neighbor to extend to each person without exception, including enemies, we are recognizing that such a call to love is our “ultimate principle.” To understand love of neighbor as the core of human morality

will lead one to see that no other value or conviction or principle can take precedence over this love. As a consequence, any calculation of moral responsibility must take this commitment to love as central to discernment concerning morally appropriate action. Love of neighbor stands as the conviction that may never be compromised in relation to other convictions. When other important values come into play (such as defense against aggression, the need to hold wrong-doers accountable for their actions, one's duties as a citizen of a particular nation-state, efforts to free people from oppression and injustice, and many others), these must be acted on in ways that do not violate the call to love *each* neighbor.

Such an understanding of the love command calls us to action, not to withdrawal and passivity. As John Howard Yoder points out, Jesus faced one central temptation throughout his public ministry: to use violence in order to uphold the core concerns of Torah.⁸ Jesus did not take seriously the temptation to withdraw in order to “love” the world through avoiding impurity or through his own suffering. This “Essene option” was not a serious temptation for him. But the “Zealot” option clearly was, the option to bring God's rule into being by force, to “do good” at the expense of treating some people as means instead of ends. Jesus understood the call to love the neighbor as a call actively to resist the injustices of the day and actively to seek to empower and liberate those oppressed by such injustices.

However, this call is not a call to draw lines between the “neighbor” whom one fights to support against enemies who are not considered neighbors. From early in his ministry, Jesus makes it clear that his kind of active love refuses to draw such lines. The kind of transformation Jesus embodied meant injustice would be resisted in ways that did not visit suffering upon the enemy but instead accepted self-suffering as the cost of genuine love.⁹

Jesus' approach challenges pacifists today to hold two truths together at all times. The first truth is that love of neighbor leads to involvement in resistance and transformation work. The second is that this love requires a refusal to exclude anyone. Hence, the need for creativity. How do we involve ourselves in ways that show love toward everyone? How do we resist evil in ways that are consistent with love for each neighbor?

The term “pacifism” connotes that “peace,” holistically understood as pertaining to widespread well-being linked with all-encompassing love

of neighbors, stands as our core value. This is the one “ism” that does not elevate the penultimate to an ultimate, because holistic peace (love of God and neighbor, in Jesus’ terms) is the ultimate.

(3) *Pacifism has to do with life in every aspect of human existence.* Since pacifism stands at the center of our understanding of human morality, we believe it informs all areas of life. For example, we recognize that Jesus’ message speaks to life here and now. So we reject a present/future separation as if Jesus’ love-centered ethic is normative only in some future heavenly setting. Jesus used apocalyptic imagery to “reveal” God’s rule in the present, requiring immediate choices about our loyalties. Jesus called for a commitment to God’s kingdom vis-à-vis Caesar’s kingdom, a commitment that could lead to a confrontation to the death.

As well, we reject any kind of personal/social separation, as if Jesus’ love-centered ethic is normative for his followers’ personal lives in families, neighborhoods, and faith-communities, but another ethic of “responsibility” governs their actions as citizens. This “responsibility” ethic has traditionally been understood to call for violence on occasion, where enemies of one’s nation-state become non-neighbors. Jesus did speak directly to political relationships from start to finish.¹⁰ His most alluring temptation was *how* to shape his political practices, not *whether* to be political or not. The love command calls pacifists to seek wholeness in all areas of life but always in ways consistent with love. This calls us to see *all* areas of life both as places where we should participate and as lending themselves to being shaped by the call to love.

This is a call to think and act as if pacifism is *always* one’s core moral value.¹¹ One does not limit the relevance of one’s convictions by accepting a high level of incommensurability between pacifist convictions and the “real world.”¹² The Bible contains myriad examples of prophets and teachers who understood the word of God, the message of Torah, the teaching of Jesus, to speak to the world of kings and empires, wars, and rumors of wars.

Pacifists will always challenge leaders who wield power to consider the requirements of respect and compassion for all people, and will expect that such challenges can be understood and acted upon. Because of the universal applicability of pacifist values, pacifists should also recognize

that their role need not always be one of standing outside the “corridors of power” beseeching decision-makers to take them seriously. Pacifists need not exclude themselves from the exercise of power in principle. The responsibility to practice consistent love should lead anyone in power to make decisions that are respectful and always move away from violence and injustice.

