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An Overview of Four Traditions on War and Peace in Christian History

Joseph J. Fahey*

This essay examines four traditions on war and peace that have developed in Christian history. They are: Pacifism, Just War, Total War, and World Community.¹ Pacifism characterized the earliest Christians; Just War appeared in the late fourth and fifth centuries; Total War in the eleventh century; and World Community began in the sixteenth century. All four positions continue today and are held by people who sincerely call themselves Christian.

Globally the growing involvement of religious actors in violent conflicts and peacebuilding efforts, described in detail by Toft, Philpott and Shah (2011), has led to an increase in attention to the views of violence in peace in the world's major religious traditions (see Kurtz, et al., 2018). In the Catholic Church, we see a growing debate about the acceptability of the Just War approach (Dennis, ed., 2018). In this essay I will explore four approaches to war and peace found in the Christian tradition: Pacifism, Just War, Total War, and World Community. One can find similar approaches within secular thought and other major religious traditions (see Kurtz, et al., 2018).

These four approaches in the Christian tradition have important similarities and differences. Pacifism and World Community complement each other since they employ nonviolent methods of peacemaking while Just War and Total War have in common the use of violent methods that injure or kill their opponents. Each position, however, is distinct: Pacifism applies primarily to personal and civil Christian witness while World Community deals with the creation of an international political and economic order to secure peaceful relations between states.² Just War employs limited violence to secure justice between groups and nations but does so strictly as a last resort and it is engaged with a "mournful" attitude. Total War employs indiscriminate violence to subdue one's opponent and regards war as a sign of virility, fortitude, and national pride.

All four traditions in some measure employ power and coercion to make peace. Passivity, or inaction, or silence in the face of injustice has no place in Christian theology. Pacifism and World Community are rooted primarily in Christian scripture (NT) while Just War and Total War find their roots primarily in the Hebrew Scriptures (OT). Today there is a healthy dialogue between advocates of "Just Peace," Just Policing," and "Responsibility to Protect" on the use of violence to protect the innocent.

We turn now to a brief discussion of each tradition. In each case I will discuss how Christian scripture relations to the approach, and the history of the approach.

1. PACIFISM

Pacifism is a personal and social philosophy that seeks the conversion of enemies through love and active nonviolence.

SCRIPTURE: While there is strong support for peace in the Hebrew Scriptures, Pacifists believe there is strongest support for their position is in the Christian scriptures (New Testament). They

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hold that the “good news of the kingdom” (Matthew 4:23) that Jesus preached was that peacemaking was central to the Gospel.³ Pacifists hold that the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount contain the blueprint for a Christian society, especially “Blessed are the peacemakers for they be called the children of God.” (5:9). And Jesus tells his followers to love even enemies:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your father in heaven;” Matthew 5:43-44)

Jesus also speaks of reconciliation with enemies:

“So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go, first be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come to offer your gift.” (Matthew 5:23- 24)

Hence, Pacifists contend that Christians are called to a higher standard with dealing with human conflict that is based on love and forgiveness.

But what of Jesus’s counsel to “turn the other cheek” and “Do not resist one who is evil” in the Sermon on the Mount? Was Jesus really telling his followers to do nothing in the face of evil?

Walter Wink in *Engaging the Powers*⁴ contends that Jesus was advocating a “third way” between passivity and violence. Wink holds that Jesus was actually counseling nonviolent resistance when Jesus told his followers to “turn the other cheek,” “give your cloak,” and “go the second mile.” (Matthew 5: 38-42). He concludes that Jesus was counseling public humiliation and resistance to slave masters, tax collectors, and Roman soldiers.

Pacifists also hold that St. Paul’s counsel in Ephesians 6:10-17 to “put on the whole armor of God” demonstrates the centrality of nonviolent resistance in Christian life. Paul urges Christians to use spiritual weapons against their adversaries: Christians are to use “the sword of the spirit.”

