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REINHOLD NIEBUHR & THE PROBLEM OF PARADOX

By MARC LiVECCHÉ

THE GREAT WAR & THE DAWN OF THE AMERICAN CENTURY

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WILL CHRISTIANITY SURVIVE IN THE MIDDLE EAST? A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

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ALSO: ROBERT NICHOLSON LOOKS EAST TOWARD THE SYRIAN CRISIS • MARK TOOLEY CONSIDERS CHRISTIANS & EMPIRE • LUBO ONDRASEK PAYS TRIBUTE TO JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN • MICHAEL NOVAK IS COMMEMORATED • WAYNE SCHROEDER CALLS CHRISTIANS TO PEACE WORK • THORIN OAKENSHIELD MAKES A DEATHBED CONFESSION • DOUGLAS BURTON REPORTS ON MOSUL • AMITAI ETZIONI PRESCRIBES MORAL TRIAGE • HERMAN MELVILLE REMEMBERS THE BATTLE OF SHILOH • & ALAN DOWD REFLECTS ON AMERICA'S LONG DEFENSE OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

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Portrait of Reinhold Niebuhr by Hannah Strauss, original commission, 2017. A pensive Reinhold Niebuhr considers the scene before him, surrounded by iconic images from the Second World War. While referencing historical events, horrific locations, and the machinery of warfare, these images also suggest the focal points of Niebuhr's internal conflicts as he wrestled with his own theological and ethical conceptual dilemmas. Immediately behind Niebuhr is an amphibious assault, with warfighters disembarking a landing craft and wading toward a shoreline already engaged with the fire, smoke, and din of battle. Above him, bombers swarm in deadly formation. Below are rendered scenes depicting the hated guard towers and dreaded gate of Auschwitz-Birkenau and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan. Taken together, these scenes begin to describe the reach, the moral and political complexity, and the devastation of human conflict.

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FEATURE

REINHOLD NIEBUHR & THE PROBLEM OF PARADOX

MARC LIVECCHÉ



In September 2010, by his own admission, Marine Lt. Timothy Kudo abetted in the slaying of two unarmed Afghan teenagers.¹ On patrol, Kudo was leading his squad toward a village when a nearby farmer suddenly dropped his shovel and seemingly ran for his life. Alarmed, the squad scattered for cover just as the staccato pulse of machine gun fire erupted from somewhere around them. The shooting ceased and no enemy combatants could be seen, but the Marines quickly repositioned, advancing toward likely enemy ambush points. After a fleeting glimpse of a possible Taliban fighter, the Marines converged on a nearby building and divided; one team launched an assault inside the structure while a second formed a security perimeter outside.

Suddenly, two men approached on a motorcycle from a hill above the squad—a position of deadly tactical advantage over the Marines. As the riders neared, they either did not understand or simply ignored the patrol's repeated commands to stop. Escalating force along standardized lines, the Marines redoubled their efforts: they fired a smoke grenade in warning, shouted halt, and waved the bike away. The riders slowed, seemingly hesitated, and then continued, crossing the trigger line toward the Marines. Too close. In a heartbeat, a set of misconceptions gave further appearance of an attack: sticks the riders held were, at the distance, confused for rifles and the motorcycle's chrome, reflecting the sun in bright flashes, gave the appearance of muzzle bursts. The Marines opened fire.

Kudo recalls, "The motorcycle sparked where the rounds slapped the metal and drove into the bodies. The bike stopped. The men fell... We ran to the motorcycle. One Marine made a quiet plea, 'Please let them have weapons. Something. Anything.'" But it was not to be.

One of the dead appeared no older than sixteen.

WARRIOR PRAYERS

The American Protestant theologian and public intellectual Reinhold Niebuhr is probably best known as the steadfast defender of democracy against the totalitarian evils of the 20th century's fascist and communist regimes. Indeed, Niebuhr came to increased national prominence in the lead up to the Second World War by making the case for American intervention against Nazism. To help his doing so, he inaugurated a new publication, *Christianity & Crisis*, which he committed to the proposition that "the Christian faith offered no easy escape from the hard and sometimes cruel choices of such a world as ours; but that it did offer resources and insights by which our decisions could be made wisely and our responsibilities borne courageously."

Shortly after Japanese Zeros had dropped from the December skies over Hawaii, forcing America's entry into the war, Niebuhr published an editorial entitled "Our Responsibilities in 1942", in which he suggested that it was to America's own good that we had been "finally forced to be loyal to interests beyond our own." National threats had at last "strengthened our reluctant will and overruled our recalcitrant will", goading us to now do what we ought already to have done. "We have been thrown into a community of common responsibility", Niebuhr suggested, "by being engulfed in a community of common sorrow."

However much Niebuhr might have rejoiced over the moral rousing of American power, he did not rejoice in its need to be roused. Harboring no illusions that the "very grim" task ahead would be characterized by anything other than "blood, sweat, and tears", Niebuhr knew that if the totalitarian monsters were to be defeated, it would require "every area and every resource" of the free world to gather against them. Moreover, for the Christian, he also understood war to have theologically terrible costs, involving

a necessary renunciation, if partial, of the ethics of Christ.

Nevertheless, for his part Niebuhr pledged to his readers that in the struggle ahead he and his journal would “continue to interpret the world in which we are living in the light of our common faith”. It was the only service by which he could see his way through the present cataclysm.

Niebuhr’s vocation to bring faith to bear on our view of the world is perhaps nowhere better captured than in his Serenity Prayer. This famous orison has been variously misattributed to a remarkable range of personalities including Thomas Aquinas, Francis of Assisi, Helen Keller, and Mother Goose. Almost as numerous are the various versions of the prayer. The one I offer here is itself cobbled together from several different renderings:

Father, give us the grace to change with
courage what must be altered,
serenity to accept what cannot be helped,
and the wisdom to know the one from
the other;
living one day at a time,
enjoying one moment at a time,
accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,
taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is,
not as we would have it, trusting that You
will make all things right,
if we surrender to Your will,
so that we may be reasonably happy in this
life,
and supremely happy with You forever in
the next.

A foretaste of his journal, Niebuhr crafted the prayer in the early 1930s, just as American churches were beginning to grapple with how to respond to the growing specter of Hitlerism and Japanese imperialism. For Niebuhr, the advent of WWII found him, again, moving to disabuse himself of his own rather cyclical fidelity to pacifism, which came and went in successive undulations since before the First World War. Against the pacifist sentiment and calls for isolationism dominate among his fellow Christians, Niebuhr insisted on a realistic response to the political crisis, one willing to dirty its hands to avoid catastrophic evil.



While much of this rightly positions Niebuhr in the stream of Christian realism, it is against his promotion of dirty hands that this essay is necessarily pitted. Rooted in Niebuhr’s dialectic between love and justice, alternatively cast as the tension, or contradiction, between love and responsibility, the Niebuhrian current of Christian realism results in what I will argue is a catastrophic paradox.

The paradox itself can be summarized as follows. The moral vision of the New Testament, specifically as revealed in the life of Christ, declares the Law of Love to be the normative ideal for Christian behavior. Given the conditions of history, however, this norm is impossible to follow. Alongside the Impossible Ideal is the possibility of approximating those ideals. Given these options, in the face of



sufficiently grave political evil, the Law of Love requires that we overrule love.

Just how all this works out can be seen by referring back to the Serenity Prayer, which in a general way lays bare the bones of Christian realism in its Niebuhrian form. In what follows, I will first explicate the prayer to better grasp the Niebuhrian paradox. With that in hand, I will reconnect us with the terrible experiences of Timothy Kudo, and show why this paradox is such a calamity.

FACTS ON THE GROUND

In Niebuhr's prayer, realism's core commitment is found in the petition for the grace, courage, and serenity to take "this sinful

world as it *is*, not as we would have it". Take the second bit first. How *would* we have the world? In Niebuhrian terms, surely, we would have a world which abides by the Law of Love; one characterized by altruism and other-centered acts of self-donation. In Niebuhr's view, "the pacifists are quite right in one emphasis. They are right in asserting that love is really the law of life."² The Christian ethical idea—as displayed in the life of Christ—calls uncompromisingly for love without qualification. Niebuhr continues:

It is very foolish to deny that the ethic of Jesus is an absolute and uncompromising ethic. It is...an ethic of "love universalism and love perfectionism." The injunctions "resist not evil," "love your enemies," "if ye love them that love you what thanks have you?" "be not anxious for your life," and "be ye therefore perfect even as your father in heaven is perfect," are all one piece, and they are all uncompromising and absolute.³

This obviously requires radical self-sacrifice. Love means not simply nonviolence (*pace* most species of pacifism) but *nonresistance* to evil altogether, supported by unilateral absolutism in the face of injustice. In practical terms, love means the rejection of all forms of self-assertion or coercion in human relationships. The ideal of love, fueled by the "sublime naiveté of the religious imagination",⁴ relinquishes moral judgment to look with impartiality toward the evil and the good.

But notice, even Niebuhr's description of the ideal world already admits that the law of love is not operative. "Non-resistance", "self-sacrifice", "absolution"—each term betrays the fact that something abides in the world that does not, itself, meet the ideal. Hence the first clause, the determination to take "this world as it is". Niebuhr understands there are those who acknowledge the fact of sin while nevertheless decrying his fatalism, insisting that the real problem is that "the law of love has not been preached persuasively enough". Such hardliners declare that "there is no conflict of interest which cannot be adjudicated".

Against such wishful thinking, Niebuhr rejects the idea that "pure moral suasion could

[solve every]...problem”. Considering the circumstances of the day, Niebuhr suggested that “if we believe that if Britain had only been fortunate enough to have produced 30 percent instead of 2 percent of conscientious objectors to military service, Hitler’s heart would have been softened and he would not have attacked Poland, we hold a faith which no historic reality justifies.” Therefore, the continued presence of recalcitrant injustice, “requires discriminate judgments between conflicting claims.”⁵ Failure to provide such judgments, attempting to universalize Christian benevolence despite the malevolent insistence of some to do violence against the innocent, is to abandon the requirements of concrete neighbor-love.

This is because the Christian must hold that our neighbor, every neighbor, is worthy of love. To love something means, at least ultimately, that we desire to see it flourish. History, we’ve seen, proves that things tend not to flourish on their own. They have to be helped. No human being can long flourish if those basic goods necessary to life are unavailable. So then our task becomes trying to find the best ways to bring those goods within reach. In turn, neighbor-love implies concern for the good of our neighbor’s neighborhood, for context matters, and human beings suffer or prosper under conditions conducive to one or the other.

In place of the simplistic pursuit of the Law of Love, Niebuhr insists, love requires instead an ethic of responsibility.

THE COURAGE TO ALTER

With this in view, Niebuhr’s opening request for “the grace to change with courage what must be altered” is a call to action. The Christian realist recognizes that the exculpatory witness of history makes plain what must be altered. Considering just the 20th century, the *Encyclopedia of Genocide* calculates:

In total, during the first eighty-eight years of the century, almost 170 million men, women, and children [noncombatants] were shot, beaten, tortured, knifed,

burned, starved, frozen, crushed, or worked to death; buried alive, drowned, hanged, bombed, or killed in any other of the myriad other ways governments have inflicted deaths on unarmed helpless citizens and foreigners.

Some years back, I attended the ceremonies in Oswiecim, Poland, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Nazi concentration camps. At the end of the formal program, they began reciting over a loudspeaker the names of the dead. The endeavor was to continue until every name was read. During the next several hours during which I walked the grounds, the reading continued apace, and I thought to calculate just how long that awful litany would continue. Imagining they had all the names of the approximate 1.2 million people who were murdered there, and assuming it takes a single second to read each name, the recitation would have continued for 13.8 days. Nearly 14 days of names from the Auschwitz camps alone.

The manifestation in public and private life of certain words—order, concern, community, justice, responsibility, and love—tends toward the welfare of the innocent, while that of others—disorder, atomization, solipsism,



injustice, desertion, and indifference—tends toward their annihilation. Therefore, Niebuhr was clear as to the purpose of political authority. Without divinizing government or even suggesting it is godly, he understood its divinely appointed task to include securing the conditions necessary for justice, order, and peace, political goods without which no other goods—such as life or health—can long endure.

Such political responsibility is grounded in the individual. That bit in Genesis in which humanity is revealed to be formed in the image of God and given dominion over all the earth signals a divine mandate. We have delegated responsibility—partial not ultimate—in history for the conditionals of history. But when faced with a choice between love or justice, the similarity between State and individual commitments ends. Unlike the individual, for whom love is binding, when the State must choose between the unachievable ideal of the Law of Love and an ethic of responsibility through which it is possible to achieve an efficacious, if only approximate, measure of justice, Niebuhr considers it inappropriate—not simply unrealistic—to expect, indeed to even desire, the State to act self-sacrificially or to transcend justice in favor of mercy. Such unilateral dismissal

of the facts on the ground can lead only to greater catastrophe. Political authorities must choose the possible over the impossible.

WHAT CANNOT BE HELPED

Of course, “taking the world as it is” requires a recognition of limits. Our willingness to fight injustice must be qualified by an attendant humility acknowledging that some things, for any number of reasons, simply cannot be altered. “Give us”, Niebuhr pleads in the face of this, the “serenity to accept what cannot be helped”. Niebuhr addresses at least two such obdurate realities.

First, quite simply, we cannot contend against every evil out there. There are times when—despite our best intentions, desires, or efforts—we do not have the power to change or overcome our adversary’s will. In a world of competing interests and limited resources, even the most powerful or altruistic of nations cannot do everything nor avoid completely the irony of unintended consequences that accompanies all human activity. We botch, and we break, even as we attempt to mend.

One salutary outcome of this should be a realistic modesty of purpose. History, finally,



doesn't depend on us. Our business is to resist evils, to do no harm, and to help—*where we can*. We needn't believe it in our power to attain any kind of final justice, order, or peace. Rather, we must be impatiently content with decent approximations. There is reason to be resolute about this, for our brief survey of 20th-century history ought to confirm for us the horrors that result when human beings grasp for an ultimate role in history.

Second, and this will introduce the focus of my critique of Niebuhr, he insists we cannot alter the fact that by seeking justice we become complicit in evil. This is not only because of the impurity of our wills—corrupted, as is our enemy's, by the fact of sin—nor only because of those unintended consequences that betray our aspirations. Rather, Niebuhr insists, it is because it is impossible to be responsible to the political needs of our threatened-neighbor without dirtying our hands. There is no avoiding this:

We cannot refuse to make a decision between political answers to a problem because each answer is discovered to contain a moral ambiguity...We are responsible for making choices between greater and lesser evils.⁶

What this amounts to, for Niebuhr, is that the Law of Love, as demonstrated by the life of Christ, is, as a guide to international relations, both practically impossible and dangerous in practice. Summarizing Niebuhr's view, Robin Lovin writes:

The point is made at first against a particular kind of Christian idealism, but in the end, the warning applies to idealisms of every kind: "Given the complexities of the human situation, a moral ideal alone cannot dictate what we ought to do...To devote oneself exclusively to determining and proclaiming the right thing to do," cautioned Niebuhr, "is most probably to render oneself powerless in the actual course of events."⁷

Impotence in the face of Nazism and Japanese militarism's totalitarian threats was not an option. We must, Niebuhr asserted, "strive for justice even if...forced to use means, such

as self-assertion, resistance, coercion...social conflict and violence...which cannot gain the moral sanction of the most sensitive of moral spirit."⁸

This is not, as some read Niebuhr, to abandon love completely; rather, it is a grave concession that "the ideal principle must be sacrificed to guarantee its partial realization."⁹ Nor is this to say that Niebuhr chose the world over his moral principles or even, simply, that he chose the principle of justice over the principle of love. Justice, however paramount, must be brought under the control of love. "Any justice which is only justice", Niebuhr stresses, "soon degenerates into something less than justice."¹⁰ Love must remain the "motive of social action", qualifying every application of



justice even as love spurs its own rejection. This is the only way Niebuhr could see to account both for the fact of the supremacy of the Law of Love as well as the fact of sin.

It was the only way that he could see the Christian faithful having any effective role at all in helping to prevent the recitation of a full fourteen days of names, or a fifteenth, or a sixteenth.

THE PROBLEM OF PARADOX

As I've already noted, Niebuhr had a rather on-off relationship with pacifism. He claimed to be a pacifist up to the start of the First World War, abandoned it after realizing the need to conquer German belligerence,

embraced it again after reflecting on the horrors of the conflict and deciding he was “done with the war business”, and then rejected it again and finally in the face of Nazism. Nevertheless, even as he railed against pacifist leanings before WWII, he never really gave pacifism up in principle. Given the example of Jesus, Niebuhr maintained that the Christian norm is non-resistance against evil. Therefore, waging war against Nazi fascism and Japanese militarism remained a morally evil enterprise—it was simply less morally evil than not waging war. Niebuhr rejected—or postponed—the Law of Love as ineffective, not wrong. This is a meaningful difference, for the warfighter especially.

Warfighters, because they are human beings, are at the same time both invariably sinful and yet capable of astonishing acts of other-centered self-donation. But in the Niebuhrian universe, the goodness of duty and of meeting one's martial responsibility is found in doing what ought never to be done. On the battlefield, the consequence of the Niebuhrian paradox between love and justice is made most clear: “It is not possible to move in history without becoming tainted with guilt.”¹¹

Timothy Kudo left Afghanistan in 2011. Time passes, but memories remain. The slain Afghan teenagers are never far from his mind; their deaths remain a source of lasting anxiety.

It's been more than two years since we killed those people on the motorcycle, and I think about them every day. Sometimes it's when I'm reading the news or watching a movie, but most often it's when I'm taking a shower or walking down my street in Brooklyn.¹²

No one should question whether Kudo's remorse at the slaying of unarmed civilians is appropriate; its absence, surely, would be anathema. Naturally, more needs to be said about context and justification and about who is truly culpable and where various degrees of blame ought to be apportioned, including acknowledging the causal links between such unintended killings and insurgency tactics



intentionally designed, in part, to lead to precisely such accidents. Nevertheless, the killing of children must engender rueful despair in any circumstance, and deep shame and guilt in some. Lament is always therefore a proper presence. But, crucially, the teenagers' deaths are not the only ones that haunt Lt. Kudo. Rather, he appears to be as traumatized at having killed enemy combatants as he is unarmed bystanders.

While he was never the trigger-puller, Kudo considers himself every bit a killer, and this fact in itself plagues him: "I never shot someone but I ordered bomb strikes and directed other people to shoot." Here he recalls the first time a Marine unit patrolling several miles away radioed for permission to fire on someone in the process of burying a roadside bomb. As the ranking officer, the decision fell to Kudo, and after deliberating he ordered the shot. Such events would come to typify his combat experience, and he looks back with horror at how easy it was to kill from a distance. Looking back, Kudo gives a somber assessment: "I didn't return from Afghanistan as the same person. My personality is the same, at least close enough, but I'm no longer the 'good' person I once thought I was." He continues:

When I joined the Marine Corps, I knew I would kill people. I was trained to do it in a number of ways, from pulling a trigger to ordering a bomb strike to beating someone to death with a rock. As I got closer to deploying to war...my lethal abilities were refined, but my ethical understanding of killing was not. I held two seemingly contradictory beliefs: Killing is always wrong, but in war, it is necessary. How could something be both immoral and necessary? I didn't have time to resolve this question before deploying. And in the first few months, I fell right into killing without thinking twice. We were simply too busy to worry about the morality of what we were doing.

Kudo's judgment that "killing is always wrong, but in war, it is necessary" is raw Niebuhrianism. In light of new understandings of combat trauma, it is also disastrous.

Readers of *Providence* will already be familiar with moral injury,¹³ a proposed subset of PTSD that manifests not in symptoms associated to life-threat—such as hypervigilance, paranoia, and the like—but rather in symptoms such as shame, remorse, guilt, sorrow, and despair. Over time, clinicians have pointed toward several causes, including doing or allowing to be done something that goes against deeply held moral beliefs. The number one predictor for moral injury is having killed in combat, and there is no statistically significant distinction between the accidental killing of a non-combatant and the killing of an enemy within the laws of armed conflict and the framework of the just war tradition.¹⁴ This would cohere with the belief that "killing is always wrong, but in war it is necessary". The problem is that the number one predictor of suicide among combat veterans is moral injury. That's to say, a bright line can be drawn between having killed in battle and combat veterans killing themselves, even long after those battles have ended.

Thus, my primary critique of Niebuhr is that he wrongly renders the very business of war-fighting morally injurious, and it is killing those who fight our wars.

MORAL PORTAGE

Some have called Reinhold Niebuhr the father of Christian realism, in at least its modern framing. But not all Christian realists are Niebuhrian. Happily, there are different streams of this rich tradition, some of which afford us the ability to maneuver away from the twin hazards of the Niebuhrian paradox and thus avoid both the rocky shoals of rejecting love as well as the swirling whirlpool of rendering ourselves powerless against the conditions of history. In recovering Christian realism, and with a certain Augustinian undercurrent, we owe a debt of gratitude to Niebuhr for having brought us a good distance in the right direction. But on the question of the precise moral nature of war, there are surer, more morally navigable waters.

In particular, the deeper Augustinian stream of Christian realism runs best through Thomas Aquinas. In Thomas, and in those who carry important currents of his thought forward—including the late scholastic Spaniards Francisco Suárez and Francisco di Vitoria, and, leaping forward, Paul Ramsey and Nigel Biggar—one can find tools capable of more nuanced moral reflection than on offer from Niebuhr.

The Christian realist in Thomistic waters, for instance, will not countenance the notion that the just war tradition counsels the performance of lesser evils. Instead, we discern that evil comes in different kinds, involving important distinctions between moral and non-moral evil. Moral evil—the intentional, unholy, privation of goodness—is an offense against God; it’s what used to be called “sin”. As such, Thomas reminds us it may never be freely and knowingly chosen—neither for the sake of justice nor anything else.¹⁵ In this, Thomas is merely calling to mind the biblical witness regarding moral action: including John’s prescription to imitate good not evil, and Paul’s principled insistence to overcome evil with good, as opposed to further evil.¹⁶ Because these verses are focused on ethics, the evil that is in mind here is clearly moral evil—sin.

But what of the other—non-moral—kind of evil? This returns us to the mention of evil as privation, made a moment ago. Evil-as-privation understands evil as the loss or diminishment of some essential good. Endorsing this privative view, Nigel Biggar stresses that killing another human being is always to cause an evil, because it deprives the victim of the *good* of life. He rightly presses this notion all the way down, applying it even to the killing of someone “who has let himself grow monstrously corrupt—think Hitler, Stalin, or Pol Pot”. That their death *seems* to involve the loss of nothing good is only because they have “so misdirected their lives that”, for most of the rest of us, their losing the *good* of life “amounts to a moral gain rather than a loss.”¹⁷ Yet, while to kill a person is always to cause an evil it is not always to do a wrong. Biggar explains:

History is sometimes very unkind to us and forces us into the position of not being able to do anything without becoming responsible—in some sense—for causing evil. I can kill you out of contemptuous hatred, intending nothing less than your annihilation, constrained by no necessity, and with no proportionate reason to prefer another’s life to yours. Or I can kill you without malice, with respectful and manifest reluctance, necessitated by love for others, and with sufficient reason to prefer their lives to yours.¹⁸

Maintaining this distinction between non-moral and moral evils allows for the possibility that different kinds of evils issue in different kinds of consequence, that moral evil alone incurs moral guilt to the doer of the moral evil. Meanwhile, committing actions that result in a non-moral evil does not, at least not intrinsically. The removal of a child’s gangrened leg, for instance, is an evil, for it involves the loss of the essential good of bodily integrity and function. But if the hard deed is done by an honest surgeon with the aim of securing the child-patient’s health, then in the act of surgery no moral wrongdoing has occurred. In fact, the non-moral evil results from a moral act, and the proper response to the surgeon is gratitude. His skill, though not the necessity of employing it, is to be celebrated. Contrast this with the sadist who steals into the same child’s hospital room and chops away the gangrened leg for kicks. It makes no difference that the leg was due for removal—the sadist’s carving is a moral evil, a wrongdoing, and a guilt-worthy act.

To continue down this stream of moral reasoning would see us encounter further distinctions: between different kinds of killing; between intending, aiming at, and wanting particular kinds of outcomes; and between evil acts that are worthy of sorrow and even regret at their having to be done and those that ought to end in moral injury. *Pace* Niebuhr, the Augustinian stream of Christian Realism introduces no new moral legislation. Nor does it postpone old ones. Indeed, Niebuhr’s delaying sacrificial love because of its current impossibility doesn’t make much sense. In that future day, when



the conditions of the life are such that sacrificial love will be possible, sacrificial love presumably won't be necessary—there won't be any evil in the face of which self-sacrificial non-resistance will be required. But, surely, love is relevant *now*, and therefore it must remain the direct motive of all our actions *now*—not just in some future, far-off day. Because of the conditions of our world, including our own hearts, the full character of love will not be displayed. But our moral actions, at any given moment, strive to best approximate this fullness. That's to say, our criteria is never which action is the lesser evil, but which is the greatest achievable good. Such distinctions can help warfighters endure the moral bruising field of battle without becoming irreparably morally injured. If so, then we need to conclude that while Niebuhr's stream of Christian realism is good, Biggar's is, well, better.

None of this is to suggest easy solutions for Timothy Kudo's moral anguish. But it does allow for the Christian, or moralist, to justify use of lethal force on grounds other than lesser (moral) evils. In disentangling the very business of warfighting from moral injury, we may begin to unburden warfighters from unnecessary burdens of guilt. At the very least, in distinguishing actions that issue in sorrow from those that issue in sin, we may uncover different sets of remedies to address different kinds of wounds. P

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(Endnotes)

1 These events are described by Timothy Kudo in a *New York Times* op-ed, "On War and Redemption", dated November 8, 2011, and again in a *Washington Post* op-ed, "I Killed People in Afghanistan. Was I Right or Wrong?" dated January 25, 2013, and in an *Associated Press* article, "I'm a Monster: Veterans 'Alone' in their Guilt", by Pauline Jelinek, dated February 22, 2013.