(4) *We are destined for wholeness; the key issue is how we reach that destination.* We may think of human destiny in two mutually reinforcing senses: destiny has to do (a) with our nature and purpose and (b) with our final outcome. A pacifist anthropology understands human beings to be capable of living at harmony with one another and with the rest of creation, with the hope that such harmony is the direction toward which we are moving.

This peaceable destiny may be derived from understanding human evolution to be grounded in the fundamental reality of cooperation (more than competition).¹³ Of course, many evolutionists argue that humans are naturally inclined toward violence. This debate may be interminable, though it seems clear that debaters’ assumptions provide a powerful influence on how ambiguous data are interpreted. Pacifist assumptions may not be easily vindicated, but neither are they easily refuted.¹⁴

The biblical story also seems to lend itself to various interpretations. However, the most fundamental orientation of the Bible assumes that human beings are indeed capable of moral responsibility.¹⁵ Torah, the teaching of Jesus, and the moral exhortations of Paul all presuppose the likelihood of faithfulness. The call to peaceable living is doable in this life, which is why humans are accountable for their failure to live in peace.

The Book of Revelation – despite the tendency of many to read it as a book of violence – makes clear that human beings who so choose may indeed “follow the Lamb wherever he goes” (Rev. 14:4). Revelation portrays the culmination of human history in a healed community populated by reconciled enemies (Rev. 21–22; note especially the presence of “the kings of the earth” [21:24] and the healing of “nations” [22:2], both of which are specified earlier in the book and throughout the Bible as enemies of God and God’s people). The message of Revelation speaks to the human need for hope and purpose. In the face of the overwhelming power of the idolatries

and blasphemies of the Roman Empire, Revelation promises an outcome of healing and restoration. The focus, however, is not on a pre-determined happy outcome of history regardless of humanity's actions but on the *means* to achieve that hopeful outcome.

Revelation portrays Jesus' path to peace, summarized in 1:5-6: "the faithful witness" who lived according to the love command and suffered martyrdom as a consequence, "the first born of the dead" whose witness God vindicated through resurrection, the "ruler of the kings of the earth" who reveals the true nature of the grain of the universe, and the one who makes of his followers "a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father." The message of Revelation thus illustrates the conviction that regardless of how certain we may be about the actual paradisaical conclusion to human history, we may be certain about the only *means* for achieving that outcome. The New Jerusalem is home for those who embody the way of Jesus, following his path of love even in the face of overwhelming violence and domination. Revelation promises that in following this path, Jesus and his followers may hope to transform the very nations who have persecuted them through the ages.

(5) *We understand our social ethics in relation to the Powers – and the hope that they might be transformed.* An understanding of human beings as not inherently violent and having a peaceable destiny leads to paying close attention to the dynamics in human existence that do foster violence. If the terrible violence that bedevils our world does not originate in human nature, how do we understand its presence?

We may draw on New Testament language of "principalities and powers." A Powers analysis such as articulated by Walter Wink¹⁶ suggests that violence has mostly to do with "fallen" social structures that shape our environment in ways which move us toward violence. The Powers are simultaneously created good, fallen, and redeemable.¹⁷ We live our lives amidst these social dynamics that reach into every area of existence.

The "goodness" of the Powers means they are necessary for the functioning of human life. The Powers enable society to organize for accomplishing tasks needed to sustain life – for example, local government provides for public utilities, the Postal Service delivers our mail, colleges

educate, agricultural structures provide our food. The *purpose* of human institutions is to serve human well-being. The “fallenness” of the Powers means these structures tend to seek our loyalties in ways that foster alienation and conflict. We require organization for economic activity, yet some of the organizations that have evolved become hungry for more and more profit at the expense of environmental health. The nation-state meets many important human needs but also becomes an object of violence-enhancing idolatry. The “redeemability” of the Powers means the structures do not *have* to be idolatrous and destructive to human well-being. We do not have to have a criminal justice system that focuses more on punishment and privatized profit than on the healing of victims and offenders. We do not have to have an agricultural system that treats farming as an extractive industry rather than a sustainable and cooperative effort.