HISTORY: Pacifism was the dominant stance for Christians from the time of Jesus until the late fourth and early fifth centuries. While some scholars conclude that Christians did not serve in the Roman army because of persecution, the witness of the Early Fathers tells us that Jesus’s command to “love your enemies” was the major reason for their refusal to shed blood. Even Roman soldiers converted to Christianity. St. Martin of Tours (316-397 CE) was representative when he stated, “Hitherto I have served you as a soldier, let me now serve Christ...I am a soldier of Christ and it is not lawful for me to fight.”

Proscriptions and exhortations against Christians participating in blood-letting are found throughout early Christian teaching. They include the *Didache* (composed between 70 and 90 CE), Justin Martyr (100-165 CE), Tertullian (160-220 CE), Origin (185-254 CE), Maximilian (274-295 CE), the *Canons of Hippolytus* (third to fifth centuries CE), and

Pelagius (ca. 350-ca. 420 CE). We read in the *Canons*, for example, “Of the magistrate and the soldier: let them not kill anyone, even if they receive the order to do so; let them not put crowns on.”

When participation in war was legitimized for Christians principally through the teaching of St. Augustine of Hippo in the fifth century, Christian pacifism remained mandatory for monks and clerics down to our own time. St. Francis of Assisi (ca. 1182-1226) founded a mendicant order dedicated to voluntary poverty and pacifism. The Franciscan “Third Order” granted laypeople exemption from military service. Its Rule stated, “They are not to take up lethal weapons, or bear them about, against anybody.”

The period following the Protestant Reformation saw the rise of the “Historic Peace Churches”: the Anabaptists, the Society of Friends, and the Brethren. These pacifist churches were subject to persecution by both Protestant and Catholic rulers for their refusal to participate in warfare. To this day conscientious objection to warfare is regarded by some as cowardice or treason. As the Russian author Petr Verigin stated, “The most dangerous element in Christianity from the point of view of the established order, is the refusal to kill a human being.”

In the twentieth century, the tragic wars and the international arms race inspired almost all Christian churches to examine their long-held tradition of accepting the institution of war. The Catholic church was representative when the world’s bishops in Vatican II’s *Gaudium et Spes*, declared that we must “undertake an evaluation of war with an entirely new attitude” (80). Part of this new attitude was an endorsement of pacifism in the form of conscientious objection to war on the part of Catholics. We read in *Gaudium et Spes*, “we cannot fail to praise those who renounce the use of violence in the vindication of their rights” and “it seems right that laws make humane provisions for the sake of those who for reasons of conscience refuse to bear arms, provided, however, that they accept some other form of service to the human community” (78- 79).

Pope Francis has spoken a great deal about peace. He stated in his World Peace Day Message of 2017, “To be true followers of Jesus today also includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence...I pledge the assistance of the Church in every effort to build peace through active and creative nonviolence” (Dec. 8, 2016; see Dennis, ed, 2018, pp. 221-229). In April, 2016 an important conference on “Nonviolence and Just Peace” sponsored by Pace e Bene and Pax Christi International was held at the Vatican that called the church to return to “Gospel nonviolence” and to “no longer use or teach “just war theory” (see *An Appeal to the Catholic Church to Re-Commit to the Centrality of Gospel Nonviolence*, in Dennis, ed., 2018, pp. 17-26).

CONCLUSION: Pacifists hold that the innocent must be protected and that evil must be resisted through means that are both persuasive and coercive. Hence, pacifism employs the many social, economic, and political methods of active nonviolence to restore justice.⁵ Pacifists employ the power of love to produce reconciliation with enemies.

2. JUST WAR

War is a political institution that employs lethal methods to resolve conflict between states. Wars may be *international* (between nation states) or *intranational* (civil war or revolution).

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War is a relatively new social institution that became possible 10,000 years ago with the evolution from nomadic to territorial societies, and 5,000 years ago with the first city states that required civil governance. Hence, territoriality and hierarchy create the conditions for war between large social entities that were tribal, or city states, or empires, or nation states.

Anthropological and historical records of even the earliest societies tell us that wars were governed by custom, or principle, or law. A tradition developed in ancient Greece and Rome that has become known as Just War. Just War is sometimes called a “theory,” or “principles.” There is, however, a presumption against war in Just War thinking since “war as a last resort” is found in almost every formulation of the Just War.