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12 Unless stated otherwise, all of Kudo's quotations are taken from: Timothy Kudo, "I Killed People in Afghanistan. Was I Right or Wrong?" *Washington Post*, accessed December 5, 2013, washingtonpost.com.

13 See Timothy S. Mallard, "The (Twin) Wounds of War", in *Providence's Fall* 2016 issue; and my "The Fifth Image: Seeing the Enemy With Just War Eyes", Summer 2016, and "Kevlar for the Soul: The Morality of Force Protection", Fall 2015.

14 The one qualification is that many who suffer moral injury *have* experienced, directly or not, the accidental killing of civilians. The question then is to what degree such accidental killing grounds one's perception of all lethal combat action.

15 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, n.d., see, for example, 1a-2ae.6-17.

16 Consider 3 John: 11 and Romans 12:17, respectively; and further on, Romans 12:21 and, earlier, 3:8.

17 Nigel Biggar, *In Defence of War* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013), 92.

18 *Ibid.*

THERE IS MORE IN YOU OF GOOD THAN YOU KNOW,
CHILD OF THE KINDLY WEST.

SOME COURAGE AND SOME WISDOM, BLENDED IN
MEASURE.

IF MORE OF US VALUED FOOD AND CHEER
AND SONG ABOVE HOARDED GOLD, IT
WOULD BE A MERRIER WORLD.

Deathbed confession of
THORIN OAKENSHIELD *to* BIBLO BAGGINS



Sinking of the Linda Blanche out of Liverpool, by Willy Stöwer, 1915. Source: Wikimedia Commons. Though this German depiction exaggerates the ship's size, U-21 did sink Linda Blanche in January 1915. This same U boat sank the British cruiser HMS Pathfinder in September 1914 near Scotland off the Firth of Forth, making it the first modern submarine to sink a ship with a torpedo.

THE GREAT WAR & THE DAWN OF THE AMERICAN CENTURY

JOSEPH LOCONTE

By the spring of 1917, the most advanced nations on earth had spent nearly three agonizing years destroying themselves in a frenzy of blood-letting never seen within the boundaries of Europe.

The United States watched, with bewilderment and anxiety, as a “Great War” among

the European states broke out in August 1914. What began as a diplomatic kerfuffle between Serbia and Austria-Hungary quickly metastasized into a global conflict, ultimately involving dozens of nations. What was supposed to be a short, tidy campaign devolved into a ferocious stalemate, a war of attrition, with no end in sight.



America's decision to enter the First World War on behalf of the Allied forces, in April 1917, shattered the wretched status quo. The nation's economic and martial resources—the US military would swell to five million men within 18 months—would make a German victory impossible and hasten the end of the conflict.

Vera Brittain, an English nurse working in a London hospital, remembered seeing “a large contingent of soldiers pass by on the main road.” She noted “an unusual quality of bold vigor in their stride,” which “caused me to stare at them with puzzled interest.” Brittain didn't recognize these fresh troops:

They looked larger than ordinary men; their tall, straight figures were in vivid contrast

to the under-sized armies of pale recruits to which we were grown accustomed...Had yet another regiment been conjured out of our depleted Dominions? I wondered, watching them move with such rhythm, such dignity, such serene consciousness of self-respect. But I knew the colonial troops so well, and these were different; they were assured where the Australians were aggressive, self-possessed where the New Zealanders were turbulent.

Brittain then heard an excited cry from a group of nurses behind her: “Look! Look! Here are the Americans!” The arrival of American troops on the European continent also signaled the ascendance of the United States as the leading democratic power in the West. Prodded by a visionary American president, the entire international order would be transformed. The American century was about to begin.

This new American century, however, would begin under the political leadership of Woodrow Wilson, whose approach to international relations was a mix of sloppy moralism, liberal internationalism, and Kantian utopianism. Although understandably appalled by the results of *realpolitik*, Wilson sought to replace the European “balance of power” with a “community of power,” a union of democracies devoted to peacemaking as a transcendent political ideal. The result was a League of Nations that lacked both the will and the capacity to respond effectively to international aggression.

BEATING SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES

There was nothing inevitable about US intervention in the First World War. Indeed, there was absolutely no possibility that the United States would quickly enter the conflict. For over a century, Americans had tried to avoid the political intrigues of Europe. The Napoleonic Wars, the Crimean War, the Franco-Prussian War, and now this latest outbreak of war—it all seemed to confirm George Washington's counsel in his farewell address to avoid “entangling alliances” at virtually any cost. Hence the US ambassador to Great Britain, summarizing the American

mindset: “Again and ever I thank God for the Atlantic Ocean.”

Woodrow Wilson’s first annual address to Congress, on December 2, 1913—the first time a president personally delivered his State of the Union address—revealed his lawyerly approach to peacemaking:

More and more readily each decade do the nations manifest their willingness to bind themselves by solemn treaty to the processes of peace, the processes of frankness and fair concession. So far the United States has stood at the front of such negotiations. She will, I earnestly hope and confidently believe, give fresh proof of her sincere adherence to the cause of international friendship by ratifying the several treaties of arbitration awaiting renewal by the Senate.

Wilson went on to boast that 31 nations, representing four-fifths of the world’s population, had agreed “in principle” to sign bilateral treaties with the United States to resolve disputes diplomatically. If diplomacy failed, the treaties instructed that all disagreements “shall be publicly analyzed, discussed, and reported upon by a tribunal chosen by the parties before either nation determines its course of action.” In other words, Wilson imagined that a “cooling off” period, legalistically imposed, could overcome nationalistic war fever. “There is no record,” writes Henry Kissinger, “that any such treaty was ever applied to a concrete issue.”¹

Less than a year later, Europe, and much of the world, would be at war. Wilson immediately declared American neutrality toward all belligerents in the conflict, and instructed US citizens to do likewise in their innermost thoughts.

Political neutrality is one thing; however, economic policy is another. In the first six months of the war, US bankers extended \$80 million in credits to Britain, France, and their allies. America was also trading with Germany, but the British blockade of northern Europe made it difficult for the United States to offer loans or credits to the

Central Powers. Additionally, there was the sale of armaments: Between August 1914 and March 1917, America sold \$2.2 billion in arms to Great Britain and the Allied powers. Almost overnight, the United States became a creditor nation—and would emerge as the strongest economic power on earth by the end of the war.

“HE KEPT US OUT OF WAR”

If President Wilson wanted a pretext for entering the European conflict, it arrived on May 7, 1915, when a German U-boat torpedoed the British-owned *Lusitania*. The luxury passenger ship sunk within 18 minutes, taking 1,119 of the 1,924 passengers with it. One hundred and twenty-eight Americans were among the dead—including women and infants. There were lurid newspaper accounts of people struggling to get into lifeboats, of mothers being separated from their babies, of lifeless bodies floating in the water. Americans were stunned and outraged at this “murder on the high seas.” Although support for “military preparedness” increased, there was no public clamoring for war.

Instead, Wilson got assurances from Germany that such atrocities would not happen again. “Peace is the healing and elevating influence of the world,” he said. “There is such a thing as a nation being so right that it does not need to convince others by force that it is right.” British officers, who were dying by the dozens every month to combat German aggression, mocked the American president: British artillery shells that failed to explode were called “Wilson’s.”

Less than three weeks later, on May 27, Wilson spoke before a crowd of 2,000 supporters at Washington, D.C.’s New Willard Hotel, assuring them that an era of “more wholesome diplomacy” was at hand. America was assuming responsibility in helping to secure the peace of the world, he said, and a new political organization was needed to bring it about.

“So sincerely do I believe in these things that I am sure that I speak the mind and



Flower of Death—The Bursting of a Heavy Shell—Not as It Looks, but as It Feels and Sounds and Smells, by Claggett Wilson, circa 1919. Source: Smithsonian American Art Museum.

wish of the people of America when I say that the United States is willing to become a partner in any feasible association of nations formed in order to realize these objects and make them safe against violations,” Wilson said. “God grant that the dawn of that day of frank dealing and settled peace, concord, and cooperation may be near at hand!” The room burst into applause, with the liberal press comparing the speech to the Declaration of Independence and the Gettysburg Address.²

In the 1916 presidential election, Wilson’s campaign slogan—“he kept us out of war”—helped him to narrowly defeat Republican Charles Hughes. The president made several offers—sometimes clumsy and ill-advised—to mediate the conflict. All were rejected by the Allies and Central Powers. Yet Wilson’s effort exceeded anything America had ever attempted in European affairs. For the first time in its history, the United States was trying to negotiate an end to a major European

war. “Clearly it reflected the sense that the Europeans were incapable of managing their own, and by extension, the world’s affairs,” writes Harvard historian Akira Iriye, “and that without some leadership role played by the United States, there could be no stable international order.”³

PEACE WITHOUT VICTORY

The opening months of January 1917 tested American neutrality to the breaking point. On January 21, Germany declared unrestricted submarine warfare on all shipping headed for Britain, neutral or belligerent. The next day, addressing the Senate, Wilson made a final appeal for ending the war: a plea to the warring parties to give up the objective of military victory, enter into a peace agreement, and establish a new community of nations based on democratic principles. The end of the conflict must be founded upon “a peace without victory.”



His Bunkie, by William James Aylward, circa 1918. Source: National Museum of American History. Aylward was one of eight official artists to be deployed with the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF).

I am seeking only to face realities and to face them without soft concealments. Victory would mean peace forced upon the loser, a victor's terms imposed upon the vanquished. It would be accepted in humiliation, under duress, at an intolerable sacrifice, and would leave a sting, a resentment, a bitter memory upon which terms of peace would rest, not permanently, but only as upon quicksand. Only a peace between equals can last. Only a peace the very principle of which is equality and a common participation in a common benefit. The right state of mind, the right feeling between nations, is as necessary for a lasting peace as is the just settlement of vexed questions of territory or of racial and national allegiance.

Historians debate whether Wilson was blithely indifferent to the nature of the European conflict or a prophet doing battle with the spirit of his age. Nevertheless, after two and half years of industrialized slaughter, Wilson's proposal didn't stand a chance of being accepted by the European powers. The British believed that, unlike the United States, they had been sacrificing the best of their youth to defend the principles upon which Wilson was pontificating. Moreover, the "right feeling between nations" would not be achieved after so much suffering and loss. The French leader, George Clemenceau, was characteristically frank about Wilson's aims: "Never before has any political assembly heard so fine a sermon on what human beings might be capable of accomplishing if only they weren't human."²⁴

In the end, Germany's political and military leadership—determined to win the war and impose its will upon the Continent—rendered Wilson's plea an irrelevance. When the conflict began, German author Thomas Mann, a future Nobel Prize winner, expressed the nationalist mood. The war, he said, was "a purification, a liberation, an enormous hope. The German soul is opposed to the pacifist ideal of civilization, for is not peace an element of civil corruption?"²⁵ Thus, in December 1916, the German Reichstag approved an Auxiliary Service Law, which effectively conscripted every German male between the ages of 17 and 60. Men not sent to the front would be assigned to a munitions factory or some other

industry to help the war effort. Like no other nation in European history, Germany embraced the concept of total war.

In pursuit of this goal, Germany made two of its most fateful mistakes in relation to the United States. The first was the decision to resume unrestricted submarine warfare, a direct threat to America's economic interests. The second blunder was the Zimmerman telegram: an absurd plan to support a Mexican war against the United States. In February 1917, British naval intelligence intercepted and decoded the cable to Germany's ambassador to Mexico City. The British government quickly shared its contents with the US ambassador in London. Within five days the telegram was released to the press. When Wilson called his cabinet together, everyone favored war.

A WORLD MADE "SAFE FOR DEMOCRACY"

On April 2, 1917, the president asked Congress for a declaration of war. "The world must be made safe for democracy," he announced. "Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty." Wilson again made the case for a new international system to replace the old order of Europe:

A steadfast concert for peace can never be maintained except by a partnership of democratic nations. No autocratic government can be trusted to keep faith within it or observe its covenants. It must be a league of honor, a partnership of opinion. Intrigue would eat its vitals away; the plottings of inner circles who could plan what they would and render account to no one would be a corruption seated at its very heart. Only free peoples can hold their purpose and their honor steady to a common end and prefer the interests of mankind to any narrow interest of their own.

Under Wilson's vision, international peace and security would not rest upon a "balance of power," but on democratic states binding themselves to treaties extolling universal moral laws. Foreign policy would not be driven by national self-interest, but instead by a sense of universal brotherhood. International disputes would not be resolved by force, but

by diplomacy, based on reason, negotiation, and arbitration.

In Wilson's famous "Fourteen Points" speech, delivered on January 8, 1918, these ideals were taken to their logical conclusion. There were to be no private agreements among nations, but rather negotiations conducted "always frankly and in the public view." There would be no new arms race; instead, spending on national defense would be reduced "to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety."

The most contentious and problematic idea in Wilson's speech, expressed in articles 5, 10, and 12, is often neglected: his insistence that the empires of Europe and Asia abandon their colonial holdings and allow their ethnic minorities to choose their own political path. Wilson imagined "a free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims." Ethnic nationalities under colonial rule, he said, must be granted "an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development." With the growing strength and prestige of the United States behind him, Wilson was promising nothing less than an absolute right to self-determination.

Many were ready to take him at his word. US mobilization began immediately, and by December 1917, 200,000 Americans were in Europe. Within 18 months, roughly 2 million men joined the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe, mostly along the Western Front. The United States was fully committed to the conflict.

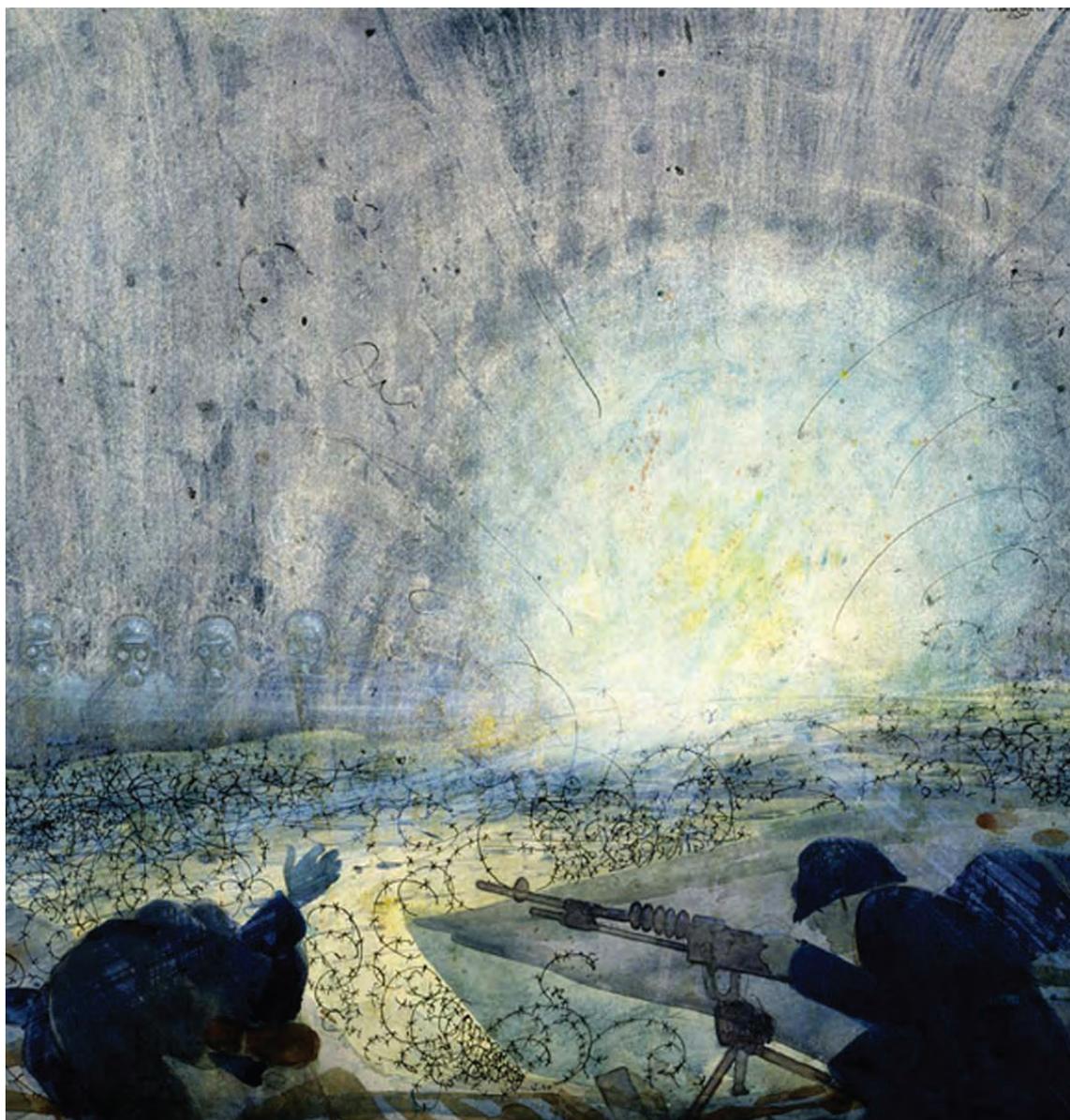
In September 1918, 600,000 American troops helped launch the last great offensive of the war—the largest in US history—and among the deadliest for the United States. More than 26,000 American soldiers were killed in the battle, including many from the 91st Division, where the author's grandfather, Michael Loconte, was deployed as a private. Their orders were unambiguous: "Divisions will advance independently of each other, pushing the attack with utmost vigor and regardless of cost." Their success is credited with crushing German hopes for victory, producing the Armistice on November 11, 1918.

"America now had one of the largest and most powerful armies in Europe," writes historian Paul Johnson, "and could convincingly claim that it had played a determining role in ending Germany's ability to continue the war." More than that, the United States had entered upon the world stage at a moment of global catastrophe with the purpose of bringing the catastrophe to a decent and honorable conclusion. In this, under Wilson's leadership, the nation made a contribution to world peace that only it could make.

Wilson's vision for a new world order, his Fourteen Points speech, was widely circulated in European capitals. It became a kind of moral compass for millions of Europeans, Africans, and Asians. "They are the principles of mankind," he told the US Congress, "and they must prevail." They would not prevail, of course, but many in Europe were not prepared to believe it. All over the Continent there were parks, squares, streets and railway stations bearing Wilson's name. Posters declared, "We Want a Wilson Peace." Italians knelt in front of his image. In France, the left-wing newspaper *L'Humanite* devoted an issue to praising the American president. Nationalist movements from Korea to Arabia clung to the Fourteen Points as their lodestar.⁶

Thus when the American president arrived in Paris on December 13, 1918, to hammer out a peace treaty, the United States was at the height of its influence and prestige. Throngs of admirers were there to greet him. They filled the streets, hung from windows, cheered from rooftops. "He was transfigured in the eyes of men," writes H.G. Wells. "He ceased to be a common statesman; he became a Messiah."

Many wanted to believe that, under Wilson's enlightened leadership, democratic ideals of equality and self-government would guide the nations of the world. After a war that had devastated so many lives and national economies, Europeans longed for a redemptive outcome. Wilson, as the leader of the only democracy that seemed capable of negotiating a just and lasting peace, held out the prospect of a new global order. Historian Michael Kazin writes that the American president seemed to believe



Symphony of Terror, by Claggett Wilson, circa 1919. Source: Smithsonian American Art Museum.

that “well-meaning Christians could transform the world into a polite, even brotherly place.” Margaret MacMillan summarizes his influence thus: “Wilson kept alive the hope that human society, despite the evidence, was getting better, that nations would one day live in harmony.”

TRIUMPH & TRAGEDY

Although Wilson would get his “league of honor,” the participating nations would not live in harmony for long. When the Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919, the leaders of 44 countries joined the newly

created League of Nations. The League’s charter, in important respects, echoed Wilsonian principles: the elimination of armaments “to the lowest point consistent with national safety,” arbitration to resolve international disputes, a cooling-off period during the interim, the preservation of peace as a binding moral commitment. Nevertheless, unchecked aggression over the next two decades would bring the League into widespread disrepute. By 1939, Europe was again at war.

Conventional wisdom blames the harsh terms of German surrender stipulated in the Treaty of Versailles—widely known as “that wicked



The Menin Road, by Paul Nash, 1919. Imperial War Museums. Source: Google Art Project.

treaty”—as the guarantor of a second world war. Wilson offered the world a way out of its troubles, we are told, but the European powers wanted vengeance and a return to power politics. Americans, misled by an isolationist Congress, rejected Wilson’s vision and refused to join the League.

There are, however, problems with this interpretation of history, problems that go much deeper than a treaty or an international organization. Wilson proclaimed the “destruction of every arbitrary power anywhere” as an uncompromising goal of American participation. He repeatedly assured his audiences that once the Kaiser and the other “autocratic powers” of the world were toppled, newly liberated citizens would create self-governing democracies. This was the “war to end war,” the “culminating and final war for human liberty.” The world would be rebuilt on “American principles.” Wilson’s political progressivism, his liberal religious views of human potential, his trust in the power of democratic ideals to transform international relations—at times it all smacked of utopianism.

Assuming that all reasonable people desired peace, the American president extrapolated

that all civilized nations would share the same goal: the perpetual peace dreamed of by Immanuel Kant. He helped design an international order built on this idea. “This was the sort of peace you got when you allowed war hysteria and impractical idealism to lie down together in your mind, like the lion and the lamb,” concluded the US diplomat George Kennan, “when you indulged yourself in the colossal conceit of thinking that you could suddenly make international life over into what you believed to be your own image.”⁷

All of that may be right. Yet the enormity of the First World War—it’s sustained assault on the moral and religious ideals of the West—created challenges that no statesman could overcome. “Injuries were wrought to the structure of human society which a century will not efface,” observed Winston Churchill, a participant in the war. “The war really did change *everything*: not just borders, not just governments and the fate of nations, but the way people have seen the world and themselves ever since,” writes G.J. Meyer. “It became a kind of hole in time, leaving the postwar world permanently disconnected from everything that had come before.”⁸

Into this hole—this vortex of suffering, terror, destitution, and disillusionment—stepped the United States. Historians such as Michael Kazin argue that American intervention was a mistake, that it “foreclosed the possibility of a negotiated peace” among the belligerents.⁹ Such a revisionist view, however, ignores the determination of Germany and its allies to dominate the Continent: Almost up until the Armistice, more British, French, and American troops were being killed in combat than Germans.¹⁰ The revisionist view rests on the fantastical idea that additional years of remorseless slaughter would have produced a better outcome for European civilization.

Whatever the aims of other nations engaged in the conflict, America’s motives for waging war were honorable, its objectives humane. Even if the United States could have produced the most equitable peace treaty imaginable, it probably would have been resented by a defeated and demoralized Germany. Even the most generous treaty would have been exploited by an embittered anti-Semite, a brooding and hate-filled demagogue by the name of Adolf Hitler.

Perhaps, as George Kennan wrote, the peace at Versailles “had the tragedies of the future written into it as by the devil’s own hand.” But the human condition, by its nature, is crippled by a tragedy of its own making: a disaster that is both moral and spiritual. Individuals, consumed by the lust to dominate, by the demonic, will always appear on

the world stage. No paper treaty, no matter how enlightened, can negate the Will to Power.

American involvement in what Churchill called “the world crisis” of the Great War would not prevent the nations of Europe from being overwhelmed by new hatreds in another global conflict. This would become the task of a future generation of statesmen: men and women, awakened to the danger, resolute in their calling, and moved not by visions of power, but by moral purpose. By joining its fate to that of Europe a century ago, the United States can be credited with helping to preserve enough of Western civilization to make the appearance of such statesmen possible, before a hateful and hideous gathering storm could sweep them all away. P

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WILL CHRISTIANITY SURVIVE IN THE MIDDLE EAST? A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

KENT R. HILL



THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION

According to the most recent information available from the Pew Research Center, in 2014 “roughly three-quarters of the world’s 7.2 billion people (74 percent) were living in countries with high or very high restrictions or hostilities” involving religion.¹ Although these statistics were modestly better than 2012 and 2013, 2014 showed a “marked increase in the number of countries that experienced

religious-related terrorist activities,” and this was primarily due to Islamic terrorists associated with Boko Haram in West Africa, and al-Qaida and Islamic State (ISIL, ISIS, or Daesh), often in the Middle East.

The number of countries with injuries or deaths from “religion-related terrorism” rose from 51 in 2013 to 60 in 2014. Eighteen of 20 countries in North Africa and the Middle East experienced “religion-related terrorism.” It is also important to note that since 2014 there has been an increase in Islamic terrorism outside North Africa and the Middle East. This is a clear reminder that what happens in the Middle East and North Africa does impact very directly the rest of the world.

Not surprisingly, most victims of religious violence and persecution are Christians and Muslims—the two largest religions; though there has also been a rise of anti-Semitism, including violent anti-Semitic attacks in Europe. The most dangerous places to be a Christian in the world include North Korea, North Africa, the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

Open Doors reports that every month 322 Christians are killed, 214 churches or Christian properties are destroyed, and 772 forms (acts) of violence are committed against Christians.² The great majority of the top fifty countries where Christians face the most persecution are Muslim-majority.³ This represents a very real challenge to Christians, but also to Muslims throughout the world, the majority of whom do not even live in the Middle East (indeed, only 20 percent of the world’s Muslims do).⁴

Though the relationship between Christians and Muslims has frequently been strained through the centuries, it has often been better and more tolerant than in recent decades. In fact, Muslims and Christians have often been capable of living together quite peaceably in the past, which offers hope for the future.