Wink argues that violence in our society stems from religious-like beliefs in the redemptive nature of violence. Hence, the Powers of militarism benefit from this myth of redemptive violence. Our nation goes to war because of the momentum created by those Powers shaping our country’s values and practices, not because of careful moral discernment. We Americans believe (blindly, against the actual evidence) in the efficacy of investing more money in our military-industrial complex than does the rest of the world combined.

Pacifists argue that self-awareness about our core values (human community; suspicion of the story told by government and popular culture about the necessity of militarism; careful assessment of the true consequences of preparing for and making war) frees us from the spiral of violence our world currently is locked into. Such a freeing requires awareness of how the Powers shape our consciousness toward self-destructive, irrational policies and practices. The Powers analysis helps us understand the roots of violence in society,¹⁸ the possibilities of resistance, and the hope for transformation. Pacifism plays an essential role in discernment. Pacifists suggest that the presence of violence is always likely a sign of the domination of fallen Powers; violence serves as kind of a canary in the mine signaling the presence of distorted loyalties.

(6) *The enemy is evil-doing itself, not any particular nation or group of human beings.* In our moral discernment, we should focus on stable

understandings of the values that we see as central – not on more fluid uses of values language that serve particular interests (fallen Powers). Only with stable understandings applied evenly may we hope actually to discern and respond in ways that address the true problems of violence and injustice.

Consider, for example, the issue of “terrorism.” We can agree that terrorism is a bad thing and should be opposed. People of good will should also agree that terrorism should be opposed and overcome, regardless of its source. We start, then, with a reasonably stable definition of terrorism so we know what we are opposing. The US Army in the Ronald Reagan administration, facing the emergence of terrorism as a central national security theme, presented this definition: “The calculated use of violence or threat of violence to attain goals that are political, religious, or ideological in nature through intimidation, coercion, or instilling fear.”¹⁹ This definition may not be the best we could imagine, but it would surely strike most people of good will as reasonable and a good start. The key moral issue, then, is to seek a consistent and objective application of this definition. If terrorism itself is our problem and our responsibility is to resist it, we would oppose *any and all* incidents of “the calculated use of violence” to attain “political, religious, or ideological” goals.

When we follow a stable definition of terrorism and apply it consistently, we will see terrorism itself as our key problem – not any particular group of alleged terrorists. That is, if we truly oppose terrorism, we will not allow the rubric of terrorism to lead us to label only certain people as “terrorists” in a way that serves political agendas. We will be especially sensitive to the proclivity to use the label both to stigmatize political opponents in ways justifying violent responses to them and to justify acts that according to a stable definition of terrorism are terrorist acts themselves.

In his history of the use of car bombs, Mike Davis shows that the driving force in using such bombs has been covert American operatives and allies such as Israel.²⁰ This illustrates how tactics that clearly fit the US Army’s definition of “terrorism” are not generally defined as terrorism when used by status quo powers. The use of terrorist methods (which by definition surely include aerial bombardments and “targeted assassinations”²¹) is immoral, regardless of who uses them. Pacifists could agree that terrorists must be brought to account for their actions; terrorist acts are indeed crimes

of the most heinous variety. However, such accountability must be applied consistently.

(7) *In the name of “realism,” we should not trust our nation’s power elite when they use violent methods.* While operating with an essentially optimistic anthropology that denies human beings are inherently violent, pacifists also take seriously the human proclivity toward selfishness and seeking advantage over others. However, in contrast to “realists” who highlight such proclivities (e.g., Augustine, Thomas Hobbes, and Reinhold Niebuhr), pacifists draw from this awareness of human sinfulness the opposite of support for coercive discipline from the power elite to “keep sinful humanity in line.” Because of their realistic view of morality, pacifists insist that people in power are the ones least likely to be capable of careful, morally constructive uses of “limited” violence. In the name of “realism,” pacifists argue for a strong attitude of suspicion toward justifications of violence coming from people in power. If humanity is shaped powerfully by sin and selfishness and thus prone to misuse of power, those most likely to be guilty of such misuse are the people with the most power.

So, pacifists counter the claim that pacifism is unsuited for the real world by saying that those who believe people in power tend to act objectively and in the service of genuine human security are the ones who are the most naïve and romantic.