SCRIPTURE: The “Law of Talion” as found in the eighteenth-century BCE Code of Hammurabi is based on the “eye for and eye” principle. That is, just compensation for a crime must be limited to taking only that which resulted in an injury. The Hebrew scriptures, while allowing for violence, nevertheless limit what may done to an opponent. We read in Exodus 24:19: “Anyone who maims another shall suffer the same injury in return, fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth;” Examples of this principle was applied by the Jews in war in such passages as: Deuteronomy 20:10-14, 2 Kings 6:20-23, and 2 Chronicles 28:5-15. As we shall see, war without limitations as in Total War is also found in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Advocates for the Just War in Christianity cite the following texts to support their belief that Jesus would support Just War:

Mark 12:17: “Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” This is interpreted to mean that Jesus was telling his followers to follow Caesar’s laws and that included military service.

Matthew 21:12: “And Jesus entered the temple of God and drove out all who bought and sold in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who sold pigeons.” This is interpreted to mean that Jesus himself used violence in driving out the moneychangers.

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.” This is interpreted to mean that Jesus accepted participation in war for his followers.

Luke 22:36: “And let him who has no sword sell his mantle and buy one.” This is interpreted to mean that Jesus mandated the use of swords for self-defense while on a journey.

Matthew 8:5-6: “When he entered Capernaum, a [Roman] centurion came to him, appealing to him and saying, ‘Lord my servant is lying at home paralyzed in terrible distress.’” This is interpreted to mean that Jesus, in not condemning the Roman soldier *de facto* accepted the military profession for Christians.

John 15:13: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

This is interpreted to mean that Jesus praises soldiers who die in battle.

Romans 13:1: “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.” This passage is interpreted to mean that people should obey their government’s call to military service.

While each of these passages must be interpreted in the historical and cultural context in which they were written, Just War advocates believe they may be interpreted to justify Christian participation in war.

HISTORY: The Just War tradition of the Roman philosophers finds its way into Christianity in the fourth and fifth centuries. The pacifism of the early Christians survived but gradually was located in monasteries and the clerical state. Why did the church change from a body of believers who rejected violence and war to a body that eventually accepted—albeit with limitations—the shedding of blood in war?

Three reasons explain this change⁶:

1. The union of the Pax Christiana and the Pax Romana. As Christians gained political freedom and Roman citizenship in the fourth century some came to see the peace established by the Roman empire as the vehicle for the spreading of Christian peace.
2. From Semitic to Platonic philosophy. Semites viewed the human person as intrinsically good, body and soul. Neoplatonic philosophy saw the material human body as an obstacle to the perfection of the soul. This influenced St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE) who held that humans are a “race condemned” to “lawlessness and lust.” War, which existed in the “earthly city” characterized the children of the Fall while peace existed in the “heavenly city.”
3. Two Kingdoms: Rome and God. By the beginning of the fifth century Christians became Roman citizens and Christianity became the official religion of Rome. The Christian obligation to Rome included military service that had earlier been rejected by Christians when they were persecuted.

St. Ambrose of Milan (340-397 CE) and St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE) introduced Just War principles into Christian history that had earlier been advocated by Plato (ca. 428-ca.347 BCE), Aristotle (384-322 BCE), and Cicero (106-43 BCE). Ambrose believed that war should defend the oppressed; that innocent people may not be killed, that war must be legally declared, and that monks and clerics may not shed blood. Augustine held that “Love does not preclude a benevolent severity” and that “The love of enemies admits of no dispensation but love does not exclude wars of mercy waged by the good.” Augustine supported Ambrose’s principles and also endorsed the duty of the Catholic Church to employ civil authority to combat heresy. The Just War was now established in Christian history.

Augustine’s notion that war must be fought with a “mournful” attitude led to restrictions on war found in the medieval Penitential Books and in the Peace and Truce of God. The Penitentials required that soldiers due penance for shedding blood even in a declared war.