The enormous pressure on persecuted Christians in parts of the Middle East to flee is completely understandable. Yet, it is



Christ Whipped, by Edward Knippers, 1998
Source: all images courtesy of Edward Knippers.

imperative that we understand that a Middle East devoid of Christians and other religious minorities would be a tragedy—a tragedy not only for Christians and others who have lived in the Middle East for centuries, but a tragedy for an outward-looking and tolerant Islam. Thus, it is in everyone's best interests to not lose hope and develop strategies which will promote pluralism and religious freedom. To stay, if at all possible, is what most Middle Eastern Christians want to do and what they feel called by God to do.

CHRISTIANITY IS ANCIENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Some Americans envision the Middle East as a monolithic sea of Arabs and Muslims, and they fail to see the rich pluralism of diverse ethnic and religious communities that have inhabited this region for centuries. Far from being the byproduct of Western colonialism, Christianity in the Middle East has ancient roots that reach back to the first century.

The second Chapter of Acts, which talks about the birth of the Church, tells of the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after the resurrection—the day considered the foundation of the Christian Church when 3,000 believed and were baptized. Among those who are listed as present are the Parthians, Medes, and Elamites—from modern-day Iran and Iraq. We have historical data of this story that goes back to Eusebius in the fourth century, who talks about bishops in this part of the world. There was a converted Jew who was a bishop in Mesopotamia around 100. In fact, there were more Jews living in Mesopotamia in the first century than there were in the Holy Land, and many of them became Christian.⁵ Until about 600, more Christians lived in Mesopotamia than in the entire West put together.⁶ Mesopotamia was not only the center of Christianity but was also a center of missionary activity that extended to Mongolia, China, and India. The languages Christians speak in places like southern India reveal this history. It is Syriac, a language close to what Jesus spoke. Christians in both the East and Mesopotamia today celebrate Mass in Syriac because of this ancient history.⁷

THE PLIGHT OF CHRISTIANS IN THE MIDDLE EAST TODAY

In the global digital age, images splashed across our electronic devices have a profound power to shock, dismay, and move us.

So it was on September 15, 2015, when the world finally awoke to the horror of the greatest refugee crisis since World War II—all because of an indescribably sad image of a lifeless three-year old Syrian boy, Aylan Kurdi, washed up on a Turkish shore. All of a sudden, the tragedy of 60 million refugees worldwide, but particularly those from Syria, began to touch the consciousness of the world. The refugee crisis became real, became personal.

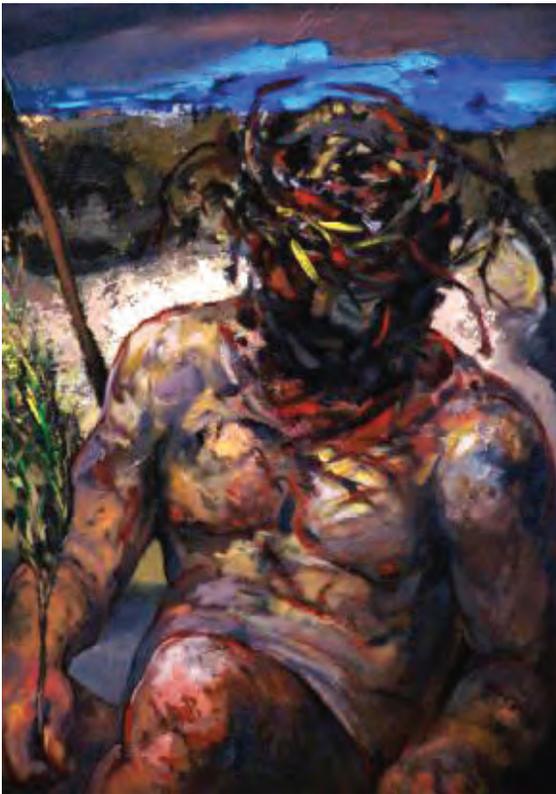
It was exactly eight months to the day earlier in 2015, on February 15, when ISIS released a chilling five-minute video of the brutal execution of 21 mainly Egyptian Coptic Christians. We watched in horror as the kidnapped migrants in orange jump suits, hands tied behind their backs, were led to the shore, forced to kneel, and then beheaded. The genocide of Christians became real, became personal.

Three factors in recent decades are key to understanding the conflict and anarchy in the Middle East which has had such a devastating impact on Christians and other minority religious communities.

First, the rise of radical Islamist thought—something which we dare not forget long precedes the rise of ISIS. Seeds of Islamic extremism can clearly be seen stretching back to the rise of Wahhabism in eighteenth-century Saudi Arabia⁸ and the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in the 1920s.⁹

Second, sectarian violence and anarchy after Saddam Hussein's 2003 overthrow devastated Christian communities in Iraq.

Third, the catastrophic civil war in Syria, which began in 2011 and which has produced between 400,000 and 500,000 casualties,¹⁰ over 4.8 million registered Syrian refugees, and over 6.1 million Internally Displaced



The Mocking of Christ, by Edward Knippers, 2004.

Persons (IDPs).¹¹ Ironically, many refugees from Iraq fled to Syria, and specifically to Aleppo, only to find themselves once again in the midst of chaos and danger.

These three factors have had dramatic impacts on Christian communities throughout the region. The problem has been most acute in Iraq and Syria, but Middle Eastern Christians have also suffered in Turkey, Iran, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the Gulf States, and North Africa. Of the 30-35 million worldwide Middle Eastern Christians, less than half still live in the Middle East.¹² According to the Pew Research Center, as of 2010 there were approximately 12.7 million Christians living in the Middle East and North Africa, which represented approximately 3.7 percent of the region's population.¹³ Given the turmoil in Iraq since 2003 and the war in Syria since 2011, the number of Christians in the Middle East has certainly declined from that number. Plus, many Christians, even if they are still in the Middle East, have been forced to flee from their homelands as refugees or IDPs.

Beyond Iraq and Syria, specific examples can help illuminate the plight Middle Eastern Christians face:

- In Turkey, which has seen the sharpest decline of Christianity in the Middle East, less than 1 percent of the population of Turkey is now Christian. (At the end of the Ottoman Empire, roughly 3.5 million Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek Christians were massacred.)¹⁴
- In Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Christian decline has been fueled primarily by political and economic reasons, not religious freedom factors. After 80 to 90 years of outflows, Palestinian Christians in this region have gone from 10 percent in 1920 to less than 1 percent today.
- The Christian population in Iran is relatively tiny, perhaps 0.3 percent.
- The largest Christian population in the Middle East is in Egypt, mostly Copts, and they make up 10-15 percent of a population of 89 million.¹⁵ At least there they can talk to the government, even if the government does not always follow through on pledges to be supportive.
- Lebanon has one of the largest concentrations of Christians in a Middle Eastern country. Perhaps 38 percent of the country is Christian,¹⁶ while the Muslim population, roughly divided between Shi'a and Sunni, make up about 61 percent. Alongside the roughly 4-6 million Lebanese, between 1-2 million Sunni refugees from Syria have entered into an already fragile demographic and religious balance. The sooner the Syria crisis is resolved, the sooner refugees can return home. If they do not go home, Lebanon could be destabilized, creating new disasters.
- Jordan has the most positive Muslim leadership towards Christians in the region. King Abdullah has for a long time promoted keeping Christians in the Middle East in order to preserve the region's rich cultural texture. Not everything in Jordan is perfect, but the King is certainly a positive force in the region in the promotion of pluralism and religious freedom.

Examples of Christian persecution in Iraq could fill many pages. Churches have been bombed, and individuals taken for ransom and murdered. ISIS swept into the second biggest city, Mosul, in August 2014. Perhaps 30,000 Christians from Mosul and another 125,000 to 150,000 from the Nineveh Plain were forced to flee, and others were killed.¹⁷

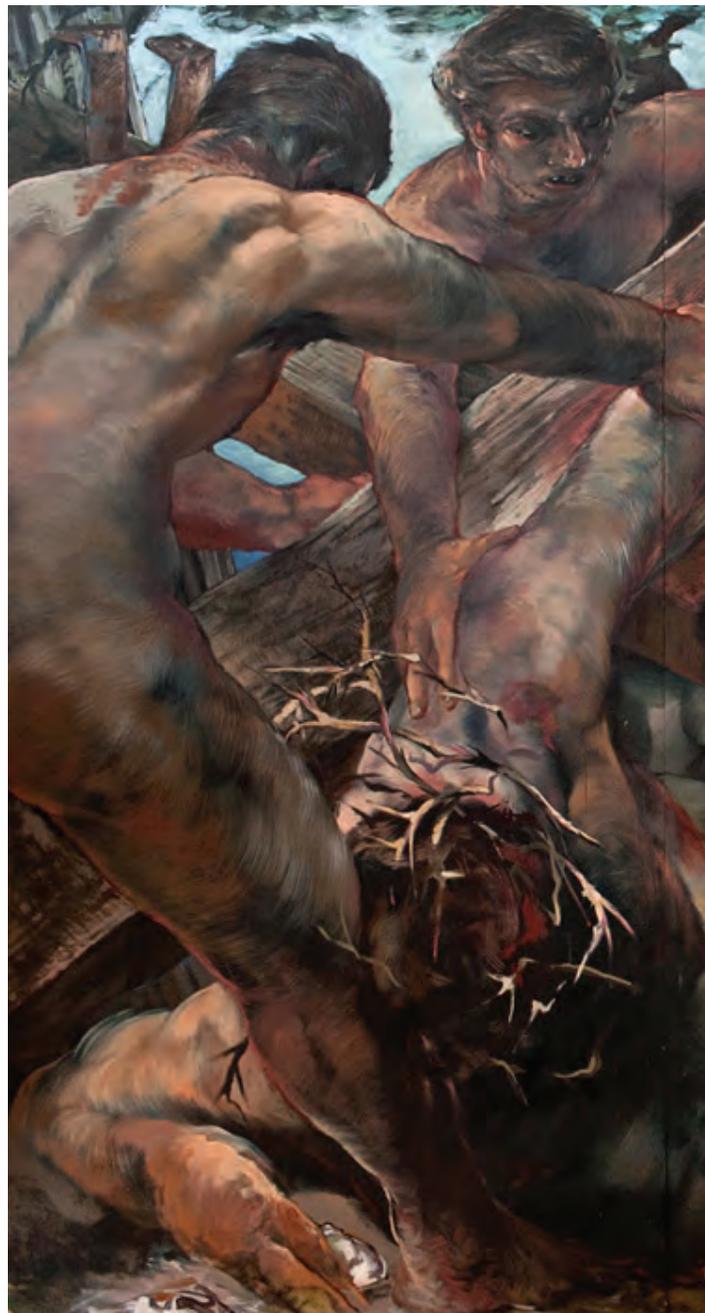
The devastation following Saddam's fall teaches a painful lesson: just removing a bad ruler does not guarantee that a situation will improve. If anarchy and conflict result, then there can be terrible unintended consequences.

It is estimated that there were 1.5 million Christians in Iraq at the time of the US invasion in 2003 (just under 6 percent of population). Prior to the rise of ISIS in 2014, the community had shrunk to less than 500,000, and now that number has probably declined to between 100,000 and 300,000 (less than 1 percent of the current Iraqi population). Many of the latter are IDPs in the Kurdistan Region of northern Iraq (governed by the Kurdistan Regional Government, KRG).¹⁸

Joshua Landis' *Syria Comment* asserts that the percentage of Christians in Syria around 2012, just a year after the civil war began, may only have been 4-6 percent, though frequently 10-12 percent is cited.¹⁹ In the spring of 2016, Antoine Audo, the Chaldean Bishop of Aleppo, reported that Syria's Christian population had dropped from 1.5 million to 500,000.²⁰

As brutal as Assad has been, were Sunni Islamist extremists to overthrow and replace him, the results for Christians and other minorities could be even worse than they face at present.

Aleppo, once a Christian safe haven, became a death trap during Syria's civil war. After Turkey's Christian genocide in the closing years of the Ottoman Empire, many survivors took shelter in Aleppo. The city went from 300 Armenian families to 400,000.²¹ Aleppo had been particularly hard hit by fighting and the persecution by extremists,



Christ Nailed to the Cross, by Edward Knippers, 2000.

resulting in its Christian population plunging from an already reduced 200,000 to 35,000 (down 85 percent), and Syria's third largest Christian community, Homs, had plunged from 40,000 to 2,000 (down 95 percent).²² Syrian Christians are effectively powerless pawns, small enough that no matter who wins or stays in power, they are in trouble.

The Islamist militant group al-Nusra took the northern Syrian city Raqqa in March 2013. The city would become the ISIS capital of Abu



Bakr al-Baghdadi's Caliphate. Of the 200,000 civilians there, 3,000 were Christian. Many fled, and others were taken captive or executed. Stories emerged about how in the city square crosses were erected and Christian victims, perhaps already dead, were hung crucifixion-style. A UN fact-finding mission reported children were "killed or publicly executed, crucified, beheaded, and stoned to death." Girls as young as 12 were seized and sexually brutalized.²³ Bishop Audo has confirmed that young children have been

beheaded and dismembered in Christian villages.²⁴

WHY ISLAM & THE WORLD NEEDS A CHRISTIAN PRESENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Why does it matter that Christians stay in the Middle East? Some say it is so horrendous there now, particularly in Iraq and Syria, that Western Christians should arrange jumbo jets to airlift the remaining Christians out. It would seem the humane thing to do. The



Descent From the Cross, by Edward Knippers, 1998.

problem is this: removing the presence of Jews, Christians, Yezidis, and other minorities from the Middle East would destroy the region's rich culture. This impoverishes the dominant culture, and the sad truth is that societies which cannot tolerate diversity within their own backyard inevitably become a threat to their neighbors as well.

AN EVER-PRESENT QUESTION

In *From the Holy Mountain: A Journey in the Shadow of Byzantium*, William Dalrymple retells his journey through the Middle East, including Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, and Syria. He was following in the footsteps of John Moschos, a monk who in 578 left a monastery near Bethlehem. Fourteen centuries ago, this monk wondered whether Christians could survive in the region. He asked the same

question we ask today, but, then anyway, Christianity did, in fact, continue to be an important presence in the Middle East.

Before Moschos' day, few could have predicted that Christians would have survived their persecution to become ascendant in the Roman Empire. And yet, no sooner had the Christians become ascendant than the German "barbarians" emerged as a lethal threat. Not surprisingly, Christians of that day were tempted to despair, to wonder where the Providence of God was amidst this threatened descent of "Christian" Rome into pagan hands. It was during this time that Augustine was writing his classic testimony to faith, *City of God*. Of course, we now know the rest of the story: the Germanic tribes were converted, and Christianity survived and thrived throughout the so-called "dark ages."

Then two centuries later John Moschos goes on his journey, finds Christians once again under siege, this time by the Persians, who were attacking Jerusalem and Bethlehem. All of this occurred before Islam even emerged as a powerful new religion and power, and then proceeded to conquer the region.

In other words, this is indeed a very old story, filled with many ups and downs for the Christians of the Middle East. And once again, during this past century, and particularly these last decades, the threats to Christians in the Middle East seem particularly ominous.

WHAT CAN WE DO IN THE WEST TO BE OF HELP?

What, in the midst of all this, can the West do? Christians and non-Christians alike need to first understand that keeping a multi-faith, multiethnic, diverse Middle East is in the best interests of the minorities, but also of the region and, in fact, of all of us. For Christians and non-Christians alike, there are very negative consequences for the Middle East and the world if historic minorities such as Christians are purged from the landscape.

Several years of research by the Religious Freedom Project at Georgetown University has documented that whenever religious freedom exists in a society, there are multiple ways in which that society prospers. Taking this knowledge of the value of religious freedom and communicating it to governments is the task of the newly created and independent Religious Freedom Institute in D.C. It is a message that needs now to be heard in both the democratic West and in the boiling cauldron of anarchy and conflict that is the Middle East.

Below are several specific suggestions for how the West can address the tragic problems which threaten the very survival of Christians and other religious communities in the Middle East.

First, we must not succumb to the understandable temptation to despair and give up, as if nothing we can do will

make a difference. The narrative sometimes can be heard that we have miscalculated before with our interventions, have triggered unintended consequences, and therefore, we should learn from our mistakes and do nothing. However, unintended consequences should not teach us to never act, but rather to act more intelligently and carefully. To succumb to an “isolationist” conclusion is an escape from responsibility. We must resist the temptation to believe there is no hope in the Middle East or elsewhere, that there is nothing we can do which can help or make the situation better. Doing nothing is not an option, but rather a dereliction of duty.

Second, though the use of force against ISIS is not all that will be required, it will almost certainly be an important initial part of what is required. In this case, Christian Just War theory does justify using force as appropriate. It won't be enough to solve the problem completely, but it is part of a solution. But we must also transform hearts and minds as well. Intolerance and a failure to appreciate the value of pluralism and religious freedom is a problem of cultures and societies, not just of governments and religious extremists.

Third, both individuals and nations should respond to the very tangible needs of refugees and IDPs. There is much more we can and should do. We may not be able to save all children, but that is no excuse for not saving those we can.

Fourth, the bipartisan “Iraq and Syria Genocide Relief and Accountability Act of 2016” (HR 5961) should be supported. Congresspersons, who are trying to do their best to help, need citizens' support so that resolutions like this can pass.

Fifth, the US must work with Iraq to create necessary political and societal conditions which will allow Christian IDPs and other religious communities to return to the Nineveh Plain and live in peace and security. We must accept that there is no quick fix. There can be a successful military campaign to retake Mosul,



The Second Coming, by Edward Knippers, 1998.

but creating a culture in Iraq, Syria, and elsewhere in the Middle East that ensures safety for pluralism and religious freedom is a multi-decade process. We must look at what it will take to accomplish this task, and then commit ourselves to what will be required to accomplish it. There are no short-cuts to the hard work of nurturing the values and institutions which can support democracy with minority rights, including a robust guarantee of religious freedom.

A positive future depends on the conviction that the good of both majorities and

minorities alike is advanced when religious freedom is nurtured and guaranteed. We must become much more adept at making the empirical case that this is so.

Sixth, while securing the survival of Christianity in the Middle East, it is imperative that we not just attend to the acute crises which now engulf Syria and Iraq. While the fighting there must come to an end and new political and societal environments be fostered which enable religious freedom, we should not be so focused on Iraq and Syria that other parts of the



Middle East are ignored. Places like Lebanon, Egypt, and Jordan should also be areas of concern. Where diversity exists, political and economic stability should be enhanced, as well as democracy, human rights, and religious freedom. In short, where there is at least some health, we must ensure even greater health, and do the hard work of immunizing to the fullest extent possible such settings from extremist threats by focusing on school curriculum, civil society enhancement, inter-religious dialogue and collaboration, and positive use of social media.

Seventh, we should learn from history. Crucial lessons need to be absorbed both in terms of what mistakes to avoid, but also as a means to remember that the present is not a necessary predictor of the future.

Eighth, the United States should work with practicing and devout Muslims who oppose ISIS and al-Qaida. Some say working with Muslims to defeat and marginalize extremist Islam is hopeless. But there is hope, as demonstrated by an open letter to Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, self-proclaimed caliph of the Islamic State, signed by well over 100 global Muslim leaders. Most of the signatories are from places like Egypt, Yemen, Iraq, and Syria. This letter is a carefully-crafted theological treatise, 16 pages long, which absolutely rejects the Islamic State's central tenets. According to these Muslim leaders, in Islam: it is forbidden to kill the innocent; it is forbidden to kill emissaries, ambassadors, diplomats, journalists, and aid workers; it is forbidden to harm or mistreat in any way Christians (they go on to say it's inappropriate to harm or mistreat Yazidis); it is forbidden to force people to convert; it is forbidden to deny women their rights; it is it forbidden to torture; it is forbidden to disfigure the dead; it is forbidden to attribute evil acts to God. Now, more than treatises like this are needed. It is imperative that Muslims find within their own tradition the means to excise violent understandings and interpretations of Islam that are so dangerous to the whole world and to Islam itself.

Another example of Muslim leaders strongly criticizing Islamic extremism occurred in late January 2016, when over 200 Muslims from 120 countries signed the Marrakesh Declaration, which calls for the protection of minorities in Muslim countries.²⁵

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

The purpose of this recital of history, some of it ancient, some of it all too recent, has been to affirm three key points.

First, Christianity has always been in danger in the Middle East, and elsewhere for that matter. It exists within the “ebb and flow” of history.

Second, this history reminds us that the hostility which exists between Christianity and a particularly fundamentalist and violent understanding of Islam is a sad and very painful fact at this point in history, but it should not blind us to the fact that Christians and Muslims have often lived and worked side by side together through the centuries. The relationship has been far from perfect, but there is no reason that this relationship cannot be better in the future than it has been in the past, though it will be necessary for intolerant Muslim extremists to be defeated both on the battlefield and in the ideological swamp in which they have thrived.

Third, the Church has and always will always survive, and it always will be victorious in the long-run over persecution. Being victorious, however, does not mean that death and suffering will be escaped in the short-term. For believing Christians, death, however, is never the end which the world thinks it is, which is why the symbol of the cross and crucifix is so powerful for Christians.

We are astounded at the senseless cruelty and inhumanity of 21 Christian migrants being brutally murdered on the shores of the Mediterranean in Libya. But we are even more astounded by what happened a week later when a brother of two of those victims gave an interview that was broadcast throughout the Middle East. He not only forgave his brothers’ executioners, but he thanked the Islamic State for allowing his brothers’ final profession of faith to be broadcast. Within hours, 100,000 people on Facebook had watched that story of forgiveness.

In the New Testament and in the chronicles of Christian history, a consistent theme exists: if the followers of Jesus are faithful, even while persecuted, God will use their suffering to advance the coming of His Kingdom. The apparent defeat of “Good Friday” can indeed be followed by the victory of “Resurrection

Sunday.” Just as Saul of Tarsus, who went to Damascus to persecute Christians, became a Christian and martyr, similar miracles do and will happen again. For Christians, there are profound lessons to be learned from both Scripture and church history.

Mindy Belz’s fine book *They Say We Are Infidels: On the Run from ISIS with Persecuted Christians in the Middle East* illustrates many of these lessons. Despite the horrors, she recounts courage and joyful witness to Christian truth, such as that of Bishop Antoine Audo of Aleppo, head of the Chaldean Church in Syria. He has borne eloquent witness to his deep faith as to what the continuing presence of Christians means in the Middle East storm of violence and danger:

[T]his is the church of Mesopotamia now for two thousand years. The call is to continue with a presence to give a taste of faith to Kurdish and Arabic peoples, and others. So, I am doing my duty as a witness—praying, attending to the Eucharist, showing the presence of the Lord, and serving him with joy.²⁶

Similarly, the head monk of Mar Matti, a fourth-century monastery just 12 miles from Mosul, has insisted that as long as there are Christians in Iraq, “a shepherd cannot leave his sheep.”²⁷

So, while we are obligated to do all we can to provide refuge to all who are compelled to abandon their homes and become refugees or IDPs, we must also protect as best we can all those who remain in harm’s way. We must do the tedious, hard, and decades-long work of building conditions which promote tolerance and stability. We also have an obligation to bear witness to the faithfulness and joy of those who are persecuted, whose fidelity to the faith does not occasion despair but, by the grace of God, faithful witness. Scripture rejects resignation, and instead enjoins us to:

Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, “Behold, we did not know this,” does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?²⁸

Finally, we must not give up hope. Surely, there have been times when we have all been tempted to despair, and yet, history and our faith teach us that despair and hopelessness are not Christian virtues. Dry bones do live again. The Cross reminds us that what seems to be the end may well be just a necessary path to Resurrection Sunday.

Despite this very dark time, Christians will almost certainly survive, and God willing, one day thrive again in the home of their ancient faith. ☐

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Edward Knippers is a nationally exhibited artist known as a figurative painter of biblical subjects. We are grateful that his art illustrates the text of the memorial lecture held in honor of his late wife. To see more of Ed's extraordinary exploration of the Christian faith through artistic creation, visit: www.edwardknippers.com.

(Endnotes)

- 1 Pew Research Center. "Trends in Global Restrictions on Religion" (for 2014), released June 23, 2016, pewforum.org
- 2 Open Doors, "Christian Persecution" opendoorsusa.org, accessed February 28, 2017.
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- 5 Mindy Belz, *They Say We Are Infidels: On the Run from ISIS with Persecuted Christians in the Middle East* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2016), pp. 310, 84.
- 6 Ara Bedlian, "Christians in Iraq: Decreased Numbers and Immigration Challenges," in Sa'ad Salloum's *Minorities in Iraq: Memory, Identity and Challenges* (Baghdad-Beirut: Masarat, 2014), p. 59.
- 7 Suha Rassam. *Christianity in Iraq* (New Edition. Leominster, Australia: Gracewing, 2010), xvii-xviii.
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- 9 William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Fifth Edition (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013), pp. 185-86.
- 10 The Syrian Center for Policy Research reported in February 2016 that at least 470,000 Syrians had died as a result of the war. Anne Barnard, "Death Toll from War Now 470,000, Group Finds," *New York Times*, February 11, 2016.

- UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura on April 22, 2016, estimated 400,000 deaths in the conflict in Syria, http://www.unmultimedia.org/radio/english/2016/04/syria-envoy-claims-400000-have-died-in-syria-conflict/#.V_GoG5MrLox
- 11 The 6.1 million IDP number is as of September 2016, according to OCHA (the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), <http://www.unocha.org/syria>. (Actually, the same source also lists 6.5 million IDPs; we also know that many refugees are not registered, such as in Lebanon.) Here are the locations of the registered refugees: Turkey: 2,733,655; Lebanon: 1,033,513 (but the total number of refugees, since many are not registered, may be 1.5 million or more); Jordan: 656,400; Iraq: 239,008; and Egypt: 114,911.
 - 12 O'Mahoney, Anthony and John Flannery eds., *The Catholic Church in the Contemporary Middle East* (London: Melisende, 2010), p. 7. Cited in "Hope for the Middle East," p. 7. See footnote 19 for full citation.
 - 13 Pew Research Center. *The Future of World Religious Population Growth, 2010-50, Middle East-North Africa*, April 2, 2015, pewforum.org. 93% of the population in the Middle East and North Africa is Muslim and 1.6% Jewish. The vast majority of Jews are living in Israel.
 - 14 Israel Charney, "Notes on the Genocides of Christian Populations of the Ottoman Empire," presented to the membership of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, 2007, http://www.genocidetext.net/iags_resolution_supporting_documentation.htm. The Turkish government would claim that those they killed were allied with their enemies in World War I, and thus it was not genocide.
 - 15 *United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF): 2016 Annual Report*, p. 91, uscirf.gov.
 - 16 Estimate of 38.3% is for 2010. Pew Research Center. "Table: Christian Populations as Percentages of Total Population by Country," December 19, 2011, pewforum.org. According to the Pew Research Center, about 58% of the population of Eritrea is Christian, overwhelmingly Orthodox. Though religion is very controlled here for the four registered religions, and banned for the rest, Eritrea is not nearly as strategic in the discussion of the Middle East as is Lebanon, and thus I will not deal with Eritrea in this paper. For further information on Eritrea, see *2016 Annual Report*, USCIRF, pp. 39-42.
 - 17 Belz, p. 265. According to *2016 Annual Report*, USCIRF, the Iraq Defense Minister, Khaled-al-Obeidi reported that ISIS killed 2,000, mainly in the Nineveh Plain, and forced approximately 125,000 Christians to flee, mainly to the Kurdistan Regional Government, p. 101.
 - 18 "Hope for the Middle East: Impact and Significance of the Christian Presence in Syria and Iraq during the Current Crisis," February 2016, p. 9, opendoorsuk.org. A publication produced by Open Doors, Served, Middle East Concern, and the University of East London. I have lowered the number of Christians remaining in Iraq from 500,000 to an upper estimate of 300,000 to take into account the recent continued flow of emigres out of Iraq.
 - 19 Ehsani [George Saghiri], "Fewer Christians Live in Aleppo Than Previously Thought," *Syria Comment*, Center for Middle East Studies, University of Oklahoma, <http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/the-poor-plight-of-the-christian-minority-in-Aleppo-syria-by-ehsani/>.
 - 20 "Syria - 66% of Syrian Christians Gone, Chaldean Catholic Bishop Says," Aid to the Church in Need, April 13, 2016, acnmalta.org.
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 - 23 Belz, pp. 198-99.
 - 24 Belz, p. 201.
 - 25 See the "Executive Summary of the Marrakesh Declaration on the Rights of Religious Minorities in Predominantly Muslim Majority Communities," Institute for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies, January 25-27, 2016, icjs.org.
 - 26 Cited in Belz, p. 165.
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 - 28 Proverbs 24:12



The Prophet Nathan Rebukes King David, by Eugène Siberdt, circa late 19th century. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

MORAL TRIAGE

AMITAI ETZIONI

One of the main elements of soft power is the expression of moral condemnation or approval. Although a realist may argue that nations act to promote their self-interest and are moved only by tangible considerations such as the size of another nation’s military, economy, or other such “real” factors, nations in effect *do* respond to the moral voices of other states, non-state entities, and the “international community.” Thus, even totalitarian and authoritarian states do not simply ignore criticisms of their human rights records, but rather seek to justify their actions by

arguing, say, that socioeconomic rights are more important than legal or civil ones. Alternately, they might insist that their human rights records are in reality better than outside observers claim, or that they will attend to legal or civil rights once they have achieved a higher level of economic development. Nor, in turn, do these same states hesitate to criticize liberal democracies; for example, Russian President Vladimir Putin has chastised the United States for its own human rights record.¹

Leaving aside consideration that motives might include genuine

concerns of conscience, nations are inclined to raise their moral voices, even if the impact on other nations is limited, if for no other reason than simply because many local and transnational groups expect it. Taking a moral view may serve the domestic politics or diplomatic agendas of those in power. As a result, nations and non-state actors might raise their moral voices readily and quite often. However, such overexposure serves only to undermine the moral voice and squanders the moral capital states have. Nations, and the world, would be much better served if they



exercised their moral voices much more sparingly—and in particular if they focused in on those situations in which they can do the most good. Discernment, and the framework to allow this, is what's needed. In short, *moral triage* is called for.²

The term triage is usually used in the context of emergency medicine to describe standard operating procedure when a medical team is faced with a number of injured people that far outstrips the team's resources. Simple triage calls for sorting the injured into three categories: those who will likely die regardless of immediate treatment; those whose injuries seem comparatively light; and those whose injuries are severe but are likely to survive and recover if treated rapidly. In most cases,

this last group gets first attention. (Of course, the ratio of those treated to those neglected depends on the resources available and the number of people who would greatly benefit from immediate intervention.)

The same should hold for moral triage. At any given point, a state could readily chastise scores of other nations for one reason or another—or, more often, for several reasons. However, if a nation issues scores of condemnations, they quickly lose their effect. This is particularly true if states or non-state actors that ignore moral condemnations do not face concrete consequences for their continued abuses.

Evaluating the utility of my proposal may be difficult. Because moral triage is a new concept, it is not possible to point to an agent that has self-consciously applied this approach in the past. Nor do there seem to be states or other actors that have applied policies that generally correspond to my proposal's basic tenets. Nevertheless, there follows two cases in which a moral voice was applied, with good effect, to situations that seem to fit the triage criteria for immediate attention. These are followed by a study of a scattergram approach in which condemnations were issued with decidedly less discernment. I cannot stress enough that in each case factors other than the moral condemnation were at play, though the rebuke nevertheless seems to have played a decisive role in the first two cases, and hardly any in the others.

OUT OF THE BOATS

The United Nations has called Myanmar's Muslim-minority Rohingya people "the most persecuted minority in the world" and at risk of genocide.³ In

flight from this violence and persecution, as many as 20,000 Rohingya, or one in ten⁴, have fled the country in small boats and are now living on the waters of the Andaman Sea.⁵

In May 2015, despite the Rohingya's plight, neighboring Indonesia stated that it would deny the threatened people permission to land on Indonesia territory.⁶ Thailand and Malaysia did the same.⁷ The United Nations' human rights chief declared himself "appalled" at the news that the three nations had turned their backs on Rohingya.⁸ A spokesperson for the United States Department of State expressed grave concern, calling the situation an "emergency" and, accompanied by a bevy of non-governmental organizations such as the Arakan Project⁹ and international religious leaders such as Pope Francis¹⁰, "urged" neighboring states in the region to offer the Rohingya refugee status and safe haven¹¹. The United States, for its part, further offered to settle about 1,000 Rohingya refugees. More impressively, Gambia offered to shelter *all* of the Rohingya boat people, saying, "As human beings, more so fellow Muslims, it is a sacred duty to help alleviate the untold hardships and sufferings these fellow human beings are confronted with."¹²

In specific response to this international outcry, Indonesia and Malaysia shifted their policy¹³ and extended assistance and temporary shelter to 7,000 of the nationless refugees,¹⁴ with Malaysia also offering its navy and coast guard for rescue operations¹⁵ Thailand, too, announced that it would stop preventing boats carrying Rohingya refugees from landing on its shores,¹⁶ and Bangladesh,

Australia, and the Philippines all offered to temporarily settle some of the remaining refugees.¹⁷ In return, the United Nations praised these efforts as “an important first step in the search for solutions.”¹⁸

EXODUS FOR A CHINESE ACTIVIST

The international community’s moral voice was also critical to the outcome of the diplomatic crisis precipitated by Chinese reproductive rights activist Chen Guangcheng’s flight from house arrest to the United States embassy in Beijing in April 2012.¹⁹ Chen was being persecuted by the Chinese government for fighting against the government’s forced sterilization and forced abortion policies. As the situation developed, there was considerable concern that China would prevent Chen from leaving the nation, keeping him, in effect, a prisoner in the American embassy.

The international community quickly responded by urging China to permit Chen simply to leave the country or to allow Chen and his family to obtain the passports and other documents necessary to legally emigrate.²⁰ Bolstering these appeals, and in the wake of allegations that the United States had essentially “abandoned” Chen, human rights activists, nongovernmental organizations, and politicians such as US Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) vocally called on the US government to openly assist Chen to the greatest extent possible.²¹

In response, in early May 2012, the United States successfully pressured China to clear Chen to travel abroad to study at an American university.²² By May 19, New York University

arranged to offer Chen a special student position at its law school. Chen was allowed to leave China for the United States.²³

Things, of course, do not always work out so well.

SQUANDERING THE MORAL VOICE

Considerable debate has centered on whether the United States should, or does, act as the world’s policeman. Traditionally, the US has seen itself as the guarantor of major international norms; for example, it assertively enforces the freedom of maritime navigation. However, in my studied view, when it comes to statements of moral censure the US often overextends itself and applies its moral voice without consideration for its likely effectiveness. In many cases, the United States behaves much like a grouchy, retired uncle who sits at the edge of a playground and verbally snipes at the children playing there by telling them to run less, clean up their language, play nice, and so on; all the while being roundly ignored.

One reviewer has posited that the primary problem here is not so much the incessant moral censure—assuming that the uncle’s complaints are in fact legitimate—but that there is no force backing up his words. While granting that “neither the uncle nor America should be nitpicking nags,” the reviewer maintained that ignoring children’s petty playground vices is not quite the same thing as, say, remaining silent after ISIS hacks off someone’s head. This remains true even if it’s granted from the start that ISIS will not desist. In response, I can only say, well, yes. But it’s

important to note that the scope of this article is limited to acts of moral censure; it does not encompass an analysis of any other possible action or the lack thereof. Furthermore, the specific purpose of this article is to highlight why moral censure should be used sparingly. Without question, the US and the international community should condemn brutal acts by ISIS. However, if it will issue similar condemnations on a too-frequent basis regarding the other acts of terrorism happening across the globe on any given day—all of which are deserving of such censure but which may not be deemed actionable—there will be a declining marginal utility of the effect of such condemnations.

Let’s consider Burundi President Pierre Nkurunziza’s April 2015 announcement that he would seek reelection, a declaration which sparked a failed coup, months of protests, and acts of brutality against the protestors by police and the ruling party’s Imbonerakure youth militias.²⁴ The United States not only called on the Burundian government to “condemn and stop the use of violence” by government proxies but demanded as well that all who used violence to intimidate protestors “be held accountable.”²⁵ It further issued a statement condemning any attempt to gain power through violence or other extraconstitutional mechanisms, and urging all parties to the fighting to stand down and “commit themselves to a constructive dialogue.”²⁶ The American ambassador-at-large for war crimes weighed in, insisting: “We are sending [the] strongest message we can that those that commit [acts of violence]—in particular, those that incite them, order them, arm and deploy the forces that are

committing these crimes—will be held to account.”²⁷ All these condemnations were issued to no effect.

By noting that these demands went unheeded, one may ask about alternatives: “Is the brutality to be simply ignored? Is there no kind of moral censure that remains valuable without making demands that no one intends to enforce?” To use a musical analogy, yes, moral outrage *can* be expressed in different registers. All the while, the higher registers (i.e. the more severe), in particular, should be used sparingly.

Shortly following the Burundi debacle, the United States issued yet another moral criticism, this one concerning developments in Sudan, which also went largely ignored. This in turn was followed by an expression of moral outrage by the US about actions of Boko Haram. Before and after, there were several critical statements by various American authorities concerning human rights abuses in Russia, China, and elsewhere in the world. Most to little effect.

Still looking for a place for even that kind of moral censure that we know will go unheeded, another earlier reviewer pondered a situation in which we don’t, initially, publicly condemn an action because, per the framework of moral triage, we realize our condemnation won’t directly cause behavioral change—as might have been the case with China building artificial islands with military installations. But what if the scenario is serious enough that, if it continued apace, we knew we would eventually be required to react militarily if we deemed the actor had finally crossed a—hitherto unspoken—red line? How could our adversary have

avoided military action if we never communicated that we might consider such action necessarily? Especially if we consider war a last resort, isn’t a verbal condemnation a step in avoiding conflict? This reviewer’s concern is not directly related to the concept of moral outrage. A distinction can be made between moral censure and the drawing of a red line, which comes into play especially when the national interest is at stake. Limiting pronouncements of moral censure would not limit, for example, the United States’ ability to make its interests known, or its intended method of recourse should those interests be compromised. In other words, publicly made moral condemnation is not the only way for nations to communicate the existence red lines.

But one may then ask: “Isn’t there space for something between doing nothing and generating red-lines we don’t intend to defend? Surely there is a public condemnation that doesn’t carry demands—that need to be backed by force—but still makes a moral proclamation and, if so, isn’t that kind of thing valuable? Wasn’t there power in Reagan’s declaration of the Soviet Union as an ‘evil empire’?” In response, I note that I am not arguing that moral outrage has no effect but only that it needs to be sharply focused. President Reagan used the term in reference to one country. A future administration would refer to just three nations as an axis of evil. If instead that characterization would be made of all the countries that violate human rights—several scores—the label is likely to lose much of its effect.

The use of highly evocative terms, such as evil, raises another issue, which is beyond

the scope of this article but deserves brief discussion. One does not deal or negotiate with evil; one seeks to vanquish it. Hence, once the leaders of one nation characterize another nation as evil, and that nation is not subject to regime change or major reforms, it is difficult to work with it, yet doing so is often unavoidable. Thus Reagan sat down with Gorbachev and made a very important arms deal long before Russia was truly reformed (it still is not), and John Kerry arranged the removal of a major pile of chemical weapons from a war zone, in which they were employed, by negotiating with an “evil” nation. I suggest that it would be morally more appropriate and politically savvy to follow the line of hating the sin but loving the sinner, of criticizing policies but not nations, and of assuming that all are redeemable.

After all this, what can we conclude a triage-based approach would look like? A state such as the United States should say comparatively little about the moral conduct of states and non-state actors, such as North Korea or ISIS, that are extremely unlikely to be affected by its censure or its approbation. It should also refrain from chastising the occasional missteps of states that by and large maintain a high standard of human rights. Instead, it should focus its moral voice on censuring the egregious moral violations of those nations it is possibly able to sway. This would necessarily include being prudent about which kinds of violations might be open to influence by moral opprobrium. No nation is likely to be malleable when it comes to what it perceives as vital interests. China, for example, is much more likely to consider criticism of its treatment of the environment than

of the limitations it imposes on free speech.

The United States took such an approach toward Germany and other members of the Eurozone over the Greek debt crisis. In February 2015, President Obama called for reasonable leniency, saying, “You cannot keep on squeezing countries that are in the midst of depression.”²⁸ Meanwhile, other American officials called for compromise from both Greece and the other members of the Eurozone.²⁹ In July 2015, the White House reiterated its position that Germany must compromise with Greece in order to salvage the latter’s position in the Eurozone and offer opportunities for Greek economic growth.³⁰ On July 17, the German parliament voted in favor of a proposal to negotiate a bailout with Greece.³¹ The United States asserted its position, but refrained from issuing moral condemnations against any of the parties involved; instead, it has preferred to comment only when necessary and in more utilitarian terms.

None of this is to suggest that the conditions of nations for whom the United States might assign, based on a framework of moral triage, a lower priority should be simply ignored. The US might well continue to issue annual reports on human rights conditions in each country, as the Department of State currently does. However, most of the United States’ effort should focus on the visible, active, and high-powered application of its moral voice to the latter triage category—those suffering severe calamities that might yet be saved by swift action. Most importantly, there must be a time when the scolding stops. When aggressor nations ignore the United States’ moral censure, they should anticipate, indeed

they must be taught to anticipate, that the United States will subject them to additional measures that reach well beyond mere words.

To mix the metaphors: the moral voice has currency and mustn’t be misspent. If it is raised too often, against targets that are unyielding or engaged in minor violations of what is considered proper conduct, it will be largely squandered. If it is applied selectively, in places of significant concern, and where it might have an effect, it will be more likely to yield dividends. **[P]**

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Quaternion Eagle printed, by David de Negker based on a circa 1510 woodcut by Hans Burgkmair and Jost de Negker. Source: Wikimedia Commons. This version of the Holy Roman Empire's coat of arms includes both imperial and Christian imagery.

CHRISTIANS & AMERICAN EMPIRE

MARK TOOLEY

CHRISTIANS & EMPIRE

Preoccupation with “empire” by some American Christian elites may be back. In the 2000s many commentators in Christian Left and Neo-Anabaptist circles obsessed over the threat of American empire. Their fears were stoked by the U.S.-led invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, and compounded by the now-quaint talk of “theocracy” after Evangelicals supported George W. Bush’s 2004 reelection.

During the Obama years, Christian fears of empire

subsided a bit, partly in reaction to limited U.S. strategic withdrawal and the cooling of presidential rhetoric about U.S. global responsibilities. Now that Donald Trump is president, the empire conversation is reigniting.

In terms of America’s global reach, Trump’s sometimes neo-isolationist campaign rhetoric, critical of Bush’s wars and skeptical of the global liberal order sustained by American alliances like NATO, should have pleased Christian critics

of empire. Trump’s national security appointments, however, seem more conventionally supportive of longtime American international commitments. Proposed increased military spending implies that the U.S. role in the world will not significantly recede.

Christian critique of empire does not focus exclusively on America’s military and economic footprint. Because empire is seen as incompatible with faith in Jesus Christ, critics reject any collaboration with

the global capitalist order, which is sometimes compared with ancient empires that tormented God's people in the Bible. In the Old Testament, it was Hebrew suffering under Egypt and Babylon. In the New Testament, Christians and Jews were oppressed by Rome, which crucified Jesus.

Much of the anti-empire pre-occupation originated in the teachings of the late Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder, author of *The Politics of Jesus* who was popularized by Stanley Hauerwas of Duke University's Divinity School. They insist that Christian faithfulness demands rejection of all violence, including by the state through law enforcement and the military. Hauerwas demonizes America for offering, unlike any other nation, a universal meta-narrative asserting human rights and democracy for all. This vision supposedly conflicts with Christian calls for surrender and self-denial.

Activist Shane Claiborne, whose 2004 book *Jesus for President* equated America with the Third Reich, relies on the Yoder-Hauerwas schematic. So too do popular pastors/writers Greg Boyd and Brian Zahnd, the latter of whom compulsively tweets against "empire." There is also Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann, who relies more strictly on old-style liberal Protestant allegorizing of the Scriptures to achieve his social justice denunciation of empire.

These Christian critics of empire are not consistent. They typically want America and the West to accept all immigrants and refugees, to regulate the global environment, to sustain larger welfare states, and coercively to impose a Western-inspired

egalitarian economic, social, and sexual ethos on the world. They demand their own form of "empire," reputedly based on the Sermon on the Mount.

While Christian critics of empire don't want militaries, capitalist economies, robust nation states, or any acknowledgement of the universal pursuit of self-interest manifest in human fallenness, they live in the upper echelons of the "empire." They benefit from it and indeed would not exist without it, yet seem mostly unaware of the paradox.

The Christian commentariat against empire, from privileged perches at large churches and

universities, is free to tweet, chatter, and gather large followings of mostly suburban middle class evangelicals and Protestants thanks to the safety and wealth of the American "empire." Their lofty social vision of poverty alleviation, universal healthcare, equality for women, and a clean environment would be impossible without the "empire" of powerful regimes sustained by the wealth engines of capitalism and protected by lethal militaries on guard against terror, aggression, and domination.

Among its other omissions, the contemporary Christian critique of "empire" forgets that unlike



Columbia's Easter Bonnet, by Samuel D. Ehrhart and Louis Dalrymple, April 6, 1901. Source: Library of Congress. Puck's cover depicts one way an American "empire" has been perceived.

ancient Egypt, Babylon, and Rome, the current American-led global order has been profoundly shaped by Christian teaching, however haphazardly. The ancient empires may have achieved order, which is not morally insignificant. But the current global order provides stability while also advocating education, disease eradication, increased standard of living for all, democracy, and human rights, including religious freedom, which ought to interest all who claim the name of Christ and wish to extol their love of Him.

It's noteworthy that critics of "empire," which they portray as the enemy and oppressor of Christ's faithful followers, typically evince little to no interest in genuinely persecuted Christians around the world. Casualties of U.S. drone strikes provoke far more sympathy and interest than Christians killed or imprisoned by Islamist regimes or mobs or by communist tyrannies like North Korea.

Suffering Christians in the Middle East, Pakistan, Sudan,

China, Vietnam, or countless other oppressive societies likely wish they could live under the protection of "empire." Ideally, their plight would at least be somewhat alleviated if America and the West advocated harder on their behalf, citing religious freedom as an intrinsic human right guaranteed by the United Nations Charter on Human Rights.

Sadly, critics of "empire" often think Christian-inspired Western notions of human rights and religious liberty are just another tentacle of empire. They root the supposed corruption of Christianity in Emperor Constantine's embrace of the church, which began the end of Rome's persecution of Christians. That Constantine's conversion led to an approximate religious liberty and began the centuries-long Christian-inspired quest for a more just social order does not terribly interest the anti-empire Christian school of thought.

In the wake of Constantine and living in the distress of the Roman Empire's weakness, St.

Augustine of Hippo wrote of God's providential superintendency of political kingdoms, their rise and fall. But critics of empire are reluctant to admit God's hand in the temporal order. At best, for them regimes are grudgingly tolerated by the Almighty as a judgement on and foil for the church. Augustine might respond that these critics underestimate the Lord and the wideness of His power and goodness.

American Christians, as agents of "empire," have been graced by our Lord with a special responsibility for power and influence, which can be used for good or ill, prudentially deployed or cavalierly disregarded. We can advocate a global statecraft that pursues stability, liberty, law, and prosperity. Or we can, as critics of empire seem to demand, self-indulgently and parasitically denounce our blessings while evading responsibility. Surely both godly duty and wisdom summon us to the former. **P**

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Man Protected by the Shield of Faith, by Maarten van Heemskerck, 1559. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Source: metmuseum.org. Satan sits atop the globe on a rug, embellished with the seven deadly sins, hurling burning arrows at a praying man. The man is protected by a shield held by the personification of Faith, who also bears a Bible and cross. The favor must be continually returned: Faith herself needs a champion.

A SHIELD FOR FAITH

ALAN W. DOWD

With just 1.3 million active-duty troops and about 800,000 reserve forces defending this nation of 320 million, fewer of us than at any time since World War II know someone who serves as a soldier, sailor, airman, or Marine. Sure, most of us know *about* America's military. It fights terrorism, rescues people after disasters, and does other stuff the media reports and Hollywood portrays. But knowing *about* something is different than knowing something. As such, most Americans are so disconnected from their military that it's an abstraction.

For anyone who cares about freedom—especially freedom of conscience, the freedom to worship or not worship—the U.S. military should be anything but an abstraction. In a world where might makes right, it is the U.S. military—not international treaties, presidential speeches, UN resolutions, protest marches, Wall Street, or Wal-Mart—that protects us from enemies who would either stamp out all faiths or force submission to one faith. We dare not think about it, but the line separating us from such a dark age is terrifyingly thin. Those 2.1 million citizen-soldiers not only stand on that line; they are that line.

EVERYWHERE

Eleven months before the attack on Pearl Harbor, in a speech detailing “unprecedented” threats to “American security,” President Franklin Roosevelt shared his vision of “a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.” FDR's Four Freedoms included freedom of speech, freedom from fear,

freedom from want, and “freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world.”

FDR spoke during the high noon of godless tyrannies.

Nazi Germany exterminated Jews, waged war on the Church, and turned its leader into a messiah. As historian Gerhard Weinberg observes, Christianity and Judaism “were removed simultaneously” by the Nazis.¹

In 1938, the Nazis destroyed 300 synagogues and arrested 25,000 Jews. A year later, Hitler began to deport Germany's Jewish population to Eastern Europe, where his war on religion would crescendo. By the end of the war, Hitler had murdered 6 million Jews.

“The destruction of Christianity was explicitly recognized as a purpose of the National Socialist movement,” Nazi leader Baldur von Schirach explained. The Nazi regime desired “a complete extirpation of Christianity,” as

the U.S. government concluded after combing through Nazi records, but “considerations of expediency made it impossible” to do so in one fell swoop. Instead, Hitler employed a policy of gradualism—lying to church leaders about the Nazi program and then lying about church leaders to the German people; abrogating laws protecting religious independence; seizing control of church institutions; declaring certain denominations illegal; fomenting violence against church leaders; sending anti-Nazi church leaders to concentration camps; murdering church leaders.²

Imperial Japan, too, elevated its emperor into a god, making it easier for his high command to justify anything and everything.

By the late 1930s, as Princeton University's Sheldon Garon details, the regime was regulating religious activity; ordering religious groups to correct “discrepancies between their teachings and the imperial myth”; and subordinating all faiths to the

cult of the emperor.³ As Paul Johnson adds in *Modern Times*, Japan's masters turned Shinto into a state religion that encompassed emperor worship in the military and in schools. Shinto was thus transformed into "an endorsement of a modern, totalitarian state," and "religion, which should have served to resist the secular horrors of the age, was used to sanctify them."⁴

Put it all together, and it's no surprise that FDR called on the American people to come to the defense of something they took for granted: religious freedom.