Just one set of examples may be cited. A close, objective examination of the US war in Vietnam shows a large web of self-defeating, immoral policies that arose from ignorance, incompetence, and willful selfishness on the part of the American power elite. As the internal processes of the US government have become clearer in the years since 1975, their problematic character is more obvious. For many years after policy analysts understood that the Americans could not win this war, the government pressed on. The continuation of the war caused unimaginable death and destruction, not in hope of actually winning the war but mostly for domestic political concerns.²²

To the extent that human beings, especially in groups, are shaped and motivated by selfishness and hindered from acting on the basis of neighbor love, we should be especially wary of giving the power of death-dealing

violence to people in leadership. Reinhold Niebuhr's "moral man, immoral society"²³ analysis contains wisdom. However, rather than concluding the "immorality" of groups should encourage more acceptance of the "rough justice" of order-based public policy, awareness of such immorality should instead lead to heightened resistance to allowing people in power to decide in favor of enhanced military power.²⁴ Pacifists should especially be wary of the temptation to accept the "rules of the game" made by people corrupted by holding death-dealing power. We indeed should take every opportunity to work within the system to reduce its reliance on violence.²⁵ However, we must also recognize the tendency toward corruption in these halls of power.

(8) We may believe that the system always has the potential to make decisions for less (or no) violence, but a pacifist commitment to peace over loyalty to the system also requires us to stand aside on occasion. Even though the nation-state's systemic dynamics tend consistently to select for violence,²⁶ pacifists understand that in each choice policy-makers make, options exist for less, rather than more, violence. So, we do have justification for advocating alternatives to the most violent actions in the midst of conflicts. Even more may we advocate farsighted policies that diminish the likelihood of conflicts emerging. Pacifists should join with others of good will, including those seeking to adhere to a just war theory that is applied rigorously,²⁷ in supporting and seeking to enact violence-reducing policies.²⁸

Traditional historical discussions minimize or ignore altogether currents of creative nonviolence in world history. However, we are learning that such currents can indeed be identified.²⁹ Alternatives to violence do exist and have been followed.³⁰ Yet pacifists also recognize that their advocacy may be ignored, and nation-states may make irrevocable choices in favor of violence. In such cases, pacifists simply will not be able to play a public policy role while still adhering to their convictions about the centrality of love of neighbor.

This recognition of the need to "stand aside" does not stem from a quest for purity. Rather, it stems from a sense that pacifists' central calling is seeking actively to love neighbors, not to hold power or to further the interests of any particular nation state or other human institution. Pacifists

recognize that in the name of pursuing genuine peace they must at times seek other avenues of involvement than policy-making and state-centered activities. If the core criterion for appropriate action is seeking to love neighbors, pacifists will reject the claim that the only way to be “responsible” is to act within the paradigm of inevitable violence.

For example, numerous American pacifists were aware of the danger facing Jewish people in Nazi Germany in the 1930s. They actively sought to address that danger in numerous ways, tragically finding their efforts generally rebuffed by the American government.³¹ When events evolved to the point of total war, pacifists turned their efforts to other problems, offering assistance to deal with the wounds of war and addressing other human needs (such as care for mentally ill people). They did not believe violence could solve the problem of Nazi hostility toward Jews, but when they faced a series of dead ends in seeking to save Jewish lives, they found other avenues to protect life.

The twentieth century saw the emergence of remarkable efforts by pacifists to meet human needs and thereby provide alternatives to violence-centered politics. Quakers with American Friends Service Committee, Mennonites with Mennonite Central Committee, and Brethren with the Brethren Service Committee created organizations that greatly expanded their work as needs increased. These works of service are a remarkable witness to the powerful commitment pacifists have made to being *responsible* and *relevant* in face of human security needs. And this witness stands as proof that commitment to love of neighbor may bear remarkable fruit, even when not channeled through the coercive dynamics of state politics.

Engaged Pacifism

These eight convictions concerning engaged pacifism may be summed up thus: We live most authentically as human beings when we love our neighbors. We best understand this call to love the neighbor as a call to consider each person as our neighbor and thus deserving of our love. That is, we love even those considered to be enemies; we love even those who are committing acts of evil.

Seeing the call to love neighbor as a commitment that cannot be superseded by any other cause or value leads us in two directions

simultaneously: (1) that we have a calling to engage, to actively resist evil, and to help vulnerable people, and that this calling applies to all areas of life; and (2) that however we do engage, we remain bound by the call to love wrong-doers and enemies. These two parts of our calling – actively engaging in resisting evil, and while doing so remaining committed to loving our adversaries – may be a particular burden for engaged pacifism. However, they are also a call to creativity.