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The Peace of God severely restricted those who could fight in wars while the Truce of God forbade fighting for a good part of the Church year. War as a “last resort” dominated the medieval period.

The Dominican friar, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), in the *Summa Theologiae* enunciated three principles for a Just War:

“First, the authority of the sovereign by whose command the war is to be waged... Secondly, a just cause is required, namely that those who are attacked should be attacked because they deserve it on account of some fault... Thirdly, it is necessary that the belligerents should have a rightful intention, so that they intend the advancement of good, or the avoidance of evil” (II-II, Q. 40, Art. 1).

St. Thomas also recognized that abuse of power on the part of a government can justify revolution on the part of its subjects. He states in *On Kingship*, “in cases where it belongs by right to a community to provide a ruler for itself, that community can without injustice depose or restrain a king whom it has appointed, if he should abuse royal power tyrannically.” It is clear that Christians have a right to overthrow unjust rulers through revolutionary means.

The military attacks on native peoples in the Americas by the Spanish Conquistadors in the sixteenth century prompted Bartolome de Las Casas (1474-1566) and other missionaries to invoke the Just War to prevent the persecution of the Indians in the “new world.” In 1537 Pope Paul III, who was influenced by Las Casas, declared that Indians were not to be deprived of their liberty and that conversion must take place by “example of good and holy living”—not military conquest. In an important development of Just War principles the Dominican Tommaso Cajetan (1469-1543) influenced Las Casas and others to demand that the invading Spaniards owed “restitution” (also called “restoration”) to the Indians from whom they had stolen land and natural resources. The Dutch Protestant Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) in his *On the Law of War and Peace* (1625) explained Just War principles in legal rather than theological terms and thus laid the foundation for international law.

In the centuries that followed the numerous European wars of colonization scarcely followed the Just War principles. Since the European invaders dehumanized the people they exploited, many held that rules of war did not pertain to sub-human “savages.” In fact, many of the colonizers invoked Divine approval for their conquest, thus employing the tactics of Total War which will be discussed shortly. Even today when some people in the Global South hear the term “Just War” they think of lawless wars of conquest.

Twentieth century wars that employed atomic, biological, and chemical (ABC) weapons posed a particular challenge to Just War. World War II with its massive indiscriminate air raids on whole cities by all sides made many question whether Just War could be followed in an age where technology permitted the wholesale slaughter of civilians. The English writer Vera Brittain (1893-1970) shocked many with her detailed account of the British and American bombing of German cities in *Massacre by Bombing*. The American Jesuit, John C. Ford, wrote “The Morality of Obliteration Bombing” (*Theological Studies*, 1944) where he concluded that saturation bombing was morally wrong. He stated, “Obliteration bombing, as

defined, is an immoral attack on the rights of the innocent.”

The United Nations which was founded in 1945 to prevent war, allowed in some instances for the use of military force “as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security.” (*Article 42*). Mainstream Christian churches reaffirmed their commitment to Just War principles even as some began to advocate for the creation of a world-wide public authority that would outlaw war. The world’s Catholic bishops in *Gaudium et Spes* stated that “governments cannot be denied the right to legitimate defense once every means of peaceful settlement has been exhausted” but added the caveats that defense did not allow the “subjugation of other nations” or that war once begun “means that all is fair between warring parties.” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1965, 79)

Today the Roman Catholic church continues to affirm Just War principles. Just War teaching exists in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Pope Francis has stated that “It is licit to stop the unjust aggressor” and in April, 2016 reminded a conference on nonviolence that “Governments cannot be denied the right to legitimate defense once every means of peaceful settlement has been exhausted.”

CONCLUSION: The following is a summary of Just War principles that have evolved from the time of St. Augustine, through the medieval period, and down to our own time. Traditionally only the “Right to Go to War” and “Just Conduct in War” have been discussed. “Justice after War,” although centuries old, has only recently been added to the Just War principles.

I. Right to Go to War (*Jus ad bellum*).

- (1) *Just cause*. A war must be fought in defense of “innocent” human life or to protect violated rights.
- (2) *Proper authority*. A nation’s legally constituted authority must declare war. International law should be respected.
- (3) *Right intention*. The intention must be to restore peace. Revenge is forbidden.
- (4) *Last resort*. All peaceful alternatives must be exhausted before war is declared.