ENEMIES

"Every major war the United States has fought over the past 70 years has been against an enemy that also severely violated religious freedom," University of Texas professor William Inboden observes.⁵ Indeed, the one common denominator between the fascists of the Axis Powers and the communists of the Soviet bloc, between North Korea and North Vietnam, between the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Iran, between Moammar Qaddafi's Libya and Saddam Hussein's Iraq and Slobodan Milosevic's Serbia, between Hezbollah and the Taliban, Islamic State (ISIS), and al Qaeda, is that all of them were (or are) violently opposed to religious freedom.

While yesterday's enemies generally forced their subjects to stop believing in God—or accept some human substitute for God—today's envision a world where everyone either submits to their version of God or dies. ISIS is the most extreme and brutal embodiment of this:

- ISIS has orchestrated mass-beheadings of

Egyptian Christians; razed, desecrated, and plundered ancient Christian churches; shelled Christian homes; targeted Assyrian Christians for abduction; and crucified Christian children as young as 12.

- ISIS has given Christians a choice to convert to Islam, make payments to remain Christian, or face execution. In a haunting echo of how the Nazis branded Jews, the ISIS death cult marks Christian-owned properties with the Arabic equivalent of the letter "N" (ن) for "Nazarene."
- The European Union reports that Christians and Yazidis (a Kurdish religious tradition that blends aspects of Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Islam) "have been killed, slaughtered, beaten, subjected to extortion, abducted and tortured" by the Islamic State's coordinated campaign of brutality. As proof of its savage piety, ISIS has murdered thousands of Yazidis; forced 2,000 Yazidi women into sex slavery; conducted a systematic campaign of rape against Christian and Yazidi women; imprisoned Christian and Yazidi children as young as eight; sold children into slavery; and perhaps most shocking of all, used "mentally challenged" children as suicide bombers.⁶

These are just some of the reasons the U.S. military is at war with the Islamic State. However, the U.S. military is not at war with Islam. After all, in the past quarter-century, U.S. troops have rescued Muslims in Kosovo and Kurdistan, Somalia and



Sumatra, Kuwait and Kabul. Yet they are at war with those who would force people to submit to Islam, with mass-murderers masquerading as holy men, with those who, in Osama bin Laden's words, "do not differentiate between those dressed in military uniforms and civilians."

Calling the Islamic State's footsoldiers "unique in their brutality," President Barack Obama dispatched U.S. troops and warplanes to Iraq in 2014 to protect thousands of Yazidis from extermination.⁷ Thus began America's third war in Iraq in less than a quarter-century.

Hunted down and trapped on Mt. Sinjar, the Yazidis faced what Obama called "a terrible choice: starve on the mountain or be slaughtered on the ground. That's when America came to help."⁸ U.S. Marines and Special Operations forces landed on Mt. Sinjar to coordinate air drops and airstrikes. The Marines were planning and prepared "to pick everyone off the mountain," General James



Amos later confirmed, in what would have been perhaps the largest humanitarian evacuation in history. But that turned out to be unnecessary: U.S. C-17 and C-130 cargo planes dropped pallets of food for the Yazidi people, while F-16s and F-18s dropped ordnance that ended the ISIS assault. In the span of seven days, U.S. air power delivered 114,000 meals and 35,000 gallons of fresh water to the Yazidis. America's military saved an estimated 40,000 Yazidis, who were attacked simply because of their religious beliefs.⁹

The operation to protect the Yazidis is only the latest example of the U.S. military's role in defending religious freedom. To see others, we can look back to World War II.

Postwar Germany

Following victory, the U.S. military and its closest allies were deeply involved in rebuilding German society by addressing the causes—religious, cultural, political, institutional,

economic, educational—of Nazism.

To prevent the rise of another manmade messiah, General Lucius Clay (military governor of the U.S. sector of Germany) and other Allied military leaders worked with handpicked Germans to ensure that the postwar constitution guaranteed and protected religious freedom: "Freedom of the person shall be inviolable... Freedom of faith and of conscience, and freedom to profess a religious or philosophical creed, shall be inviolable. The undisturbed practice of religion shall be guaranteed," the Basic Law declared.¹⁰

Postwar Japan

Similarly, Japan's post-imperial constitution, which guaranteed equal rights, education reform, free speech, and religious liberty, bore the unmistakable fingerprints of an American general: Douglas MacArthur. "Within his first weeks in Japan," Ray Salvatore Jennings of the United States Institute of Peace writes, "MacArthur ordered and then delivered on an impressive array of reforms," including a ban on the "government-sanctioned religious cult of Shinto." James Dobbins notes that the U.S. military government "focused on removal of all traces of emperor worship (State Shinto) and militarism from the classrooms and curriculum." In pursuit of that goal, the U.S. Army sent teams to school districts to ensure that emperor worship was no longer a state-enforced practice.¹¹

MacArthur then formed what Jennings calls "a constitutional convention" of U.S. military officers and civilians that delivered a new constitution to the Japanese people. "Freedom of thought and conscience shall not be violated," MacArthur's constitution declared. "Freedom of religion is

guaranteed to all. No religious organization shall receive any privileges from the State, nor exercise any political authority. No person shall be compelled to take part in any religious act, celebration, rite or practice."¹²

Johnson observes that MacArthur's constitution triggered "a revolution from above" and broke the "mesmeric hold the state had hitherto exercised over the Japanese people."¹³

The Cold War

The Cold War was often cast as a struggle between godless communists and defenders of religious freedom—and understandably so. On one side of the Iron Curtain, there was religious liberty, freedom of conscience, individual expression; on the other, total control of thought and expression and belief, the obliteration of the individual.

Consider the Soviet Union's approach to, and treatment of, religion. An enemy-of-my-enemy ally during World War II, the Soviet Union rejected religion altogether, purged those who refused to genuflect to the state, and elevated government above all else. Lenin, founding father of the Soviet Union, viewed religion as "a powerful and ubiquitous enemy," Johnson writes.¹⁴ By the end of 1918, the government had nationalized all church property. By 1926, the Soviet state had murdered 1,200 bishops and priests; shuttered most seminaries; closed down all but a handful of parishes; and banned the publication of religious material.¹⁵ Virtually the entire clergy corps of the Russian Orthodox Church was liquidated or sent to labor camps in the 1920s and 1930s. "By 1939 only about 500 of over 50,000 churches remained open," according to the Library of Congress (LOC).

Although Stalin, in the grimmest days of World War II, permitted the practice of religion in order to rally the Russian people, the post-war era quickly proved this openness to faith was a merely a short-lived, expedient response to an existential threat. As evidence, consider that in 1953, Stalin ordered more than a million Soviet Jews deported to Siberia. They were spared only by his death.¹⁶ After Stalin, the Khrushchev regime carried out “a violent six-year campaign against all forms of religious practice,” the LOC adds.

Moreover, Moscow’s war on religion moved beyond Russian borders and into occupied Eastern Europe. In Soviet-dominated Poland, priests were under constant surveillance; many were beaten. Religious holidays were abolished. Children from church-going families were denied acceptance into colleges.¹⁷ In Hungary, as Baylor University’s Philip Jenkins writes, “Christian clergy and laity were murdered in the thousands.” All across communist Europe, he writes, “Christians suffered horrific persecutions”—forced labor, torture, concentration camps—under Soviet-backed communist regimes.¹⁸

Washington had wanted to bring America’s troops home after the defeat of Hitler, but they stayed behind as America extended its security umbrella across the Atlantic, thus preventing Moscow from dominating the whole of Europe. What Churchill said in the first decade of the Cold War would be true until the end. “But for American nuclear superiority,” he sighed, “Europe would already have been reduced to satellite status and the Iron Curtain would have reached the Atlantic and the Channel.”

Indeed, how America handled the awesome power of the atom spoke volumes about America. Thanks to the U.S. nuclear monopoly in the first several years of the Cold War, the only thing preventing America from erasing the USSR was America’s conscience. That was enough. As President Ronald Reagan observed decades later, “Had that nuclear monopoly been in the hands of the communist world, the map of Europe—indeed, the world—would look very different today.”

Only after Lenin’s regime had fallen could Russian leader Boris Yeltsin declare, “The world can sigh in relief. The idol of communism, which spread everywhere social strife, animosity and unparalleled brutality, which instilled fear in humanity, has collapsed.”

The Former Yugoslavia

There were many dimensions to the civil war that tore Yugoslavia apart in the 1990s—and there were villains and victims on all sides—but a primary cause was the ethno-religious campaign originating from Slobodan Milosevic and his henchmen targeting Bosnian and Kosovar Muslims.

When Yugoslavia began to descend into the abyss in 1991, a European diplomat declared it “the hour of Europe.” Washington took the hint. It would be a fateful decision. As historian William Pfaff notes, “In the Bosnian crisis, the United States didn’t act, so everyone failed to act.”¹⁹

Relying on diplomacy, words, and sanctions, the Europeans were unable to protect the innocents. In that long hour when Europe tested its soft power against Milosevic’s hard power, some 200,000 people were

erased and another 2 million were displaced—most of them Bosnian Muslims. The low point came when Dutch peacekeepers in the laughably misnamed UN Protection Force stood aside, Pilate-like, as Serb militias surrounded the so-called safe haven of Srebrenica and liquidated 7,000 Muslim men.

Only after Washington asserted itself in late 1995, by bringing American military might to bear, did Milosevic’s war come to an end. A U.S.-led peacekeeping force then entered Bosnia to enforce a partition, protect and separate different ethnic-religious groups, and monitor postwar borders.

A similar formula worked in Kosovo, an Albanian-Muslim enclave formerly in southern Serbia. Milosevic’s terror squads rampaged through Kosovo in late 1998 and early 1999, purging 850,000 Kosovar Muslims and killing thousands more. Again, it wasn’t diplomatic communiqués or UN sanctions that changed Belgrade’s behavior and protected the Kosovars, but rather a U.S.-led air armada. After Milosevic came to the peace table, U.S. and other NATO peacekeepers flowed into Kosovo.

In both Bosnia and Kosovo, American troops protected churches and mosques alike. They escorted Serbian Christian kids to school in the morning and Albanian Muslim kids to the same school in the afternoon.²⁰

The Taliban’s Afghanistan

After it came to power in 1996, the Taliban ordered Hindus to wear special identity labels, destroyed ancient statues of Buddha, summarily executed those belonging to opposing sects of Islam, depopulated areas controlled by ethnic

minority groups, turned soccer stadiums into mass-execution chambers, burned people alive, killed and jailed aid workers, banished girls from schools and women from public places, and dispatched their religious police to hunt down and imprison foreigners who talked about Christianity. Afghans who helped Christian missionaries faced the death penalty.²¹ It's no surprise that the Taliban made common cause with what was then the world's most violent and vicious terrorist organization: al Qaeda.

Thanks to the U.S. military, Afghanistan is no longer under the control of the medieval Taliban. As the late Christopher Hitchens wryly noted upon the fall of the Taliban: "The United States of America has just succeeded in bombing a country back out of the Stone Age. This deserves to be recognized as an achievement."²²

The U.S. military campaign in Afghanistan, like the war against the Axis, was not primarily about religious freedom; it was about defending the national interest and defeating the nation's enemies. Even so, 15 years after the ouster of the Taliban regime, Freedom House reports that "Religious freedom has improved...faiths other than Islam are permitted." Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, and Baha'is have served in government. Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh places of worship are opened. Some 6 million Afghan children are now in school. About 2.5 million Afghan girls are attending school. This is good news.²³

The bad news is that the Afghan state has little writ beyond Kabul. Christians are permitted to worship only "in small congregations in private homes."²⁴ According to Freedom House,

Afghanistan "is still hampered by violence and harassment aimed at religious minorities... the constitution establishes Islam as the official religion." However, in a country where Muslims comprise 99 percent of the population, the recognition of Islam as the official religion is neither surprising nor distressing. What is distressing is the fact that "[t]he Afghan constitution fails to protect the individual right to freedom of religion or belief," according to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF).²⁵ This is especially dispiriting given the amount of blood and treasure America has sacrificed in Afghanistan's rehabilitation—and especially worrisome given the role religious intolerance played in Afghanistan's descent.

Saddam Hussein's Iraq

Saddam Hussein ruled Iraq for almost 24 years—longer than Hitler controlled Germany, longer than Tojo dominated Japan. During Saddam's reign, neither the Iraqi people nor their neighbors knew a day of peace. His wars scarred Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. His internal terror decimated the Kurdish minority in northern Iraq and the Shiite majority in southern Iraq, transforming the cradle of civilization into a giant torture chamber. And his cult of death deformed the country. It's estimated that Saddam murdered 600,000 civilians, which means tens of thousands of Iraqi children were orphaned by his pogroms and death squads. Saddam became their father and god. "With our souls and our blood," Iraqi children were required to pledge at school, "we sacrifice for Saddam. We will sacrifice ourselves for you, O Saddam."²⁶ Children who refused to join Saddam's youth paramilitary organization were

imprisoned by the hundreds. It was a regiment of U.S. Marines that set them free.²⁷ And as in the Balkans, U.S. troops in Iraq helped protect mosques and pilgrims as they traveled to religious festivals.²⁸

One need not support the Bush administration's invasion of Iraq and mission creep in Afghanistan, or the Obama administration's pullout from Iraq and drawdown in Afghanistan, to recognize that the U.S. military built for the Afghan and Iraqi people a bridge back to civilization—and an opportunity to learn the ways of political and religious freedom.

ESSENTIAL

Of course, most fundamentally, the American military protects the religious freedom of the American people.

This notion would surprise many of the Founders, who worried about standing armies threatening liberty. Their worries were understandable given the history they knew. But the intervening centuries have shown the U.S. military to be unique in its self-restraint, deference to civilian authority, and commitment to democratic institutions. Rather than a threat, America's troops—pledged to defend not a man or a party or a creed or a nationality, but a constitution—have themselves proved essential to maintaining American freedoms.

Sometimes the threat posed by the enemies of religious freedom—and the need for defenders to protect that freedom—is more obvious than others. World War II was one of those times. Indeed, on D-Day, FDR openly asked God to protect America's troops as they "struggle to preserve our Republic, our

religion and our civilization, and to set free a suffering humanity...With Thy blessing, we shall prevail over the unholy forces of our enemy.”

This, too, is one of those times. ISIS leaders have declared, “We will conquer your Rome, break your crosses and enslave your women,” and warned Americans, “We will drown all of you in blood.”²⁹ ISIS materials call for “jihad against the Jews, the Christians, the Rafida [Shiite Muslims] and the proponents of democracy.”³⁰ Their goal is to create the conditions for a decisive battle between the faithful and faithless, and ultimately to construct a transnational theocracy. In various places, in various ways, the U.S. military stands athwart that dark vision of tomorrow.

ISIS has proven repeatedly that these are not empty threats. In Iraq and Syria, the Islamic State has executed uncounted numbers of Christians, Yazidis, and “apostate” Muslims; replaced steeple-top crosses with the black flag of jihad; destroyed Shiite mosques and Christian churches; and in a faint echo of Daniel’s, Christ’s, and John’s warnings about the desolation of holy places, turned churches into livestock warehouses.³¹ In France, ISIS footsoldiers have assaulted the secular and the sacred: a Bastille Day celebration, rock concerts and soccer stadiums, a newspaper, a Jewish grocery, and a Catholic church, where they slit the throat of a priest during mass. In southern Turkey, they attacked a Kurdish wedding service. In Saudi Arabia and Yemen, they bombed Shiite mosques; in Ankara, a peace rally; in San Bernardino, a Christmas party; in Orlando, a gay nightclub.

While our civilization celebrates

free will and freedom, our enemy demands sameness and submission, conformity and control. Even as the coalition rolls back the Islamic State’s borders and breaks its caliphate, ISIS, al Qaeda, and their jihadist brethren will remain a threat. The reason: they take literally Muhammad’s injunction “to fight all men until they say, “There is no god but Allah.” When people like bin Laden and Zawahiri, Zarqawi and Baghdadi fuse religious commands with political and military power, we can only conclude that they are at war with the very notion of free will, which is the foundation of Judeo-Christian belief and indeed every ethical worldview.

God has always put a high value on free will. In Genesis, He gave Adam and Eve the choice to obey Him or not. In Revelation, He explains that He knocks, but the choice is ours to answer. God wants people to be free—free to choose His path or another, free from Pharaoh and Haman and Caesar and Hitler, free from jihadists who say there is no god except theirs, free from tyrants who say there is no god at all.

Moses’ interaction with Pharaoh was, at least initially, about religious freedom. Speaking through Moses, the Lord declared, “Let my people go so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert.”

Jesus interacted with pagans and polytheists, Jews and gentiles, Greeks and Samaritans. He had the power to make all of them bow to Him, but He never did. Moreover, Jesus lived among religious zealots and self-appointed holy men willing to kill to prove their piety.³² He could have endorsed them or led them, but He never did.



Instead of making people accept His view, instead of using force and violence to gain converts, He practiced religious tolerance and modeled religious liberty. Consider Luke 9. A Samaritan village refused to let Jesus stay there “because He was heading for Jerusalem.” As one commentary explains, “Samaritans were particularly hostile to Jews who were on their way to religious festivals in Jerusalem” and often “refused overnight shelter for the pilgrims.”³³ Jesus didn’t force them to accept Him; He didn’t give them a choice to convert or die. In fact, when James and John asked “to call fire down from heaven to destroy” those who dared not open their doors to Him, Jesus rebuked



His disciples and simply “went to another village.”

There’s a lesson in this for individuals and for nations: No one should be forced to believe or not believe, and no one has the right to force others to believe or not believe. “Our respect in the world declines in proportion to how vigorously we attempt to force others to adopt our point of view,” as theologian and author Philip Yancey observes.³⁴ For evidence of this, look no further than the enemy in this war: The jihadists are fighting, quite literally, for a world where there is no faith but one. The U.S. military is fighting for precisely the opposite: a world

where people can choose any faith or no faith at all.

EGREGIOUS

The enemies of religious liberty are not quarantined to Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan.

According to USCIRF, the Iranian government is guilty of “ongoing and egregious violations of religious freedom, including prolonged detention, torture and executions.” Christians in Iran are scourged for drinking communion wine—80 lashes is the common punishment. Iranian authorities “raid church services, harass and threaten church members, and arrest, convict and imprison worshippers and church leaders.”³⁵

Shiite theocrats and Sunni autocrats may have different interpretations of the Koran, but the results are largely the same. In Saudi Arabia, “not a single church or other non-Muslim house of worship exists”; promoting “unbelief” is a crime; textbooks “teach hatred toward members of other religions,” promote violence “against apostates,” and label Jews and Christians “enemies.”³⁶

In China, according to USCIRF, “[i]ndependent Catholics and Protestants face arrests, fines and the shuttering of their places of worship.” Tibetan Buddhists, Uighur Muslims, folk religionists, and Protestant house-church attenders are subjected to “jail terms, forced renunciations of faith and torture in detention.” Freedom House reports “hundreds of thousands” of religious adherents—many of them guilty of “simply possessing spiritual texts in the privacy of their homes”—are sentenced to forced labor.

Likewise, “[t]housands of religious believers and their families are imprisoned in penal labor camps” in North Korea, according to USCIRF. “Individuals engaged in clandestine religious activity are arrested, tortured, imprisoned and sometimes executed.” A UN panel finds in North Korea a “complete denial of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.” At least 300,000 North Korean Christians have disappeared since the end of the war.³⁷

Representing some of the Pentagon’s gravest worries, these regimes—along with transnational movements like ISIS and al Qaeda—may be the real “axis of evil.” Indeed, Inboden sees a clear “correlation between religious persecution and national-security threats.”

This is not to suggest that America should go to war against every enemy of religious liberty, but neither should we beat our swords into plowshares, cut deals with Tehran, avert our gaze from the gulags in North Korea and China, draw a line of moral equivalence between Israel and Hamas, or breezily conclude, “the tide of war is receding”³⁸—especially given that the enemy in this war is still viciously fighting and still violently opposed to religious pluralism.

EXERTIONS

The freedom to worship or not worship, to believe or doubt, didn’t emerge by accident, and it doesn’t endure by magic. This freedom of conscience is in need of constant protection. John Keegan argued in his *History of Warfare* that “[a]ll civilizations owe their origins to the warrior.”³⁹ But more than that, all civilizations owe their continued existence to the warrior.

“How many battlefields there are on which that soldier has fallen for our freedom and yours and thus borne witness to the rights of the person,” Pope John Paul declared in 1979, pointing to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Warsaw’s Victory Square. He then equated “the soldier’s blood shed on the field of battle” with “the martyr’s sacrifice” and “the seed of prayer.”⁴⁰

The intent here is not to glory in war. Rather, it is to remind those of us who talk and write about freedom, those who dispense and receive Nobel Peace Prizes, those who take the freedom to worship or not worship for granted, that our freedom depends on what John Stuart Mill called “the exertions of better men.”

The U.S. military stands as the last line of defense for our religious freedom. It is a shield *for* faith. That’s why so many of us are alarmed by the bipartisan gamble known as sequestration, which, in a time of war and growing international instability, has shrunk the reach, role, and resources of freedom’s greatest defender: the U.S. military.

Given the threats facing the United States, sequestration should be ended and defense spending restored to a level commensurate with those threats. Some military analysts have suggested a return to the post-World War II average of 5 percent of GDP; some have urged 4 percent of GDP; few have recommended 3 percent of GDP (and falling), which is where defense spending has hovered in recent years.

In addition, leading policymakers should draw attention—relentlessly and repeatedly—to

assaults on religious liberty. The purpose is not to shame the enemies of religious liberty—for the shameless cannot be shamed—but rather to isolate them, challenge their enablers, and offer a platform to their victims. “A little less détente,” as Reagan declared during an earlier struggle for civilization, “and more encouragement to the dissenters might be worth a lot of armored divisions.”

What does that mean in the 21st century?

It means using high-profile settings such as the State of the Union, G-7, and UN Security Council to shine a light on those who have contempt for religious freedom and other human rights—the business-suit autocrats in China and Russia, the monstrous regime in North Korea, the self-styled holy men in Iran.

It means advocating for religious and political freedom. This presents a conundrum because, as historian Walter Russell Mead notes, there is a “tension between America’s role as a revolutionary power and its role as a status quo power.”⁴¹ The way to bridge this tension is to be a reforming power—ready to maintain the pillars of the liberal international order built after World War II, willing to support any effort to move internal political systems in the direction of this liberal order, but unwilling to support movements or groups that would steer a nation away from this liberal order. Even as we “encourage and help the reform process,” as Tony Blair explains, “we have to be clear we will not support systems or governments based on sectarian religious politics... Where the extremists are fighting, they have to be countered hard, with force.”⁴²

Indeed, it means that when stateless groups like ISIS and al Qaeda try to dismember civilization, when regimes like Milosevic’s Serbia, the Taliban’s Afghanistan, and Assad’s Syria cross the line, America should rally what Reagan called an “army of conscience” to defend that space where our interests and values intersect.

EXTREMES

Those who believe in God—and those who don’t—should be thankful for the United States military. For without it, our world and our lives would be very different. Had the Axis emerged victorious in 1945, the world order would have been characterized by godless racialism and fascist totalitarianism. Had the Soviet Union outlasted the West in 1989, the world order would have been characterized by godless collectivism and Leninist totalitarianism. And if the jihadists have their way today, the world order would be characterized by ruthless conformity and theocratic totalitarianism.

God’s crowning creation cannot flourish under those extremes. We are not made for those extremes. P

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SHILOH: A REQUIEM



Skimming lightly, wheeling still,
The swallows fly low
Over the field in clouded days,
The forest-field of Shiloh—
Over the field where April rain
Solaced the parched ones stretched in pain

Through the pause of night
That followed the Sunday fight
Around the church of Shiloh—
The church so lone, the log-built one,
That echoed to many a parting groan
And natural prayer
Of dying foemen mingled there—
Foemen at morn, but friends at eve—
Fame or country least their care:
(What like a bullet can undecieve!)
But now they lie low,
While over them the swallows skim,
And all is hushed at Shiloh

Herman Melville

The Battle of Shiloh took place 155 years ago, over a pair of days in April, 1862. This contemporary sketch by Henry Lovie, which appeared first in "Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly Newspaper," shows the Shiloh log church from which the battle took its name. Wartime photograph, Signal Corps, U. S. Army.

A FAITH VOCATION: SKILLS & OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEACEMAKING

WAYNE A. SCHROEDER



Portrait of Sir Winston Churchill as a Young Man, Seated at his Desk, by Edwin Arthur Ward, circa 1900. Held in private collection. Source: Sotheby's, via Wikimedia Commons.

The United States is undergoing profound change in its moral, ethical, and spiritual climate. The gradual movement away from objective truth and toward what has become a more subjective understanding of right and wrong—post-modernism—is impacting our daily lives and our relationship to the state. One of the emerging challenges facing Christians living in this changing moral climate involves how to deal with these issues in what is known as “the public square.” Because changes

in our nation’s moral and ethical compass could have the potential to profoundly impact how we interact with other nations and lead world public opinion, an important, far-reaching dimension of this public policy challenge will be how to best address and positively influence national attitudes on matters related to peacemaking and statecraft.

For young American Christians aspiring to a vocation intersecting faith and public life, a career

in peacemaking and statecraft can afford the opportunity to positively influence US national attitudes in this area, if such aspirations are paired with proper training and certain cardinal virtues. By being engaged in peacemaking on a full-time basis, young men and women can help ensure that the foundational, abiding principles that have guided the Republic since its founding can be preserved, protected, and defended. This includes upholding the principle formulated in the Declaration

of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”¹

The foundational assumption of the Declaration is that governments are formed *by the consent of the governed*. President Abraham Lincoln reiterated this theme in his Gettysburg Address, underscoring the role of the people in democratic governance. America’s founding principles thus make it truly exceptional among nations. Democracy and self-governance are not upheld in many regions of the world, with up to one-third of the world’s population living in nations not considered truly free.² Peace in the Christian understanding is not simply the absence of violent conflict but rather the presence of shalom, comprehensive welfare extending in every direction. Peacemaking, and therefore statecraft and its constituent elements, will only approximately achieve its aims until Christ’s return. Nevertheless, peacemaking is a vocation in which one’s highest, biblically-grounded moral principles can be put to work to help expand the cause of freedom everywhere.