In regard to the question of pacifist perspectives on strategies of intervention such as the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine, we may think both of general political support for governmental officials and of specific support for, and participation in, these strategies. Pacifists may support governmental officials who seek to involve their countries in institutions that respond to evil-doing with “police action” founded on international law and international cooperation. Such support especially contrasts with tendencies all too common in the US to oppose international collaboration in lieu of the mostly unilateral projection of American military power. Pacifists should also challenge officials to treat values and laws as stable entities that apply equally to all parties. Hence, for example, insofar as the ICC ignores violations of international law in incidents such as the US invasion of Iraq, we should be calling for more rigorous and morally consistent practices.

Pacifists will remain suspicious of the use of R2P philosophies that too easily justify violence and that in practice serve the interests of wealthy and powerful nations.³² A key criterion will be whether the R2P proposals provide loopholes that would allow countries such as the United States to conduct their own military operations under the cover of R2P. Since pacifism concludes that violence is never consistent with the fundamental call to love all neighbors – and that this conviction is true of all violence – pacifists will not be able to offer direct support for, or participation in, responses to evil-doing that do rely on violence.

The fruitful work of non-governmental organizations (e.g., the peace church service committees) in enhancing human well-being in conflict situations without violence provides clear alternatives. The choice for pacifists is not either to support “necessary” violence at times in the name of responding to evil doing or else to withdraw into irresponsible purity.

Pacifists may actively participate in these alternative means to enhance well-being, and may also provide critical input to the practices of the ICC and R2P in hopes of moving those practices toward a consistent practice of neighbor-care. In the end, though, the discussion of responses to evil-doing should challenge people of good will, especially pacifists, to cultivate a healthy skepticism towards nation-states and the proclivity of the state to enhance its own power via violence. The nation-state as we experience it today is a human construct that needs to be critiqued, not deferred to, when it comes to responding to the human need for security.³³

Notes

¹ Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 3.

² See Howard Zehr, *Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice*, 3rd ed. (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2005) and Jarem Sawatsky, *Justpeace Ethics: A Guide to Restorative Justice and Peacebuilding* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008).

³ See Ivan J. Kauffman, ed., *Just-Policing: Mennonite-Catholic Theological Colloquium 2002* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2004), and Gerald W. Schlabach and Jim Wallis, eds. *Just Policing, Not War: An Alternative Response to World Violence* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007).

⁴ The 3D Security Initiative was founded by Lisa Schirch, formerly Professor of Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding. The "three Ds" are development, defense, and diplomacy. The Initiative's website (www.3dsecurity.org) summarizes its focus thus: "The 3D Security Initiative is a policy voice for civil society and conflict prevention with a new take on human security: connecting policymakers with global civil society networks, engaging in civil-military dialogue, and increasing investments in conflict prevention and peacebuilding."

⁵ The fruit of MCC's study project was published in Duane K. Friesen and Gerald W. Schlabach, eds., *At Peace and Unafraid: Public Order, Security, and the Wisdom of the Cross* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2005).

⁶ For background leading about up to the point where the Mennonite-related efforts at creative engagement alluded to above became operational, see Leo Driedger and Donald B. Kraybill, *Mennonite Peacemaking: From Quietism to Activism* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1994).

⁷ Jenny Teichman, *Pacifism and the Just War: A Study in Applied Philosophy* (New York: Blackwell, 1986), 1.

⁸ This is the central argument of John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

⁹ On this point, Gandhi captured the essence of Jesus' message better than the vast majority of Christians. See Joan Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1958), 16-34.

¹⁰ Again, see Yoder, *Politics*.

¹¹ See Gerald Biesecker-Mast and J. Denny Weaver, eds., *Teaching Peace: Nonviolence and the Liberal Arts* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003); Nancey Murphy and George F. R. Ellis, *On the Moral Nature of the Universe: Theology, Cosmology, and Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996); and James C. Juhnke and Carol M. Hunter, *The Missing Peace: The Search for Nonviolent Alternatives in United States History* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2001).