II. Just Conduct in War (*Ius in Bello*).

- (5) *Probability of success*. A war must be winnable.
- (6) *Just conduct*. Only active military combatants are legitimate targets in war. Civilians may not be killed.
- (7) *Proportionality*. The good to be achieved must outweigh the evil that is done in war.

III. Justice after War (*Ius Post Bellum*).

- (8) *Just Termination*. A “conditional” – rather than “unconditional” – surrender should be negotiated.
- (9) *Restitution*. A victor in war has a moral obligation to repair or “restore” damage done during the war to innocent people and the nation’s infrastructure.

Variations of these principles continue to exist in national and international law and are used by military forces throughout the world. They are taught in military academies. Just War principles have been adapted to police work for use with civil disturbances and in the conduct of police officers. The world's major Christian churches, including the Roman Catholic church, include these principles in their ethical teaching regarding the conduct of war. The recently developed "Just Policing" discussion contains elements of Pacifism and Just War.⁷

3. TOTAL WAR

Total War holds that war is noble and glorious and victory in battle requires the annihilation of the enemy's civilian population. Total War also believes that war is the normal state of human affairs and efforts for peace are signs of weakness and betrayal. It differs, therefore, in significant ways from Just War which requires that war be a last resort and entered into with a "mournful" attitude. Consequently, the only rules in Total War are those that require hatred, revenge, and total annihilation. Societies which believe in Total War hold warriors in high regard and equate violence with virility. Believers in Total War also tend to support totalitarian police states sometimes called the "National Security State."⁸

SCRIPTURE: The texts that support Total War are found almost exclusively in the Hebrew Scriptures. This passage from Deuteronomy is representative:

"But as for the towns of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, you must not let anything that breathes remain alive. You shall annihilate them – the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hittites and the Jebusites..." (20.10-18. See also, Deuteronomy 20:16-18 and Joshua 8:24-28)

We do well to recall that the God of the Hebrew Scriptures is also a God who counsels love and forgiveness among people. But there is a "warrior God" that is championed by followers of Total War.

In the Christian Scriptures Total War advocates use many of the same texts that were mentioned in the Just War discussion. Few, however, of these texts hint at anything that resembles the annihilation of enemies. The Book of Revelation ("Apocalypse") is most frequently used to justify Total War among Christians. Fundamentalist Christians who interpret the Bible literally believe there is a warrior God found in the New Testament.

The Book of Revelation deals with God's final victory over Satan and is famous for the "four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: War, Famine, Pestilence, and Death" (Revelation 6).

Revelation describes the "second coming of Christ" when Jesus will return to the earth and initiate the "end times." Then the "righteous" will be taken up bodily into the "rapture." Then the "great tribulation" will last for seven years, during which the "saints" will form an army and defeat the beast and the forces of evil. Christ will then rule for a thousand years ("Christian millennialism"). Then Satan will return to fight the final battle with Christ. He will lose this battle and be condemned to Hell forever. Then the "last judgement" will take place and God will reward the good with Paradise and condemn evil people to Hell. A "cosmic war" is inevitable when Christ will rule with all his glory. Hence, divinely

sanctioned violence and destruction play an important role for those who believe in Total War.

HISTORY: For the first thousand years of Christian history Christians either refused to fight in wars or they did so with remorse. That changed dramatically in 1095 when Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont in France inaugurated the Crusades. In his words:

“Oh, what a disgrace if a race [Islam] so despised, degenerate, and slave of the demons should thus conquer a people fortified with faith in the omnipotent God and resplendent with the name of Christ! Oh, how many reproaches will be heaped upon you by the Lord himself if you do not aid those who like yourselves are counted of the Christian Faith!”