Therefore, it is reasonable that people of faith would offer their vocational energy to the problems found in an increasingly chaotic, disoriented, and violent world. More than that, as Christians, we are called to live in, steward, and help transform this world, as difficult and distasteful as it often can be.³ But as young Christians canvass the current international landscape, with all of its unending tragedies, it is tempting for them to

say “no, thank you” and to forego consideration of the field of foreign policy altogether. Such a decision would be a tragic mistake, for it would further deplete the field of one of its most essential assets—passionate people shaped by Divine love.

This is, in some ways, especially true for American Christians. Because the founding principles of our Republic are backed by unprecedented power and resources, if the cause of peace and freedom is to be advanced, it will rely heavily upon American leadership. The twin themes of American Exceptionalism and Peace through Strength are used frequently to conceptualize approaches for promoting US foreign policy and national security goals and objectives. Properly understood, these themes are entirely appropriate. However, it is imperative to realize that the ultimate aim of American power is closely connected to corollary, higher order themes of peace, human freedom, and self-governance—in the first degree for America but, in the second degree, for our international neighbors. This is not simply a matter of selfless, other-centered concern. Peace across the global landscape reverberates back to the order and peace in our own lands.

A central preoccupation, therefore, is in defining how the US uses its power and influence to advance the cause of peace and freedom throughout the world. Such usage is not automatic, and those involved must first be grounded in the arts and skills of peacemaking. Happily, one can develop and hone the abilities essential to convey and disseminate the moral underpinnings of US foreign and national security policies to a world frequently skeptical, and sometimes hostile, to US values

and interests. The dangerous corollary is that to whatever degree America abandons or fails to maintain its efficacy in the peacemaking playing field, we cede our role to others who may be less committed to, or simply do not share, our basic principles of freedom and self-governance.

But such responsibility has generally been amendable to the American disposition. Support for human freedom and the dignity of man has always been a core national value. The “greatest generation” that rose through the depression era to meet the challenges of World War II saw that much more than power politics, the setting of national borders, and the defeat or triumph of land, sea, and air forces was at stake in the civilizational struggle against fascism and militarism. Moral and ethical issues were on the line. Key foundational themes, grounded in the core Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian ideas that form the Western patrimony, underscored the moral and ethical dimension of the wartime struggle and were clearly laid out in the Atlantic Charter, Franklin Roosevelt’s “Four Freedoms,” and, yes, the charter of the United Nations. All underscored human freedom, self-governance and the dignity of man. Ultimately, this great mid-20th-century conflict would transcend the issues that immediately catalyzed the war-fighting and broach far deeper questions about what kind of a civilization the West would continue to be and what kinds of values, including those of democracy, tolerance, and fair play, it would convey to the rest of the world.

Such profound existential concerns continued to shape the context of those who entered

peacemaking work during the Cold War. With Western civilization having just endured the horrors of World War II and the Holocaust, silence and disengagement were clearly not options for the Western response to the rise of Soviet totalitarianism—not as human freedoms were subjugated behind the Iron Curtain, families were separated behind the Berlin Wall, and human dignity was savaged behind the wire in the Gulag Archipelago. Although vital US and Western interests were clearly at stake and defended by forward-looking and well-integrated foreign and defense policies, once again overarching moral and ethical principles formed the deeper underpinning of the Western response. This is seen in the decisive role played by US Presidents first containing, and then defeating, Soviet Communism.⁴

Sir Winston Churchill once advised, “it is bad for a nation when it is without faith.”⁵ More than this, if we have faith in the American system and its moral foundations, then we must also be willing to defend them. However, even in an increasingly complex and dangerous world torn by radical Islamist terrorism and rising powers that challenge rules-based international order, Americans are increasingly losing faith in our political system, values, and way of life, and consequently our continued willingness to defend them is increasingly in doubt. Ultimately, any loss of self-confidence in the founding principles in which our Republic is grounded could adversely impact our ability to lead the peace-loving world and embolden our adversaries to do so instead.

For all these reasons, young Christians—fortified by faith and hope—will find that their

talents, abilities, and outlook are needed now, more than ever, in the peacekeeping field. Therefore, they should not steer clear of its challenges, but *seek it as their calling* and set out to master the skills of the trade.

STEWARDED OUR TALENTS IN A CAREER PATH

One clear dimension of our stewardship as Christians is how we use our God-given talents in our selection of a career path. God has given each of us of many gifts in terms of our individual talents and abilities—all of us have different sets of strengths in the “tool box” we’ve been gifted.

If we have a special talent or abiding interest in a peacemaking discipline, we should pursue it without hesitation. By finding, developing, and using our strongest gifts in the cause of peace, we use them to the glory of God on this earth. Those gifts should then be matured and developed to their fullest potential. Our talents will thus be directed toward making the world a better and safer place for people of all faith communities.

To plan for a career in peacemaking, we need to understand and master the skill sets that can help advance the cause of peace. After reviewing them, there will be some who will challenge that these skill sets can be used not only for peace but also for the conduct of war. It is undoubtedly, and unfortunately, a sad fact that during wartime such skill sets not only can be used for belligerence but must be used in that way. But, and this is crucial for understanding the nature of peacemaking, the moral commitment for the Christian mustn’t be that our skills, resources, and gifts are

never used in war. This is because warfighting too, when waging war meets certain moral requirements including having a just cause, can be a component part of the vocation of peacemaking, as the Christian intellectual tradition—primarily through just war casuistry—has long affirmed. The moral commitment, rather, is our gifts are never used to promote war without cause, to launch wars of aggression, or to bring conflict against the innocent. Rather, whether on the battlefield or off, our gifts must always be focused on the higher objective of securing as best an approximation of a true and durable peace among all nations.

With that conceptual introduction in hand, and before getting into the weeds of specific skill sets required of the peacemaker, let us turn to the vocational fields in which the peacemaker might labor.

International Affairs. Diplomacy and international relations are classic examples of Christian options for a career in peacemaking. Christ’s Sermon on the Mount implores us to seek peace, at all levels.⁶ Conflict prevention and resolution enables us to fulfill God’s greater will, and restore and sustain human life to its natural, peaceful condition (this, of course, assumes that the motivations of both parties toward peace are sincere and genuine). Diplomacy, international politics, international economic and business affairs, international development, global health affairs, and environmental affairs are strong career paths within this discipline. Humanitarian affairs, refugee affairs, and disaster relief are also of increasing importance, both for the US government and international organizations. Politico-military



The Signing of the Treaty of Ghent, Christmas Eve, 1814, by Amédée Forestier, 1914. Source: Smithsonian American Art Museum. One of the key negotiators for the treaty that ended the War of 1812, John Quincy Adams is pictured in the center.

affairs, including arms control and weapons proliferation, are also options for those with interests in broader security-related issue sets.

Organizational options include the US Department of State and its Foreign Service, the United Nations, other international governmental organizations, and international non-governmental organizations. Additionally, there are international departments within most multinational corporations where many of these skills sets can be put into practice.

National Security. At its highest level, through assisting nations to secure peace and maintain a defense posture of peace through strength, the field

of national security is wholly acceptable to Christians considering a career in peacemaking. Many Christian men and women have entered national security, whether directly into the military or in a defense-related civilian profession in government or industry. Many Christians who enter the discipline have been able to make seminal contributions to the cause of peace.

This discipline requires a somewhat different talent set than that of international affairs, although there are overlaps. National security requires an interest in and understanding of the military, its culture and organization, and an understanding of defense technologies and concepts. Nevertheless, it demands a keen understanding

of world affairs, especially regional affairs, as our military and defense professionals must engage with other militaries and defense officials throughout the world. There are also great opportunities for those with proficiencies in defense finance, technology, acquisition, and contracting. Pursuing this calling requires advanced abilities to understand the relationships and synergies between and among these varied disciplines.

The complexity and multi-disciplinary nature of national security makes it an excellent avenue for individuals with particular strengths and interests across diverse skill sets. Indeed, the technological dimension requires one to stay abreast of



science and technology developments throughout one's career—it's essential to learn and grow as new technologies emerge on the defense landscape that can disrupt the military balance of power. Cyber defense and information assurance will be resident within the national security community for decades, but the younger generation should also focus on technology pertaining to aerial, naval, and land weapons systems, and weapons of mass destruction.

There are opportunities in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Departments (Army, Navy, and Air Force), Federally-Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs), the war colleges of the Military Services,

public policy think tanks, and the defense institutions of the US Congress. There are also opportunities in the private-sector defense industry, both with major aerospace and defense contractors and with the smaller systems engineering, technical assistance and advisory, and analysis communities.

Intelligence. The Intelligence Community (IC) is yet another discipline where a young Christian can answer a call in the field of peacemaking. While professionals in the fields of international affairs and national security interface with issues of public policy, intelligence professionals play a more supportive role. As an executive order from the Reagan Administration on US intelligence activities advised, the purpose of intelligence is to develop timely information concerning the "capabilities, intentions and activities of foreign powers, organizations, or persons and their agents" that is "essential to informed decision-making in the areas of national defense and foreign relations."⁷

As in the national security field, a key decision juncture involves the specific kind of intelligence career path. There are rewarding career opportunities throughout the Intelligence Community, cutting across a wide range of analytical, scientific, and technical disciplines.⁸ There are sixteen organizations within the IC from which to consider a career path, including the CIA, NSA, DIA, FBI, DEA, INR, DHS, Treasury Department, and the Military Services. There are also opportunities with private contractors supporting the work of the IC.

MASTERING KEY SKILLS

Within the parameters of each

these three peacemaking disciplines, there is ample opportunity for young Christians to explore the possibilities of a peacemaking career and find the right match for one's individual skill set. In preparing for a such a career, young men and women should devote special attention to advancing their capabilities in three areas: writing, knowledge in one's discipline, and history. When offering vocational counsel to such young people, this is what I say to them:

- **Writing.** An absolutely critical skill to develop, writing will allow you to convey concepts and ideas in an understandable, logical, and persuasive way in your chosen discipline. Continue to take writing courses in college, even beyond basic requirements. Master your own language and continue to work at improving your communication skills all throughout your career.
- **Cross cultural literacy.** Additionally, beyond being able to communicate in English, an understanding of a foreign language will enable you to better comprehend foreign cultures, societies, and political systems and to communicate cross-culturally. To do this well, exposure to and curiosity about other cultures is invaluable. If you're a Christian in the peacemaking field, you are already cognizant about how faith commitments can shape worldviews and political outlooks. Being able to recognize how faith grounds the beliefs and actions of other nations,

both allied and adversarial, is often critical to effective communication.

- **Knowledge in your own discipline.** Stay current in your chosen discipline. Master it. To do that, you must continue to read widely in that discipline—and never stop reading. Don't think your knowledge as a second-year graduate student will suffice to take you all the way through your career. Read constantly, and stay open to reading works from all points of view. Develop your own home library of works directly related to your field of specialization. Whenever possible, cultivate relationships with important thinkers in your field and utilize them. Seek advice, never be afraid of what you don't know, ask questions, and know to whom to go to find answers
- **History.** Much has been written about the failure of the US educational system to effectively educate students generally in the field of history.⁹ How can one truly understand the present without understanding the past? Make every effort to expand your knowledge of the history of your chosen discipline. Look at history holistically. Do not be afraid of chronologies, geographies, or biographies related to your subject matter expertise.

The 21st-century international problem set is much more complex than that which faced world leaders throughout the 20th century. Staying current in one's chosen discipline is absolutely critical to mastering

rapid-paced changes in today's world. Success will require not only knowledge and subject matter expertise, but also wise judgment, effective resource planning, and sound decision-making.

LIVES OF VIRTUE

Peacemaking has always underscored certain basic themes to connect our public policy with our values and ideals. These include a love of justice, fealty to the truth, and a respect of basic human rights as exemplified by being principled, developing greater empathy and comprehension of others, striving with perseverance, and maintaining good will—cardinal values to foster and maintain peace. A review of the biographies of several great world leaders will help showcase how these virtues can be a beacon for us to follow.

John Quincy Adams was one of the most gifted individuals ever to become President of the United States. In one sense, his whole life had been a preparation for the presidency. The son of the second US president, John Adams, "John Quincy" served his country as minister to The Hague, England, and Russia, a US Senator, and as Secretary of State. Adams is acknowledged as the primary author of the Monroe Doctrine, which established the principle of nonintervention by the European colonial powers in the affairs of the Western Hemisphere.

Despite his eminent qualifications and extensive experience on both the US and international stage, John Quincy's presidency is seen as largely ineffective. It was marked from the start by the determined opposition from what was to become the Jacksonian wing of the

early-19th-century Democratic Party, still smarting from what it deemed the "corrupt bargain" of the 1824 election. Defeated for reelection by Jackson in 1828, Adams' real service to the nation was only just beginning.

John Quincy soon returned to public service in 1831, this time in the US House of Representatives. There he immediately took the principled lead in the House on a critical moral issue: opposition to slavery, and in particular, the "Gag Rule" in the House of Representatives, which forbade raising the discussion of the abolition of slavery and the slave trade within the District of Columbia. He later opposed US annexation of Texas as upending the free v. slave state balance, and also firmly stood in opposition to the Mexican War.

Adams always held fast to the cardinal value of *principle over expediency*—even in what was for him a decidedly smaller station in life than the presidency. Adams exemplified the traits of determination, patience, and courage in seeking policy changes in the midst of vehement opposition and rebuke from opponents. Young Americans pondering a career calling in peacemaking would do well to study and learn from the career of our sixth president.¹⁰

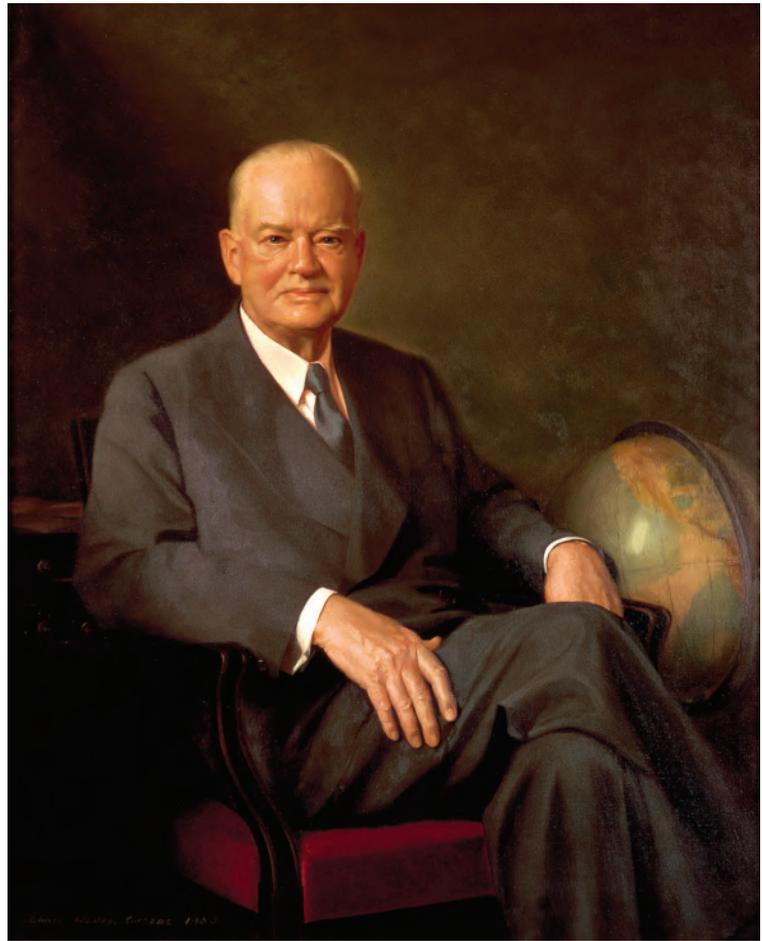
Herbert Hoover is one of most maligned US Presidents, suffering historically for serving in office during the start of the Great Depression. A stalwart proponent of economy and efficiency in government, Hoover's legacy is somewhat mixed on the international front. For while he had a reputation of being an advocate of capitalism and staunch opponent of socialism and Soviet Communism, he also held decidedly non-interventionist

views concerning the political scene in pre-World War II Europe and how best to deal with the probability that the democracies would once again have to go to war with Germany.

Whatever our views on Hoover, it is abundantly clear that he lived a life that promoted peace, justice, and the relief of human suffering. Hoover earned the title “Great Humanitarian,” due to his extensive relief efforts during and immediately after World War I, including leading the Commission for the Relief of Belgium (1914-17) and the US Food Administration (1917-18). Following the war, he led the American Relief Administration, where his efforts focused on organizing food relief for Central Europe. His post-war efforts also included food relief for Bolshevik-occupied portions of Russia. One cannot read a Hoover biography without capturing his abiding hatred of war and its profoundly negative impact on society, and its tragic human and economic consequences.

Hoover saw the costs of war as including not only the direct cost of the conflict, but also its profoundly negative economic byproducts. The cost of the Great War also included enormous economic and financial dislocations from:

- The loss of human capital caused by the deaths of millions;
- Assumption of large national wartime taxation and debt;
- The attempted liquidation of war debt through wartime and post-war currency inflation;
- Postwar gold drains and repudiation of war debts; and



Official Presidential Portrait of Herbert Hoover, by Elmer Wesley Greene, 1956. White House. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

- The inevitable social and cultural instabilities these events had on the self-confidence of the peoples of Europe and the US.

During and after his presidency, Hoover continued to make a compelling case that the real cause of the worldwide Great Depression was not simply stock market speculation originating in America, but the accumulated, cascading effect that these gross economic insults had upon all of the countries that participated in the Great War.

For Hoover, it was critical to *comprehend the big picture* and see the deeper societal and economic consequences of war, not just its military and political consequences. As an eyewitness

to the destruction of Europe after both world wars, the resultant loss of tens of millions of human lives, and the waste of economic resources, Hoover understood the deep impact war had on culture and society—and its legacy in giving rise to Nazism, Fascism, Socialism, and Communism in Europe after World War I. Even the just warrior knows that war is always tragedy, even when it must be waged to avoid a greater tragedy.

Winston Churchill appeared to be permanently out of political power in Great Britain at the age of 55, on the occasion of the Labour Party’s victory in 1929. Even with his Conservatives’ return to power in 1935, Churchill’s outlook

for a leadership role looked improbable.

The former Home Secretary, First Lord of the Admiralty, Secretary of State for War and for Air, and Chancellor of the Exchequer had far more experience and knowledge of the European scene than any of his Conservative contemporaries. But he also took a far different view on the threat posed to Europe by German Nazism and its aggressive rearmament program than did Conservative leaders Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain. Excluded from Conservative cabinets from 1935-39, and with little hope of returning to national prominence, Churchill continued on in what became known as his “wilderness years.”¹¹

Rather than be silenced, Churchill doubled down on his craft, mastering the intricacies of defense and foreign policies. He stayed current on the scope and pace of German rearmament through an excellent network of international and British government and press contacts. He argued forcefully for stronger air, land, and naval forces, and especially for the adoption of new air defense technologies. Churchill’s mastery of the details of the European scene led him to a difficult but inevitable conclusion: Britain had no choice but to contest the Nazi’s rearmament program and prepare for a potential second conflict with Germany. Few would listen. But Churchill would *persevere and never give in*.

War broke out in Europe in September 1939. Chamberlain finally relented and asked Churchill to serve as First Lord of the Admiralty, a role in which he had served in during World War I. With the fall of Norway

and France, Churchill went on to become the Prime Minister and led his country to victory during World War II. These character traits stood Churchill in good stead once he became Prime Minister. Churchill’s leadership was instrumental in helping save Western civilization from the brute force of Nazi tyranny. His six-volume history of the World War II provides his legacy on the history and lessons of the conflict for future generations. In it, Churchill offered the following moral for mankind to follow: “In War, Resolution; In Defeat, Defiance; In Victory, Magnanimity; *In Peace, Good Will.*”¹²

LESSONS FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

Devoted and dedicated young Christians, firmly grounded in the moral and ethical foundations of their faith, can provide an able service to mankind by seeking out the noble calling of peacemaking. By maintaining a strong value system for engaging in peacemaking, we will act from our highest moral principles, supporting key virtues such as humanity, integrity, transparency, and reciprocity in our dealings with other nations. And in doing so, we will also fulfill the great Christian command—to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. **P**

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(Endnotes)

1 Declaration of Independence in Congress, July 4, 1776.

2 See Freedom House. freedomhouse.org/about-us

3 A sad witness to the distasteful aspects of today’s world was recently captured in the photograph of the bloodied Syrian boy, Omran Daqneesh, sitting in an ambulance in Aleppo after being rescued from the destruction of a Syrian airstrike. It starkly emphasized the human cost, destructiveness, and waste of war when waged against the innocent.

4 For an excellent review of the role of US Presidents Truman, Kennedy and Reagan during the Cold War, see: Anders Fogh Rasmussen, *The Will to Lead: America’s Indispensable Role in the Global Fight for Freedom* (New York, NY: Broadside Books, 2016). For an exceptional exposition on the role of world leadership, see Richard Nixon, *Leaders* (New York: Warner Books, 1982).

5 Winston Churchill. (n.d.). AZQuotes.com. Retrieved October 27, 2016, from AZQuotes.com Web site: <http://www.azquotes.com/quote/1395241>. See also James C. Hume, *Nixon’s Ten Commandments of Statecraft* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1997), p. 159.

6 Matthew 5:9, “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”

7 Executive Order 12333 of December 4, 1981, *United States Intelligence Activities*, Part 2, Conduct of Intelligence Activities, Sec. 2.1, Need.

8 Human Intelligence, Signals Intelligence, Imagery Intelligence, Measurement and Signature Intelligence, Electronic Intelligence, and Communications Intelligence.

9 For the views of popular US historian, David McCullough, see: Daniel Lattier, “David McCullough on What’s Wrong with History Education Today”, *Intellectual Takeout*. intellectualtakeout.org/blog/.

10 For an excellent book on the life of our sixth President, see: Harlow Giles Unger, *John Quincy Adams*, (Boston, MA: Da Capo Press, 2012).

11 Martin Gilbert, *Winston Churchill: The Wilderness Years*, (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1981). American edition.

12 See Winston S. Churchill, *The Gathering Storm* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1948). emphasis added.

The question is not whether humans merely have these two capacities, “reflection” and “choice.” If they didn’t, there would be no point in proceeding with public debates, arguments in journals and pamphlets, and long deliberations. The question is whether these observed capacities are strong enough for the great social task of forming governments.

Since no other earthly creature except human beings acts from these two capacities, reflection and choice are nature’s testimony to human destiny. To live according to reflection and choice is, therefore, the law of nature. It is also the law of God. Since both nature and God command humans to exercise their liberty, it follows that humans must have a natural right to liberty. Without such a right, they could not obey either the law of their own nature or the law of God. Further, since to be free is to incur responsibility for one’s own deliberate choices, no one can hand off his liberty to others: liberty is not alienable.

To violate a person’s natural liberty is, therefore, to deface, deform, and frustrate the laws of nature and nature’s God. It is both a sin against justice that cries out to heaven and a crime indictable before the tribunal of humankind. In religious terms generic enough not to be limited to Christians solely, Jefferson wrote: “The God who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time.” It is a self-evident step from this conviction to the phrase of the Declaration, “endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.”

In memoriam, Michael Novak (1933-2017)

Reflections on Federalist No. 1, in *On Two Wings: Humble Faith and Common Sense at the American Founding*



Jean Bethke Elshtain. *Amongst students, she shone.* Source: Errol Elshtain.

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN: AN AUGUSTINIAN AT WAR

LUBOMIR MARTIN ONDRASEK

Jean Bethke Elshtain (1941-2013) was an American political theorist, ethicist, and public intellectual who made scholarly contributions to the debates on feminism, marriage and the family, democracy and civil society, theology and religion, and war and international relations. Indeed, such was the scope of her contributions that four multi-day conferences were required to assess and honor her work. Sponsored by the McDonald Agape Foundation and convened at the University of Chicago, where she had taught since 1995, these events, dubbed “The Engaged Mind,” were held annually from 2010-2013. The last conference, which evaluated her concerns regarding war, was held posthumously in the months shortly following her death. Taking up the same focus, this essay will elucidate Elshtain’s understanding of the just war tradition—a long and

important mode of thinking about the ethics of war and peace in the West—which she always insisted remained relevant today, even if certain aspects might bear reexamination and further development in light of the new realities of 21st-century conflict.

JUST WAR TRADITION: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE ETHICS OF WAR & PEACE

Jean Bethke Elshtain was a political realist, but not in the usual sense of the word.¹ Like other realist thinkers, she takes the dynamics of self-interest and power in domestic and international relations seriously, emphasizes the important role of sovereign states in the international system, believes in the practical inevitability of conflict in human society, worries about the danger of societal

disintegration and anarchy, and yearns for order, security, and civic peace. Furthermore, she recognizes that peace cannot be attained without a certain level of coercion and occasionally even the use of military force. Like Augustine, who is widely considered the father of the Western just war tradition, and unlike other realist thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes and the more contemporary E. H. Carr, Elshtain was also a moral and theological realist² who maintains that ethics should not be separated from politics. Elshtain rejects the classical realists’ belief that any reference to ethics and morality in politics is just an ideological cover up, smoke-screen, or window-dressing that conceals the true intentions of the political actors involved. She would not deny this as a possibility, but believes political conflicts and wars can seldom be reduced to the basic principles

of *realpolitik* since people usually act from a multiplicity of motives, including moral ones, even if never in a completely pure form.