¹² For a critique of one attempt to guide pacifists for living with this incommensurability via a “two-language” analysis, see Ted Grimsrud, “Anabaptist Faith and American Democracy,” in *Embodying the Way of Jesus: Anabaptist Convictions for the Twenty-First Century* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007), 141-59.

¹³ See Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (Charleston, SC: Forgotten Books, 2003 [1902]); Ashley Montagu, *The Nature of Human Aggression* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976); and Mary E. Clark, *In Search of Human Nature* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁴ See Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 33-39.

¹⁵ For a defense of this assertion, see my chapter, “Humanness: A Blessing or a Curse?” in *Theology as if Jesus Matters* (Telford, PA: Cascadia, 2009), 106-19. I also challenge the “nature as red in tooth and claw” perspective in the chapter, “This is God’s World: So What?” in that same book, 75-89.

¹⁶ Key writings by Wink include *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1984); *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces that Determine Human Existence* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1986); *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992); and *The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium* (New York: Doubleday, 1998). See also Ray Gingerich and Ted Grimsrud, eds., *Transforming the Powers: Peace, Justice, and the Domination System* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006).

¹⁷ Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 65-85.

¹⁸ James Gilligan, *Violence: Our Deadly Epidemic and Its Causes* (New York: Putnam, 1996) argues for the social dynamics that lie at the heart of American violence, thereby providing support for a Powers analysis.

¹⁹ *United States Army Operational Concept for Terrorism Counteraction* (TRADOC Pamphlet No. 525-37, 1984).

²⁰ Mike Davis, *Buda’s Wagon: A Brief History of the Car Bomb* (New York: Verso Books, 2007). See also an earlier version of Davis’s research on the TomDispatch website (tomdispatch.com) posted April 11 and 13, 2006.

²¹ See Jane Mayer, “The Predator War,” *The New Yorker* 26 October 2009, 36-45, on one example of the CIA’s “targeted assassination,” authorized by President Obama, of a Taliban leader hiding in Pakistan. Baitullah Mehsud was finally killed in August 2009, in a drone missile attack that also killed eleven others. Mayer notes that the effort to kill Mehsud involved 16 missile strikes and killed perhaps as many as 321 people.

²² See Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars, 1945-1990* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1991), and John Prados, *Vietnam: The History of an Unwinnable War, 1945-1975* (Lawrence, KS: Univ. Press of Kansas, 2009).

²³ Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man, Immoral Society: A Study of Ethics and Politics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002 [1932]).

²⁴ See James Carroll, *House of War: The Pentagon and the Disastrous Rise of American Power* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 2006), for one case where access to death-dealing power corrupted American leadership.

²⁵ Note the career of longtime American Friends Service Committee director Clarence Pickett, who used his direct access to President Franklin Roosevelt to good effect but maintained a consistent stance in opposition to state violence. See Lawrence McK. Miller, *Witness for Humanity: A Biography of Clarence Pickett* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 1999).

²⁶ Andrew Bard Schmookler, *The Parable of the Tribes: The Problem of Power in Social Evolution* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1983).

²⁷ See John Howard Yoder, *When War is Unjust: Being Honest in Just-War Thinking*, 2nd edition (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1996).

²⁸ See Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, 220-29.

²⁹ See, for example, Juhnke and Hunter, *The Missing Peace*, and Peter Ackerman and Jack Duvall, *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).

³⁰ See Gene Sharp, *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20th Century Practice and 21st Century Potential* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 2005).

³¹ See Nicholson Baker, *The Beginnings of World War II, the End of Civilization* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008), and Clarence E. Pickett, *For More Than Bread: An Autobiographical Account of Twenty-Two Years' Work with the American Friends Service Committee* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1953).

³² See the critique of Noam Chomsky, *Human Rights in the New Millennium* (London: Centre for the Study of Human Rights, 2009), drawing a distinction between two formulations of the Responsibility to Protect philosophy, one from the Global South reflected in the 2005 United Nations World Summit and the other from the Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty on Responsibility to Protect (known as the “Evans Report” for the leading role played by former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans).

³³ Two recent, quite different, books enhance our awareness of the violent tendencies of nation-states: William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009) and James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2009). For a challenge to the idea that in face of natural disasters we need state and military centered top-down order, see Rebecca Solnit, *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster* (New York: Viking, 2009).

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