To this statement the assembly cried “Deus Vult” (“God wills it”) and Christians set off to fight the Islamic “infidels” in the Middle East. Crusaders wore large crosses on their chest to symbolize God’s blessing on this Holy War. While the initial call to the Crusades was to defend Christians in Jerusalem, this quickly changed to a war that punished Islam everywhere and, more importantly, reaped economic rewards from conquered territories. With the Crusades Christianity now embarked on Holy Wars fought in “God’s name, for God’s gain, and for God’s glory.”

Even monks, priests, and women participated in the eight Crusades that took place between 1095-1291. There were also minor Crusades including two Children’s Crusades that never reached the Holy Land as the children drowned or were sold into slavery. The Crusades were championed by popes and clerics and even monks such as St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) who stated, “Go forward, therefore, in confidence, O Knights, and with dauntless spirit drive out the enemies of the cross of Christ.”

Only the first Crusade reached Jerusalem and all the rest failed in their military objectives. The Muslims held firm. But the Crusades did open the door to international trade, banking, and the rise of military orders such as the Knights Templar, the Knights of Malta, and the Teutonic Knights. Christian Europeans now realized that riches existed in abundance beyond their shores. It was merely a matter of time before the crusading ideal was applied to the colonization of Africa, Asia, and the lands that came to be called the Americas.

The Crusades also came home to Europe in the form of Inquisitions against heretics and witches. In the early part of the thirteenth century, in 1209 Pope Innocent III declared a Crusade, not against Saracens (Muslims) in the Middle East, but against a Christian pacifist sect in southern France, the Cathari, where “priests, women, infants, and old folks” were slaughtered. There were three major Inquisitions: (1) the Medieval Inquisition against France, Germany, and Italy, (2) the Spanish Inquisitions against Jews and Moors (Muslims), and The Roman Inquisition against Protestants and Catholic dissidents.

Roman Inquisitors accompanied the Conquistadors to the “new world” following the military invasion of native lands in the Caribbean by Christopher Columbus in 1492. The Holy War tradition that originated with the Crusades continued in the centuries that followed as Christians enslaved Africans and “colonized” people in Asia and the Americas as well.

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Christian colonization is best understood within the Total War framework.

In the twentieth century, elements of Holy War thinking can be found in the Fascist Security States that existed in Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal, and Japan. While few of these movements were explicitly Christian, the notion that war was glorious, that warriors were national exemplars, and the totalitarian state resonate strongly with Total War.

Because of advances in technology and the absence of moral qualms, weapons were used in WWII that annihilated whole cities along with their populations. Saturation bombing (also called “carpet bombing”) was used by the Americans against the Japanese and by the British and Americans against Germany. This was Total War against civilian populations. Schools, hospitals, old age homes, and churches were bombed with people in them. When the atomic bombs were used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki people cheered and few spoke in protest. After WWII both the United States and the Soviet Union formulated a policy of “Mutually Assured Destruction” (MAD) to deter each other from first strike attack. Leaders of both nations were prepared to order bombers and missiles to rain down on each other’s cities. There was no defense against such attack although plans were made to shelter a small amount of government officials in caves in mountains.

When the Cuban missile crisis occurred in 1962 a Catholic, John F. Kennedy announced that he was prepared to order a “full retaliatory attack” on the Soviet Union if they attacked the United States. The world was on the verge of nuclear annihilation. Pope John XXIII helped end the crisis through mediation and in April, 1963 issued *Pacem in Terris* (“Peace on Earth”) which called for the elimination of nuclear weapons, disarmament, and the creation of an international “public authority” that could ban war itself. The Catholic church had spoken against Total War.

On August 8, 2017 President Donald Trump used the language of Total War when addressing the possession of nuclear weapons in North Korea. He stated, “they will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen.” The world has seen the annihilation of whole cities by bombing from the air and the nuclear destruction of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. President Trump promised that an attack on North Korea would be worse than this. This is the language of Total War.

CONCLUSION: Total War originated in Europe with the Crusades as “Holy Wars” became the norm for the Catholic Church in the centuries that followed. Today only some fundamentalist Christians support Total War and the concept and tactics have been strongly condemned by the Vatican.