Although her political realism is anchored in moral realism—she argues that the veracity or falsity of moral claims can be established independently of commonly-held beliefs of a particular culture and are not just an expression of the subjective attitude of a particular individual or a matter of social contract—Elshtain is not a sententious moralist. She agrees with another Augustinian thinker, Reinhold Niebuhr, who asserts that to treat Jesus’ ethics as a “simple possibility” directly applicable to political and social life would be an egregious error and that any attempt to, as Martin Luther says, “try to rule the world by the Gospel” would fail and have disastrous consequences. Thus, Elshtain both rejects moral relativism, which has become prevalent in present-day Western society, and is cognizant of moral ambiguities, especially in politics. Elshtain’s metaethical position can be characterized as a form of minimalist universalism, and its practical application can be seen in an important document—written in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks—titled “What We’re Fighting For: American Intellectuals Defend the War against Terrorism.”³ Elshtain was one of the principal authors of this open letter signed by sixty scholars and public intellectuals. In it they defend the war against terrorism on moral grounds, starting their argument with the affirmation of “five fundamental truths that pertain to *all people* without distinction” and the declaration that “we fight to defend ourselves and to defend these *universal* principles.”⁴

She acknowledges three fundamental ethical assumptions—or as she calls them, “self-evident truths”—that guide (also her) just war thinking: “the existence of universal moral dispositions,” “an insistence on the need for moral judgments,” and “the power of moral appeals and arguments.”⁵

The ethical framework within which Elshtain conducts her just war thinking is *casuistry*—“moral reasoning” based in cases, which according to her “drove the just war tradition historically.”⁶ In this form of practical reasoning, one relies on paradigm cases and basic moral norms and principles, arguing by analogy and applying them to unsettled novel cases, while being attentive to the complexities of the world that may change the moral evaluation of any one act. Elshtain subscribes to neither a deontological nor consequentialist approach in ethics, but maintains that just war interacts with these modes of moral reasoning to transcend the field’s typical fault lines. That same interaction enables the just war approach to transcend the realist-idealist dichotomy of international relations.⁷ Elshtain is not only critical of thinkers who refuse to apply any moral standards to the use of force, but also those who apply “deontological rigidities rather than casuistical rules”⁸ to question the use of force. She consistently reminds us that one must “reason from principles but there may, in practice, be exceptions to the principles.”⁹ In other words, the principles may be—after rigorous exercise of prudential judgment—“overridden” in certain cases. Some just war thinkers ground their ethics of war and peace in a strict deontological tradition, which Elshtain finds problematic because she views

Kantian ethics as too formal and narrow, abstract, inflexible for interpretation, excessively moralistic, and based on the faulty assumption that moral values can never conflict with one another.¹⁰

Elshtain posits that the just war tradition, as an alternative to realism on one hand and pacifism on the other, seeks to provide justification for the use of force and at the same time puts significant limits on its potential destructiveness.¹¹ Elshtain frequently warns that “just war is and must remain a cautionary tale,”¹² referring to Augustine’s teaching that “war and strife, however just the cause, stir up temptations to ravish and to devour, often in order to ensure peace.”¹³ War is and always will be a tragedy, even when justified, and one must therefore approach it with great reluctance and regret. But despite the terrible tragedy of war, just war thinkers argue that “even more tragic is permitting gross injustices and massive crimes to go unpunished.”¹⁴ Guided by the principal conviction that the aim of war is to the restoration or defense of a just peace, Elshtain recognizes that the deployment of force can be a tragic necessity.

Locating the justified use of force in a framework of Augustinian realism, she expounds:

Augustinian just war thinking imposes constraints where they might not otherwise exist, generates a debate that might not otherwise occur, and promotes skepticism and uneasiness about the use and abuse of power without opting out of political reality altogether in favor of utopian fantasies and

projects. It requires action and judgment in a world of limits, estrangements, and partial justice. It fosters recognition of the provisional nature of all political arrangements. It is at once respectful of distinctive and particular peoples and deeply internationalist. It recognizes self-defense against unjust aggression but refuses to legitimate imperialistic crusades and the building of empires in the name of peace.¹⁵

Elshtain further argues that Augustinian realism acknowledges the limits of the human ability to bring about perfect peace to our earthly existence. Her approach also recognizes the paradoxical nature of power, appreciating both the warning that power must be distrusted and the contention that power is an inescapable reality in our world. On my reading of Elshtain's works, her Augustinian realism is undergirded by three essential concepts—limits, responsibility, and hope—which are visible in the following citation: “Augustinian realists are not crusaders, but they do insist that we are *called upon to act* in a mode of *realistic hope* with a hardheaded *recognition of the limits to action*”¹⁶

In summary, Elshtain insists that the just war tradition is not a rigid moral system with “immutable rules so much as [it is a means of] clarifying the circumstances that should—and actually, if imperfectly—do justify a state in going to war (*jus ad bellum*), and what is and is not allowable in fighting the wars to which a state has committed itself (*jus in bello*).”¹⁷ When scrutinizing various criteria of the tradition, it is worth noting that, for Elshtain, these criteria



Augustine in His Study, by Sandro Botticelli, 1490-94. Uffizi. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

do not represent some sort of simplistic “check-list” but rather complex ethical principles that are put at the service of moral and political deliberation in *concrete* situations. The political theorist is not dogmatic on the precise number of criteria that should be fulfilled when deciding whether to use force, and does not ascribe them equal importance. She acknowledges that “just war principles are ambiguous and complex. Evaluations have to be made at each step along the way. New facts may alter previous assessments. Greater and lesser evils must be taken into account.”¹⁸

Let us now briefly analyze the guiding principles that Elshtain uses to determine when the initiation of force is justified and what criteria should guide just conduct in the midst of war.

JUS AD BELLUM

First, a just or justified war can only begin and be conducted under a legitimate political authority. Elshtain notes that the

purpose of this criterion is to “forestall random, private, and unlimited violence.”¹⁹ The just war must be “openly declared or otherwise authorized,” but the question of what constitutes a legitimate authority remains open. In recent decades, there has been an increasingly popular notion that the United Nations possesses the ultimate right to authorize the use of force, with the underlying assumption that this policy would prevent the unilateral use of force, which is generally viewed in a strongly negative light as unjust and even imperialistic. Elshtain disagrees, claiming that “there is nothing in the just war tradition that requires that a decision to go to war, in order to be legitimate, must be made by a group of states or by some other body by contrast to *de jure* state itself.”²⁰ This is not to say that a state should not attempt to present a strong case before an international body or that it would not be prudent to create a coalition of states to fight war, but one thing that Elshtain wants to unequivocally argue, is that “just war doctrine does *not* stipulate that only the UN can legitimately declare war.”²¹

In her writings, Elshtain seems to focus on the second *ad bellum* criterion, namely, having a just cause for war. According to her, wars of “aggression,” “self-aggrandizement,” and “holy wars” that seek to expand the boundaries of faith by military means are clearly prohibited within the just war tradition.²² Conversely, any response to aggression against one’s homeland (self-defense) or another country (humanitarian intervention) comprises just cause. Elshtain has become a leading voice among contemporary just war thinkers who identify humanitarian intervention as a justifiable cause for war.

Because of such cases in which sufficiently grave aggression clearly must be resisted, one of Elshtain's more contested views is the insistence that we ought never to claim that peace is in all cases preferable to war.²³ Accordingly, while some contemporary just war thinkers—perhaps most notably observed in the U.S. Bishops' pastoral letter *The Challenge of Peace* (1983)—began to recast the just war tradition as beginning with a “presumption against war,” Elshtain pressed in the opposite direction and substantially shifted the just war emphasis back toward a “presumption for justice.” Aligned with this presumption, Elshtain, acknowledging the morality of force in cases of intervention against “organized, continuing and systematic violence or the imminent threat of such,”²⁴ welcomed the emergence of a related concept called the “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P), initiated by the Canadian government in 2001 and endorsed by the United Nations in 2005, as a response to the international community's utter failure to prevent several mass atrocities in the 1990s. Moreover, Elshtain belongs to a group of just war thinkers who believe that under certain circumstances the use of preventative force may be justifiable, even if the concepts of preventive and preemptive war and how she understands them are beyond the scope of this essay.²⁵

There are many significant questions and dilemmas that surround the issue at hand, including how wide or narrow should be the option for humanitarian intervention or what criteria should be used for determining the potential justifiability of using force for humanitarian purposes. Using military force for humanitarian purposes in



An Augustinian in hers. Source: University of Chicago Divinity School.

every justifiable situation would be both impossible and impractical, yet it also does not follow that one should therefore not intervene anywhere. Perhaps the most controversial element of waging a war of humanitarian intervention is compromising the national sovereignty of the country under attack. Elshtain, realizing this conundrum, offers the following interpretation and imperative:

We must recall and recuperate an earlier moral conception of sovereignty to live alongside the monopoly of the means of violence definition of the state, namely, an understanding of *sovereignty as responsibility*; Correlatively, this means sovereigns can “unsovereign” themselves, as Kings could unking themselves and transmogrify into tyrants: this in the medieval right of resistance tradition.²⁶

Elshtain's insistence on viewing sovereignty in the context

of the just war tradition primarily from an ethical perspective, rather than as it has been commonly understood in the post-Westphalian era, may be difficult for some to accept, but it appears to be the only way one can legitimately justify the use of force in order to prevent a severe humanitarian catastrophe.

The third *ad bellum* criterion—closely related to the just cause principle—is that a war must be undertaken with the right intention. For Elshtain, this does not mean that a country or coalition must be “entirely disinterested” when entering war.²⁷ Here is an “insurmountable tension” between the Kantian and Augustinian approaches to just war: while the former insists on purity of intention, the latter maintains that “all human motives are mixed, we are limited, finite creatures who often will and nill simultaneously.”²⁸ Elshtain believes a state cannot and should not be absolutely disinterested in the use of force for humanitarian purposes because the primary reason for the existence of a state is “to protect its own citizens and to defend the national interest.”²⁹ The right intention within Augustinian framework is ultimately love (*caritas*) for one's neighbor, which unlike the pacifist tradition does not exclude the use of military force. Considering how challenging it is to evaluate true motivations of the human heart and the fact that human behavior consists of a multiplicity of motives, it is not surprising that Elshtain does not put too much emphasis on this principle in her writings.

Another *ad bellum* criterion of the just war tradition maintains that there should be a reasonable chance of success before engaging in war. This criterion is centered on prudential

judgments regarding the course and outcome of the war. It is generally presumed that one should only engage in a military operation when it is probable that such an operation is going to be successful and the sacrifice of blood and treasure would not be in vain. This criterion is discussed by Elshtain only sporadically, perhaps partially because it seems—at least in the case of the United States, the world’s sole military superpower for the past quarter-century—much less relevant than, for instance, the principle of discrimination.

The final criterion for entering combat in the just war tradition is the principle of last resort. Elshtain seems to be a little inconsistent here when she in her earlier works lists this criterion as one of the “seven (or more or less) requirements”³⁰ found in Augustine, and then later asserts that this is a minor and relatively new criterion which “did not really figure in the thinking of Ambrose, Aquinas, or Augustine.”³¹ Elshtain does not interpret this criterion in the strict sense, viewing “last resort [as] a resort to armed force taken after deliberation rather than as an immediate reaction.”³² Rather than indefinitely trying various alternatives, one only needs to take them seriously into account and never use force as the first option. Elshtain would endorse *reasonable* attempts at a peaceful resolution of conflict (e.g. negotiations, sanctions, deterrence), but she rejects an overly rigid interpretation of the last resort criterion that would set a prohibitively high bar for entering war. In such cases, one would effectively join the ranks of the functional pacifists, who claim to be working within the just war tradition but who in fact have a hard time identifying any war that could be labeled as “just.”

JUS IN BELLO

There are two interrelated criteria that pertain to just conduct in war: discrimination and proportionality. The primary purpose of both principles is to restrain the use of force in combat and thus limit destruction emanating from it. Elshtain’s work is particularly attentive to the discrimination principle—known also as non-combatant immunity—which she considers “the most important *in bello* criterion.”³³ “Discrimination,” Elshtain explains, “refers to the need to differentiate between combatants and noncombatants. Noncombatants historically have been women, children, the aged and infirm, all unarmed persons going about their daily lives, and prisoners of war who have been disarmed by definition.”³⁴ It is important to note that Elshtain’s understanding of this criterion underscores that civilians can *never* be intentionally targeted by countries in war.³⁵

To illustrate the principle of discrimination, Elshtain chastised the Clinton administration for how it conducted the 1999 Kosovo War. While realizing the impossibility of waging a zero-civilian-casualty war and affirming the principle of double effect, the Elshtain nevertheless insisted that the United States was obligated to do its utmost to minimize the number of civilian deaths and unnecessary destruction of infrastructure. This was hardly the case, considering that the bombing campaigns were carried out from a minimum altitude of 15,000 feet, which, while protecting American aviators, significantly lowered the accuracy of bombing runs, thus increasing the likelihood of civilian deaths. Evaluating the war efforts from the just war

tradition perspective, Elshtain writes:

[W]e made no attempt to meet the strenuous demand of proportionality; rather, we violated the norm of discrimination in a strange up-ended kind of way by devising a new criterion, it seems: combatant immunity ranked higher as a consideration than did noncombatant immunity for Serbian—or Albanian Kosovar—civilians. With our determination to keep NATO soldiers—in other words, American soldiers—out of harm’s way, we embraced combatant immunity for our own combatants and, indirectly, for the Serb soldiers. Instead, we did a great deal of damage from the air, reducing buildings to rubble, tearing up bridges, killing people in markets and television stations.³⁶

In a different context, she remarked that it is “better by far to risk the lives of one’s own combatants than the lives of ‘enemy’ infants.”³⁷ Even though it should be acknowledged that modern weaponry such as a precision-guided munition (PGM) greatly enhanced the possibility of discriminating between legitimate and illegitimate targets in military operations, Elshtain insists that one should always remember the inherent dignity of *each* human person and never take lightly the tragic loss of innocent life.

Elshtain interprets the second *in bello* criterion of proportionality generally in line with the majority of classical and contemporary just war thinkers. The principle “requires that the nature of one’s coercive force

should be proportional to any injury sustained or planned, and that at whatever minimal force can be used to do the job should be deployed.”³⁸ She expressed deep regret over “the extraordinary lopsidedness of deaths and casualties” in the Persian Gulf War, a situation in which the United States military may disproportionately have used force against its ill-resourced Iraqi counterpart.³⁹ Finally, this latter position should render clear that Elshtain is not only opposed to the use of excessive force with its adverse impact on the civilian or combatant populations, but also views the use of weapons of mass destruction as, by definition, prohibited by just war criteria.⁴⁰

CONCLUSION

Jean Bethke Elshtain, a political theorist who admired Augustine and exhibited a serious interest in the ethics of war and peace, represents a unique voice in the contemporary just war tradition, and remains a complex thinker whose thought is difficult to neatly categorize. This is nowhere more evident than in the battles she would launch, and that were launched against her, as she brought the resources of just war casuistry to bear on the “war on terror,” a subject beyond the scope of this essay but one worthy of a future work. Here I have attempted to introduce one crucial area of her scholarship, the popular and scholarly articulation of a moral framework by which American citizens and their allies—military and civilian—can evaluate, resist, and overcome the complex threats arrayed against us. And to do so justly. P

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(Endnotes)

¹ My portrayal of Elshtain as an “Augustinian realist” can be found in “Augustinian Realism as a Foundation for Christian Public Engagement: Lessons from Jean Bethke Elshtain,” Lubomir Martin Ondrasek & Ivan Modoroši (eds.), *Cirkev a spoločnosť: Smerom k zodpovednej angažovanosti & Church and Society: Towards Responsible Engagement* (Ružomberok, SK: Verbum, 2015), 214–227. I have written on Elshtain as “A Different Sort of Political Realist” in this chapter and used a portion of the material from there in this section of the essay.

² For discussion on the different types of realism, see Robin W. Lovin, *Reinhold Niebuhr and Christian Realism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3–24.

³ Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 182–198.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 182–183. (emphasis added)

⁵ Jean Bethke Elshtain, “Just War as Politics: What the Gulf War Told Us About Contemporary American Life,” in Jean Bethke Elshtain (et al.) & David E. Decosse (ed.), *But Was It Just?: Reflections on the Morality of the Persian Gulf War* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 44–45.

⁶ Jean Bethke Elshtain, “Varieties of ‘Violence’: Thinking Ethically about the Use of Force in the War on Terror,” in John D. Carlson and Jonathan H. Ebel (eds.), *From Jeremiad to Jihad: Religion, Violence, and America* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 280.

⁷ Jean Bethke Elshtain, “Introduction,” in Jean Bethke Elshtain (ed.), *Just War Theory* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 2.

⁸ Jean Bethke Elshtain, “Peace, Order, Justice: Competing Understandings,” *Millennium—Journal of International Studies* (Volume 36, Number 3, 2008), 415.

⁹ Jean Bethke Elshtain, “On Never Reaching the Coast of Utopia,” *International Relations* (Volume 22, Number 2, 2008), 164.

¹⁰ Jean Bethke Elshtain, “Just War Tradition,” *Class Lectures* (University of Chicago Divinity School, Spring 2008).

¹¹ Elshtain, “Introduction,” in *Just War Theory*, 1.

¹² Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Augustine and*

the Limits of Politics (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 111.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Elshtain, *Just War Against Terror*, 54.

¹⁵ Jean Bethke Elshtain, “Just War and Humanitarian Intervention,” *Ideas from the National Humanities Center* (Volume 8, Number 2, 2001), 19.

¹⁶ Elshtain, *Just War Against Terror*, 70. (emphasis added)

¹⁷ Elshtain, “Epilogue,” in *Just War Theory*, 324.

¹⁸ Elshtain, “Just War as Politics: What the Gulf War Told Us About Contemporary American Life,” in *But Was It Just?*, 48.

¹⁹ Elshtain, *Just War Against Terror*, 57.

²⁰ Elshtain, “New Preface,” in *Just War Theory*, xiv.

²¹ Elshtain, “Comments on the Libya Intervention in Light of Just War Doctrine on ‘Right Authority,’” *Capital Commentary*, April 8, 2011.

²² Elshtain, “Just War Tradition,” *Class Lectures*.

²³ Elshtain, “Thinking about War and Justice,” *The Religion and Culture Web Forum* (University of Chicago Divinity School, Martin Marty Center, May 2003).

²⁴ Elshtain, “Comments on the Libya Intervention in Light of Just War Doctrine on ‘Right Authority,’” *Capital Commentary*.

²⁵ See Jean Bethke Elshtain, “Prevention, preemption, and other conundrums,” in Deen K. Chatterjee (ed.), *The Ethics of Preventive War* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University of Press, 2013), 15–26.

²⁶ Elshtain, “Peace, Order, Justice: Competing Understandings,” *Millennium—Journal of International Studies*, 422. (emphasis added)

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 420.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Elshtain, “Epilogue,” in *Just War Theory*, 324.

³¹ Elshtain, “The Just War Tradition and Natural Law,” *Fordham International Law Journal* (Volume 28, Issue 3, 2004), 750.

³² Elshtain, *Just War Against Terror*, 61.

³³ Elshtain, “New Preface,” in *Just War Theory*, xiv.

³⁴ Elshtain, *Just War Against Terror*, 65.

³⁵ Elshtain, “New Preface,” in *Just War Theory*, xiv–xv.

³⁶ Elshtain, “Just War and Humanitarian Intervention,” *Ideas from the National Humanities Center*, 15.

³⁷ Jean Bethke Elshtain, “Kosovo and the Just War Tradition,” in William Joseph Buckley (ed.), *Kosovo: Contending Voices on Balkan Interventions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 365.

³⁸ Elshtain, “New Preface,” in *Just War Theory*, xv.

³⁹ Elshtain, “Just War as Politics: What the Gulf War Told Us About Contemporary American Life,” in *But Was It Just?*, 53.

⁴⁰ Elshtain, *Just War Against Terror*, 69–70.



By Mstyslav Chernov, Nov. 16, 2016. Source: Wikimedia Commons. Iraqi Special Operations Forces in Mosul, Iraq.

THE BATTLE FOR MOSUL & THE END OF HISTORY

DOUGLAS BURTON

In the city of Mosul, gasping through its fifth month of urban warfare, two histories of the world are crossing.

Biblical scholars know this densely-populated Sunni capital of Iraq as the location of Nineveh, hub of the Assyrian Empire and the place where the Hebrew prophet Jonah hesitated to preach holy words to a people he hated. So many Hebrew prophets are entombed in Mesopotamia it is called the Second Holy Land, outside Palestine. The city's surrounding plain is the sacred homeland of the Assyrians, Christian speakers of Aramaic, the language of Jesus. Nineveh's ancient wheat fields were first planted 10,000 years ago, and today beneath its red dirt trillions of petro-dollars wait

patiently for the winner of this war to claim the spoils. Terrorists, whose fighters speak more than 100 different languages, are killing themselves to hold Mosul—for them the city represents the culmination of history—against soldiers and advisors from 60 nations who are likewise risking everything to take it back.

For some, the whole world began in Nineveh, and in a sense the whole world is fighting for it now. Important foundations of the West began in the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers: agriculture, religion, urban culture, the domestication

of animals, the invention of the wheel, and large organized military forces. The Bible tells us, and many scholars agree, that civilization began here. Genesis, a book revered by all three Semitic religions, informs us that the first family, the first sin, and the first murder took place in Mesopotamia. The 1,300-year struggle between Shia and Sunni Muslims today may be seen as one of myriad latter-day instantiations of the fratricide that began with Adam's two sons, Cain and Abel.

The Assyrian Kingdom based in Nineveh was the first kingdom in the world to be organized

year-round for warfare, and by means of annual drives of conquest, Assyria became one of the most famous and awe-inspiring empires of the ancient world. The Assyrians were later conquered by the Persians, whose Zoroastrian religion still holds a presence in the syncretistic religious beliefs of the Yazidi peoples of Nineveh Province.

The Persian rulers of Nineveh were replaced by Alexander the Great's generals, who were succeeded by the centurions of Roman legions. During the early Middle Ages, Christianity was the dominant religion of the region until the Arab conquest of the seventh century. The Persian kings battled with the Turkish throne in the 17th century, but the Ottomans prevailed and came to regard Mosul as the jewel of its southern provinces. The Ottomans did not want to give up control of Mosul to the West. It has been rumored that even now Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan dreams of reclaiming the Mosul area for a new Ottoman Empire, headed by himself.

From the viewpoint of Islamic State (ISIS, or Daesh), Mosul may be considered the venue of the apocalyptic last battle in Dabiq, a town in northern Syria. The prophecy of this battle foreseen by the Prophet is recorded in the Hadith (Sahih Muslim Book 041, Hadith Number 6924). According to Ali Sada, an Iraqi citizen and editor of *Daesh Daily*, a war digest, "Since Dabiq passed into the hands of the Turkish-Arab coalition months ago, some ISIS websites are arguing that the Battle for Mosul is the equivalent of the battle for Dabiq." The significance of this prophesied battle is captured in the prominence afforded it by ISIS, which

named both their magazine and their signature website after it.

For many jihadis then, Mosul is the last battle in history. But one may also argue that from a Western, Hegelian point of view, Iraq's experiment with social democracy is also the end of history. Defense of the Iraqi

against Iran during the long war between Saddam's Iraq and the Ayatollah's Iran from 1980 to 1988.

Abadi is the face of Iraq's painful, halting experiment with democracy. He is an outspoken proponent of a republic that honors the legal rights of all



experiment with democracy as a defense of Western civilization is the unspoken premise of the 60-state anti-ISIS coalition.

Iraq today understands itself to be a federal, parliamentary representative, democratic republic, even though its current constitution defines its government as an Islamic, federal, parliamentary, democratic republic. Some critics call it a puppet state of neighboring Iran, but that would be unfair to the Iraqi parliamentarians and the current prime minister, Haider al-Abadi, who have made it clear to the world that they are proud of their independence and will fight for it. Many of them fought

citizens—at least in principle—equally. For more than two years, he has contended with scores of civilian-led demonstrations in public squares all the while guiding a mixed army of Shia and Sunni soldiers as well as huge, Iranian-supported Popular Mobilization forces including Turkmen, Yazidis, Christians, and Shabbaks. And he governs from a city in which there are between six and ten terrorist bombings every day.

True, the Republic of Iraq is no paragon of democracy, rule of law, fair play, and equal representation, but its goal is to become a social democracy in a manner similar to the

governments that support its fight against the terrorists. Relatively speaking, if the end of history is a pluralistic, cosmopolitan social democracy in a world culture in which the freedom of each individual is maximized, its champion is Baghdad or Erbil, not Mosul or Raqqa.

From the perspective of the unfolding of world history, the battle for Mosul represents the culmination of a tectonic clash between modernity and the pre-modern Middle East, between states evincing a reverence for myth and religion (Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iran) and states flaunting secularism (the Western world). It can be seen as a clash between the undeveloped and the developed world, the pre-rational and rational, the tribal and the global. Jihadism has called the West's bluff by proposing an anti-Western paradigm thought long dead: a revived Muslim Empire headed by a theocratic emperor and dedicated to the obliteration of democracy, free thought, and free action. This war has eerie evocations of ancient wars being reworked because something was left unfinished.

What is happening in Iraq and Syria is not a world war, but it is a war drawing proxies from most of the world. The 60-state coalition allied with the government of Iraq is facing off against an equally diverse coalition of jihadist fighters set to put an end to modernity in the name of the Caliphate. There may be no atheists in fox holes, but even the Marxists have their proxies in the fight: the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and their Syrian counterparts, the YPG, have scores of volunteer Marxist-inspired fighters from Europe. There is even a unit of all-female YPG fighters battling pockets of

Islamic State on the south side of the Sinjar Mountains.