4. WORLD COMMUNITY

World Community is an international democratic union of states that will abolish war, defend human rights, secure social and economic justice for all, and safeguard the environment. World Community advocates believe that it is merely a matter of time before the over 200 nation states in the world join a Global Union that will be governed by a World Charter (Constitution).

SCRIPTURE: Advocates for World Community in the Christian tradition believe that God wills the unity of nations. They are inspired by the passage in Isaiah that speaks of global peace:

“In the days to come the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised about the hills; all the nations shall stream to it...He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.” (Isiah 2:2-4)

World Community advocates contend that the Hebrew prophets offer a vision of a universal society based on justice and renunciation of violence.

In the Christian scriptures World Community believe that the words Jesus used to define his ministry are a call to universal justice:

“The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the lord’s favor (Luke 4:18-19)

The world that Jesus would have his followers live in was characterized by justice and love for people everywhere. World Community advocates are inspired by the command of Jesus to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...” (Matthew 26:19) that describes the universality of the Christian message. Further, it is clear from his interaction with non-Jews that he includes all in his messianic message. Christians were to build a world that knew no boundaries.

HISTORY: Natural law was to play a major part in the history of Christian ethics. Influenced by Aristotle and the Stoics, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) held that “natural law is nothing else than the rational creature’s participation in the eternal law.” Hence, he taught, all people have a natural inclination to do good and to live in community. In addition, we are “social animals” who function best when we live harmoniously with others. World Community advocates believe that a world governed by natural law philosophy and a Global Charter (constitution) is not only possible but necessary if the planet itself is to survive.

With the Columbian invasion of the old world of the Taino Indians in 1492 the question was raised, “Do Indians have souls?” If they did not they could be enslaved and treated as beasts of burden. If they had souls then they must be respected as people. The European invaders, however, chose to deny the Indians’ souls. This met with resistance quite early in the form of a Dominican friar, Antonio de Montesinos, who in 1511 CE shocked the Spanish colonizers stating, “You are all in mortal sin! You live in it and you die in it. Why? Because of the cruelty and tyranny you use with these innocent people [Taino Indians].” Not all of the early missionaries agreed with Montesinos and the slavery continued.

Bartolome de Las Casas (1484-1566) initially owned slaves in Cuba and even called for the

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importation of slaves from Africa once the native people began to die off. It took great courage, therefore, for him to admit this great sin and to repent for this grave evil. Las Casas became a Dominican friar and spent the rest of his life seeking to free the Indians, to restore their land and dignity to them, and to call for international law that would safeguard the rights of native peoples. Las Casas enunciated the philosophical and theological foundations for what came to be called “the law of nations.”

There are four aspects of Las Casas’ thought that are foundational to World Community⁹:

1. The Law of Nations. Because of his belief in natural law Las Casas held that the Indians were human beings who were subject to the same laws that governed the Spaniards. Hence, international law governed all, not just Europeans.

2. Rejection of War. Las Casas rejected war against the Indians based on Just War principles. He charged that the Spaniards were waging aggressive wars against the Indians for “greed” and “gold” and must be condemned.

3. Christ’s Peaceful Way. Las Casas stated simply, “Christ is not violent. He is peaceable to all.” In *The Only Way* (1550s), he stated that “it is through *spiritual weapons* that the Christian people are to be formed...by faith, hope, charity, virtues of the free soul only.”

4. Restorative Justice. Las Casas relied on the ancient tradition of Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine, and Aquinas that a person has a moral obligation to restore stolen goods and to repair injuries done to others. Thus, he adds to the traditional Just War principles a third category “Justice After War” (*Ius post bellum*)

Las Casas’ thinking on post-war morality and international law influenced and resonated strongly with Francisco de Vitoria (1486-1546), Francisco Borgia (1510-1572), Francisco Suarez (1548- 1617), Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), all of whom formulated laws of war and peace that are foundational to international relations today. Kant in *Perpetual Peace* stated that “the law of nations shall be founded on a federation of free states” and he is regarded as the founding philosopher of the European Union.

World Community developed gradually from Las Casas’ struggle to free Indians, from the struggle to abolish African slavery and to end colonialism to the struggles for workers’ rights, civil rights, and women’s rights. All of these liberation struggles are international in character and they can only be effectively solved through a world that is governed by an international juridical system with sufficient police powers to enforce the law.

Although the League of Nations failed, the Geneva Conventions have succeeded in securing human rights through international agreement. The United Nations founded in 1945 by 50 nations now numbers over 200 members and it has become a legal home for many small nations who would be voiceless and powerless without it. It will, however, only become truly effective when nations freely consent to the creation of a World Charter that will govern all.

POPE JOHN: In the Roman Catholic tradition, the publication of St. Pope John XXIII’s 1963 historic encyclical, *Pacem in Terris* (“Peace on Earth”) is a formal embrace of World

Community. Pope John stated that in an atomic age “it is contrary to reason to hold that war is now a suitable way to restore rights which have been violated.” Instead of war he stated that “the moral order itself” demands that a “world-wide public authority” be created to solve problems to promote the “universal common good.”

There are five themes in *Pacem in Terris* that are relevant to World Community:

1. Nations have a moral obligation to end the arms race, to abolish nuclear weapons, and to disarm.
2. The universal common good demands that international problems be solved by a global public authority.
3. The world-wide public authority must be freely chosen and not imposed by war.
4. The world-wide authority must respect the rights of individual states.
5. The United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) are praised as “an important step on the path towards the juridical-political organization of all peoples of the world.”

This quotation from *Pacem in Terris* serves as a summary of these points:

“Today the universal common good poses problems of world-wide dimensions, which cannot be adequately tackled or solved except by the efforts of a public authority endowed with a wideness of powers, structure and means of the same proportions: that is, of public authority which is in a position to operate in an effective manner on a world-wide basis” (137).

Should the world’s nations choose global governance, armies will be replaced by police forces to enforce the rule of law. If a nation state attacks another, the leaders will be arrested and tried in a global judicial system. But national wars are highly unlikely not only due to sanctions but also a shared economy and a collaborative culture. Individual cultures can thrive under World Community since they will be protected by law and the respect of the community.

In 1963 Pope John called the Second Vatican Council (1963-1965) and the world’s Roman Catholic bishops called for “the establishment of some universal public authority acknowledged as such by all, and endowed with effective power to safeguard, on the behalf of all, security, regard for justice, and respect for rights” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 82).

CONCLUSION: World Community has been the dream of prophets, poets, and philosophers for millennia. Today world government is rapidly becoming a necessity due to economic and social interdependence. Perhaps the most urgent necessity for World Community is the destruction of the environment that can only be solved through concerted international cooperation and legal sanctions that are binding on all.

SUMMARY

All four of these approaches are found not only within the Christian tradition, but in secular and other religious traditions as well. Some of these approaches overlap: for example, the Pacifist and Just War approaches can be found in the World Community approach. All of these

approaches, except Total War, that are shared by secular philosophies and other religious traditions are an excellent basis for dialogue and joint action for peace and justice in the world.

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Endnotes

¹ For a discussion of the four traditions on war and peace, see my book: Joseph J Fahey. 2005. *War and the Christian Conscience: Where Do You Stand*. Orbis Books.

² World Community, although it will outlaw war, will use police and at times violence to maintain social order.

³ See, William B. Frazier. 2017. *How the God of Jesus Makes Peace*. CreateSpace.

⁴ Walter Wink. 1992. *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination*. Fortress Books.

⁵ See 198 methods of nonviolence in, Gene Sharp. 1973. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*. Three Volumes. Porter Sargent.

⁶ For a fine historical discussion of this matter see: Roland Bainton. 1960. *Christian Attitudes toward War and Peace*. Abingdon Books.

⁷ See, Gerald W. Schlabach. 2008, *Just Policing, Not War*. Liturgical Press.

⁸ For a discussion of the National Security State and the proposal for world government see, Gerald and Patricia Mische. 1977. *Toward A Human World Order: Beyond the National Security Straitjacket*. Paulist Press.

⁹ For a complete discussion of the life of Las Casas see, Gustavo Gutierrez. 1995. *Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ*. Orbis Books.

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