ISIS terrorists include jihadis from North and Central Africa, Uighurs from China, and radicalized Europeans by the thousands. From Germany alone 800 young men have made their way to Syria to fight with ISIS. Suicide bombers even hail from Japan. In Syria and Iraq, more than 70 languages are spoken on the battlefield. Coalition air strikes on Jan. 9 destroyed "the Australian ISIS headquarters" on the west bank of Mosul, *Daesh Daily* reported. Let that fact sink in: Islamists from Australia?

The optimism of Francis Fukuyama, author of the 1991 best-selling book *The End of History and the Last Man*, has to be reconsidered. When the book first appeared, the Soviet Union was history, and the judgement of most political thinkers was that no ideology could compete with the culture of Western-style social democracy. But that was two years before the first Al-Qaeda attack on the Twin Towers in New York, ten years before 9/11, 24 years before the Caliphate

was proclaimed in Mosul, and 25 years before the ISIS attacks on Europe. That was before mass murder by rolling trucks became a problem.

Fukuyama's teacher, Samuel Huntington, once director of Harvard's center for International Affairs, thought that what was aborning on the world stage was a clash of civilizations. This was prescient. But for decades western leaders and analysts underestimated and understudied the new religious movement we know as Islamism. Perhaps many assumed that the age of religious wars had essentially ended at the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648.

Winning the war of ideas is the challenge that the George W. Bush and Obama administrations never engaged effectively enough. Barak Obama spoke of ISIS as the "JV" Team in the year it grew and conquered swathes of Iraq with furious speed. The Islamic State achieved in 2015 a goal that Al-Qaeda had projected in 2005 but which few observers expected to happen: the creation of a defined territory ruled by a Caliph.



Mosul by American Colony (Jerusalem) Photo Department, 1932. Source: Library of Congress.



By Spc. Craig Jensen, Feb. 5, 2017. Source: U.S. Army. Cpt. Andrew Roberts directs newly arrived paratroopers, part of the coalition to defeat ISIS, where to go near Mosul, Iraq.

In fact, in its first year, the Caliphate claimed substantial territory in three nations: Syria, Iraq, and Libya. Islamic terrorism as a whole grew by leaps and bounds on Obama's watch.

Islamism is still in a position to ascend and is hoping to get a larger share of the loyalties of 1.6 billion Muslims in 80 countries. Yes, superior arms of the coalition against ISIS will likely dislodge the terrorists from Mosul by the end of April if not sooner and from Raqqa before the end of 2017.

But most observers agree that the terrorists will fade back into counter-insurgency mode. "ISIS terrorists will simply change their skins," says Ali Sada of *Daesh Daily*. "They will shave their beards and pretend that they were always innocent civilians. Even after the costly battles to recover Iraqi cities in Anbar Province in 2016, some of the terrorists bribed their way out of prisons and are coming

to Baghdad to end their lives as suicide bombers."

For now the anxious residents of West Mosul are hoping to survive until their liberation by Iraqi Counter-Terrorism forces. As for the Iraqi survivors living in East Mosul, progress for them would be the cessation of sudden counterattacks by sleeper cells, mortar barrages, and drone attacks launched by the terrorists in the Western half of the city. For the combatants fighting for their lives and the panicked civilians running for theirs, this very modern, very ancient war still comes down to a knife fight in a pitch-black alley.

With the new administration in Washington, the rhetorical Kabuki dance over whether to use the phrase "radical Islam" as opposed to the phrase "violent extremism" is over. National security advisors to the new president as well as lawmakers, pastors, and thought

leaders of all sorts speak candidly about the war of ideas being fought between exponents of totalitarian Islamism and the various forms of social democracy that invoke freedom as the highest ideal.

Ideas do matter, policymakers concede. But which side has the ideas that will prevail in the long run? Which side has a fighting faith? The German philosopher Hegel, writing in the 1800s, asserted that there would be an end to history and taught that it was a foregone conclusion that freedom would win out in the end. Nonetheless, it was in his day, as it is our own, still a matter of faith, core identity, and grit—and by no means a foregone conclusion. P

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PARADISE LOST: THE POWER OF NOSTALGIA IN POLITICS

Review by Daniel Strand

THE SHIPWRECKED MIND: ON POLITICAL REACTION

MARK LILLA, *New York Review Book*, 2016, 168 pages



In the Woody Allen film *Midnight in Paris*, the main character, Gil Pender, travels back in time to 1920s Paris to mingle and chat with figures he idolizes—Jean Cocteau, Pablo Picasso, Cole Porter, F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, and on and on. Gil idolizes this period as the Golden Age of high Parisian artistic creativity and cultural achievement. During one of his forays, he meets and falls in love with Adriana, a lover of Pablo Picasso. They end up traveling further back to Paris circa 1890, the Belle Époque period of Gauguin and Degas, which Adriana considers the true Golden Age of Paris. She attempts to convince Gil to stay with her there; however, Gil at this point comes to a realization about nostalgia, both Adriana's and his own: it is just a seductive

form of escapism. He decides to return to the present rather than live in the past.

Mark Lilla has discovered what Gil Pender discovered. His new book *The Shipwrecked Mind: On Political Reaction*, examines the power of nostalgia in its political manifestation. In his previous, staunchly future-oriented book, *The Reckless Mind: Intellectuals in Politics*, Lilla examined the roots of radicalism in contemporary politics. In this latest book, he sets out in the opposite and uncharted direction to examine the role of the reactionary mind, which is oriented towards the past, or in his phrase “stuck in the past”. The book focuses more on conservative figures since conservatives have a stronger propensity to yearn for the lost Eden of some Golden Age from which we have fallen. This is also true of American Christians, who pine for the good ole’ days before the 1960s inaugurated the fall into godless hedonism and secularism. But unlike conservatism, Lilla’s reactionary is similar to the radical in that they are both driven by a form of utopianism: “The militancy of his nostalgia is what makes the reactionary a distinctly modern figure, not a traditional one” (xiii). The power of nostalgia is that it is rooted in the past and not in a future utopia that can fail to materialize. “Hopes can be disappointed,” Lilla avers,

“Nostalgia is irrefutable” (xiv).

Interestingly, it is the Germans who dominate the book’s narrative. Opening chapters on Franz Rosenzweig, Eric Voegelin, and Leo Strauss sketch the influences and mindset of the reactionary. Each thinker is critical of modernity, and two of them were directly affected by Nazi Germany. There is a similarity to their diagnosis of the present sickness in the West. “Healthy” thinking at some point devolves into sick thinking or deviation from the healthy whereby the “new thinking” initiates a decline leading to the present rot. What each intellectual purports to offer is a therapy that will return thinking to a state of health.

Lilla then moves to two contemporary figures, Jacob Taubes and Brad Gregory, who serve as modern examples. Taubes and Gregory exemplify reactionary thinking on the left and right. Gregory’s narrative is more interesting because it touches on Catholic anti-modernism that has been in ascendant in many contemporary intellectual circles. Lilla largely dismisses this narrative as a “just so story”, and I am inclined to agree. In it the late medieval world is described in glowing tones as a wondrous world of harmony and order only to be rent asunder by the Protestant Reformers and the Radical Reformation.

Shipwrecked Mind is an impressive little book that packs a punch or two; the most important of which is how Lilla opens “reactionary” as a fruitful category to understand our current moment both in America and around the world. One cannot help but see Donald Trump’s rise and his politics illumined, in part, by this reactionary impulse for long lost days of prosperity before globalism’s rise and its depredations. The new category also explains how Trump’s politics often run counter to conservative politics, even if they find their home in the current Republican Party. Of contemporary relevance, if we grant Lilla his narrative, it is noteworthy that the reactionaries he describes have a much more moderate effect on politics than their radical brethren, whose utopianism is more susceptible to ideological tyranny and destruction.

As would be expected, reactionaries, rooted in nostalgia,

are not well-reconciled to modernity or the fruits of modernity. While Lilla functions on the assumption that not being reconciled to modernity is a problem, he gives little in way of explaining why. Perhaps he wants one to accept all that modernity is and has wrought simply, *thereby*, to avoid becoming reactionary? Indeed, one gets the impression that Lilla, at a minimum, defaults to this assumption; though the efficacy of the proposal seems quite questionable in itself.

As with all critical narratives that offer no alternative except the unmasking of “false” narratives, *Shipwrecked Mind* leaves one feeling a bit unsatisfied. Nevertheless, the power of this little book to unlock Gil Pender’s insight into nostalgia—that we all long to return to a Golden Age, to a paradise lost—is timely and sheds much light on our present situation. It offers an important caution to those who are intoxicated by the desire to

remake the Garden of Eden in our contemporary world. There was only ever one garden, and we cannot return to it. While I do not share the opinion that things are getting better all the time, I do not think that being hopelessly nostalgic for the days of low rates of divorce and out of wedlock births is the solution. It is an illusion that we would be happier if we just lived in a better time or place. If we look back, it should be to the one event that truly changed all of history; and if we look forward, we should look forward to the coming of a renewed reality that shall not be brought about by human design or will. P

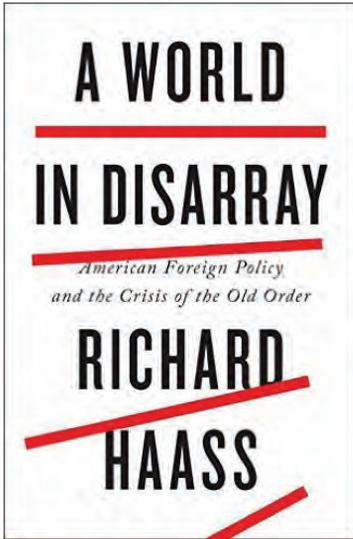
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PARADIGM LOST

Review by Matt Gobush

A WORLD IN DISARRAY

RICHARD HAASS, Penguin Press, 2017, 352 Pages



In 1947, between a second world war and a cold one, Secretary of State George Marshall formed the Policy Planning Staff at the State Department, directing it “to devise basic policies crucial to the conduct of our foreign affairs.” Present at the creation as its first director was diplomat George Kennan, who’s anonymous “X” article in *Foreign Affairs* the same year first framed the U.S. strategy of containment against Soviet communism.

Kennan was a realist who advocated a singular focus on national interests and saw the world through the prism of power politics. He sought the counsel of other realists, including practitioners, theorists, and even

a theologian—Reinhold Niebuhr. Together, they helped bring order to a world in disarray, crafting policy that would position the U.S. opposite the USSR and at the center of defense alliances and market economies uniting the free world.

Seventy years later, a successor of Kennan, Richard Haass, similarly seeks to bring order to a world in disarray with a new book of that title. Haass served as the first director of Policy Planning in the George W. Bush administration; for the last 14 years, he has served as president of the Council on Foreign Relations, publisher of *Foreign Affairs*. Like his predecessor at State, Haass is a self-described “card-carrying realist”; unlike Kennan, however, Haass’ realism is chastened by the Iraq War, over which he resigned his position at State in protest. As one would expect, his brand of realism is notably conservative in its prescriptions and minimalist in its ambitions.

This prudence does not prevent Haass from recognizing radical threats to international order, however. Indeed, he is at his best in describing the

disruptive forces wrought by globalization, including transnational terrorism, nuclear proliferation, pandemic disease, cyber warfare, and climate change. “Almost anyone and anything, from tourists, terrorists, and both migrants and refugees, to e-mails, weapons, viruses, dollars and greenhouse gases, can travel on one of the many conveyer belts that are modern globalization and reach any and every corner of the globe.” Given this new reality, a traditional realism “that speaks only to the rights and prerogatives of states,” Haass asserts, “is increasingly inadequate, even dangerous.”

Haass’ solution is to redefine realism based on a new understanding of sovereignty. Inspired by the Concert of Europe that restored stability following the Napoleonic Wars, he calls for a new sense of “sovereign obligation” such as that voluntarily assumed by Metternich, Castlereagh, Tallyrand, and the other envoys of the continent’s royal courts two centuries ago. Sovereignty, Haass urges, must extend beyond respect for the territorial integrity and domestic autonomy of states to encompass the duties states have to one

another. A state's independence is dependent upon its cooperation in the maintenance of a stable international order.

Although Haass' innovation is impressive and his defense of realism admirable, it suffers from a crucial flaw. In the current context, in which the United States remains "the most powerful country in the world for decades to come," Haass' renewed realist paradigm points to a paradox. If world order is in U.S. national interests and such order requires a balance of power, it follows that it is in the interests of the world's predominant power to elevate one or more states to serve as a counterbalance, either by strengthening them, or weakening ourselves. Is such national self-sacrifice politically realistic? Would Americans willingly cede an advantage to a rival in the interests of a balanced world order? The question answers itself.

The implications of Haass' realism are not only politically unrealistic. They are also morally unconscionable. The British Empire managed its decline and a rebalancing of world order by encouraging the growth of the United States, a like-minded liberal democracy. No such alternative exists today. Neither Russia nor China, the world's other contenders for predominance, are liberal states likely

willing to enforce a liberal world order. The manner by which their authoritarian regimes manage competing domestic power centers and use force internally are indicative of their intentions to uphold a stable, peaceful, and just international order. Repressive regimes tend to become rogue ones.

On the other hand, an America unbound is also unlikely to foster global stability, if only because it would breed resentment and provoke challenge. The necessary check on our own power, then, must come from within, rather than from without. Structurally, our constitutional separation of powers and democratic institutions limit overreach, but these are only as effective as the people that comprise them. Ultimately, self-discipline—for nations as with individuals—entails moral struggle. It is a test not of our compliance with domestic or international law, but of our commitment to abide by a higher law, one that respects dignity, supports flourishing, and seeks justice for all.

Here realism is blind. Haass insists on the strict separation of the moral from the material in foreign affairs, consistent with classic realism. An example of this is his strained distinction, bordering on the semantic, between "sovereign obligation" and "sovereign responsibility." The former

speaks only to states' duties to one another; the latter, captured in the emerging norm of the Responsibility to Protect, addresses states' duties to their citizens, and the duty of all states to protect innocents. Per Haass, to preserve world order, sovereignty must be made dependent on a state meeting its obligations, such as preventing terrorists from operating from their territory or limiting its greenhouse gas emissions. It is not contingent on it fulfilling its responsibilities, such as preventing mass atrocities within its territory. But is such a separation sensible, especially in an increasingly porous world? It is revealing that in his brief summary in the book of just war doctrine—a doctrine he elsewhere dismisses as too "subjective"—Haass omits entirely the criterion of right intention, arguably the most critical from a moral perspective. His new concept of sovereignty remains indifferent to the character and intentions of the states that claim it, viewing all as morally equivalent.

In his own recent book on sovereignty, eminent just war scholar James Turner Johnson excavates the concept to discover that in fact it was a moral one from its inception. Sovereignty, in Roman jurisprudence and Christian thought, was understood as "responsibility for the common good of society that is to be exercised to

vindicate justice.” It was a sacred duty reserved for leaders with no secular superior (*souverain* in the old French) and constituted the grounds for granting them the sole right to wield organized, deadly force. Only after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648—realism’s Genesis—was sovereignty shorn of responsibility and reduced to the rights of territorial integrity and domestic inviolability.

Unless Americans cultivate a sense of moral responsibility in our foreign policy, promoting universal justice as well as national interest, Haass cautions that we risk falling into what has been called the Thucydides Trap: a world order, like that of ancient Peloponnesian Greece, in which vying powers react on their worst fears of others and the hegemony suppress rising competitors. While, as the strongest power today, the United States could benefit from such a ruthless system, history suggests the rewards would be fleeting, for in such conditions the outbreak of war becomes almost inevitable, and the only peace is that of the graveyard. No sovereign obligations assumed by others would keep mankind from blundering into the trap,

and Thucydides’ snare would be sprung. It is our unique duty, therefore, as the world’s undisputed leader, to ensure the world order we shape serves not only our national interests but the common interest as well.

During their time together at the State Department and beyond, George Kennan and Reinhold Niebuhr carried on a lively correspondence reflecting their deep regard and respect for one another. It was Kennan who famously called Niebuhr “the father of us all.” On most matters, they were in strong agreement. But the two realists differed in one important way: the role of morality in foreign affairs. Kennan asserted that prudence dictates that national interests “have no moral quality.” Niebuhr, on the other hand, believed it necessary “to draw upon another moral and spiritual resource to widen the conception of interest... a sense of justice that can prevent prudence from inevitably arresting the impulse toward, and concern for, the life of the other.” His realism was a Christian realism, shaped by a more enlightened ethic than the cynical egoism that classic realism can fall prey

to. It was a realism that recognized our fallen nature but also our transcendent destiny. It was a realism informed by hope as well as sin.

With his novel concept of sovereign obligation, Haass makes an important advance in the search for peace and stability in a disoriented world. For this reason, his book deserves a place among the modern classics of realism. But its advances fall short, unable to grasp the essential moral quality of world order, especially one in which to balance power today would require empowering illiberal states. Without the influence and inspiration of a moral guide such as Kennan had with Niebuhr, Haass’ renewed realism remains a paradigm lost. P

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ON MORALITY & THE CRISIS IN SYRIA

ROBERT NICHOLSON



Looking eastward: *Reflections on Western engagement with the Middle East.*

It was odd to watch conservative pundits spend the final months of 2016 condemning Barack Obama for his inaction in Syria and blaming him, at least in part, for the hundreds of thousands of Syrian dead and the millions displaced around the world. The public discourse of innocence and guilt was extreme. In the words of John McCain and Lindsey Graham, “[T]he name Aleppo will echo through history, like Srebrenica and Rwanda, as a testament to our moral failure and everlasting shame.”

Such rhetoric was odd to behold given that it wasn’t just

President Obama and his supporters who let Syria burn for six years. Many on the right were more than happy to distance themselves from that part of the world, rejecting the impulse George Kennan once described as “the feeling that we must have the solution to everyone’s problems and a finger in every pie.” Indeed, the rise of Donald Trump made clear what had been only tacit, unmasking a Republican base that wanted to do less in the world, not more, and to defend vital interests alone or venture abroad only when there was something immediate and tangible to be gained.

The question of whether morality should play a role in our foreign policy is being answered by many, on the right and left alike, in the negative. The Trump Administration seems on track to channel their sentiments.

Unfortunately, the binary often made between considerations of conscience and of self-interest is insufficient—a US foreign policy absent the strong, principled, and prudent promotion of justice ignores not only our better angels but our own self-interest as well. The situation in Syria, left alone, doesn’t just result in the loss of more Syrian life. It undermines our hard-earned

position as leader of the free world.

In his now famous, or infamous, interview with Jeffrey Goldberg at *The Atlantic*, Obama articulated his view of the world this way:

[T]he world is a tough, complicated, messy, mean place, and full of hardship and tragedy. And in order to advance both our security interests and those ideals and values that we care about, we've got to be hardheaded at the same time as we're bighearted, and pick and choose our spots, and recognize that there are going to be times where the best that we can do is to shine a spotlight on something that's terrible, but not believe that we can automatically solve it... There are going to be times where we can do something about innocent people being killed, but there are going to be times where we can't.

Christian realists will find much to endorse here. Making tough decisions in a fallen world means drawing upon all virtues, but none more so than prudence. A statesman tasked with protecting his people may decide that war, even in the name of justice, is irresponsible and injurious to the common weal. "Prudence in a ruler is almost as great a source of authority as the sense of justice," Reinhold Niebuhr wrote, "because men rightly abhor the chaos of war even more than the evils of injustice."

Yet Christian realists also hold a moral view of man that complicates any simple analysis. The goal of realism is order; the goal of Christianity is cosmic justice. Christian realism is an attempt to find a mean between the two, recognizing that man is

wicked but that God loves him anyway and ordained the sword of human government for his protection, and that incremental justice can and should be gained in this world where possible. The Christian realist knows that power and morality go hand in hand, however difficult it may be to discern the hallmarks of a truly moral foreign policy.

In a *Foreign Affairs* essay entitled "Morality and Foreign Policy," George Kennan, a lifelong Presbyterian who was instrumental in creating the Cold War containment strategy (the policy of applying American counter-force against Soviet influence at an array of shifting geographical and political points), argued that a moral foreign policy would be one that actually avoided the "masquerade of moral principle" and pursued national interests with "inherent honesty and openness of purpose." He was less worried about amoral policymaking than he was about moralistic hypocrisy. "[L]ack of consistency," he wrote, "implies a lack of principle in the eyes of much of the world; whereas morality, if not principled, is not really morality."

A moral foreign policy, Kennan insisted, would be aware of its own limitations, recognizing "the immense gap between what we dream of doing and what we really have to offer." It would also embrace a negative imperative over a positive one. In his words, "avoidance of the worst should often be a more practical undertaking than the achievement of the best." This formulation was perhaps a more elegant precursor to Obama's vernacular "Don't do stupid s**t."

Kennan's skepticism about foreign intervention stemmed from a fear of unintended outcomes.

"It seldom seems to occur to us," he wrote, "that even if a given situation is bad, the alternatives might be worse—though history provides plenty of examples of just this phenomenon." Ultimately, he averred, the US seeks stability, not morality: "In some parts of the world, the main requirement of American security is not an unnatural imitation of the American model but sheer stability."

In an essay entitled "The Sources of American Prestige", the great Christian ethicist Reinhold Niebuhr took a different approach. He attempted to integrate power with morality, similar to how Einstein integrated matter with energy. Niebuhr started from the unavoidable fact of American power—power that we did not seek but nevertheless amassed over time through economic and military might. This power led to our *de facto* leadership in world affairs and the creation of a ubiquitous, though largely unseen, American world order over which we preside.

American power undoubtedly serves, and rightly so, the interests of the American people. So among the first priorities of any US president is the preservation of that power. Sovereign power, Niebuhr noted, creates an implied consent among those that fall under its sway; but this consent cannot last forever. "[P]ower...cannot maintain itself very long," he wrote, "if prestige is not added as a source of authority." The role of prestige, or legitimacy, is the key to Niebuhr's foreign policy equation.

The great kings of history ensured prestige by wielding coercive power, dynastic title, or special relationship to the gods. Today American prestige rests

exclusively on our reputation for maintaining order and justice in areas under our hegemony. This points toward why moral leadership is in the national interest. “The problem we face,” said Niebuhr, “is whether we can put enough moral content into our hegemony to make our physical power morally sufferable to our allies.”

The tension between order and justice, between stability and human rights, between states and individuals, lies at the heart of America’s quest for international legitimacy. Nothing exposes that tension more than the question of military intervention. Is it better to tolerate the reign of Bashar al-Assad because he is a foreign sovereign and his ouster may lead to more chaos and death? Or is it better to overthrow him and hopefully save lives, understanding that the crisis inside Syria could get even worse?

Niebuhr would create a hierarchy, or at least a sequence, between order and justice. As Marc LiVecche notes in his essay for this issue, Niebuhr saw a continual conflict between impossible-to-attain ideals and other, possibly lesser, ideals which were possible to attain at least approximately. Order, more possible than anything like perfect justice, must come first. Like Kennan, Niebuhr believed that stability is itself a moral

good from which other moral goods flow, and that without stability other moral goods cannot flourish.

Closely connected to order, however, is justice. Power requires prestige to be sustainable; so too order ultimately requires justice. “[O]rder precedes justice in the strategy of government,” Niebuhr wrote, “but...only an order which implicates justice can achieve a stable peace.”

Following Kennan and Niebuhr, a moral US foreign policy would be prudent, consistent, forthright, aware of its limitations, and driven by the national interest. But if the national interest desires the maintenance of American power, our policymakers must think hard about “put[ting] enough moral content into our hegemony”—not just moral language—to keep that power afloat.

The question is not whether our foreign policy will be one that implicates justice, but where and how we execute that justice in a way that enhances, and doesn’t undermine, order.

The question of Syria is not simple. It is a conflict that presents a host of bad actors and options, none of which seems likely to bring about an immediate end to the war. The polar options of nonintervention and full-scale invasion are unlikely to balance

the tension between order and justice. But that doesn’t mean the answer is disengagement.

The Trump Administration should consider a variety of mediating solutions that are on the table, including the creation of safe zones that would recognize underlying demography and provide a path for stable post-conflict governance. Such safe zones, implemented well, would offer the chance to establish order in the midst of chaos—even in geographically discreet ways—that could lead to new opportunities for justice.

What is not possible is a continued policy of inaction. Turning a blind eye to Syria tells the world one of two things: either we are too weak to act, or we don’t care about justice like we claim. Regardless of the answer, it will prompt a further decline in American prestige and will ultimately undermine our power. And unless we are prepared to let someone else lead in this most ancient, most sacred, and most unstable part of our planet, diminished power is an outcome that is entirely unacceptable. P

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AD ORIENTEM will be a regular feature offering commentary on the Middle East from a Western perspective.



DOMINION /də'mɪnyən (IS NOT)
DOMINATION /dəmən'nāSH(ə)n/

“Let us make mankind in our image; and let them have dominion over all the earth...” Called to share the Divine likeness, human beings were made to exercise rule in the form of dominion: delegated, providential care—responsibility—for the conditions of history, in history. Such care is characterized by other-centered acts of self-donation. This contrasts sharply with domination. Since the Fall in the Garden of Eden, human beings have been afflicted by the *libido dominandi*—we have been ruled by the lust to rule. Domination is characterized by self-centered acts of other-donation that feed our hunger for power, advantage, and glory through the forced submission of the powerless to our will.

The political-theological patrimony of the Christian intellectual tradition, including just war casuistry, helps guide human beings back to the just exercise of our governing vocation. In our private and public lives, including through the work of government, human dominion is approximate, limited, and imperfect. Following after God’s work of creating, sustaining, and liberating all of creation, human beings exercise power with the aim of peace, characterized by the presence of justice and order as oriented toward genuine human flourishing.
