

Changing the Rules of the Game: A Just Peace Critique of Just War Thought

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WHEN THINKING about the ethics of war, the menu generally includes just three items: pacifism, just war thought, and realism. Among mainline Protestants, a fourth path has been slowly developing over the past century. Just peace separates itself from both pacifism and just war thought, sometimes conceiving of itself as a third path or a bridge between the two. While just war thought has become, for these thinkers, too complicit in an international political system that legitimizes (rather than condemns) violence, pacifism is seen as calling for an equally counter-productive withdrawal from the political sphere. Just peace starts with the pacifist impulse—that violence is by nature immoral, and must be avoided—and ends with the just war drive for a peace that goes beyond the absence of war to the creation of actual justice. Justice is privileged over order.¹ Just peace thinking thus demands that we recognize peace not only in its negative form (the absence of war) but also in its positive variant (the presence of justice). Indeed, just peace demands not only “*non-violence or non-resistance*,” but also “positive participation in peacemaking initiatives.”²

It is perhaps not surprising that the idea of just peace is being worked out within the Protestant tradition.³ While all Christian communities have

¹ Duane Friesen, *Christian Peacemaking and International Conflict* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1986), 22.

² Glen H. Stassen, *Just Peacemaking: Transforming Initiatives for Justice and Peace* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 42.

³ Although this essay focuses on just peace thought in the Protestant tradition, it should be acknowledged that there is a similarly vigorous discussion of just peace

struggled with the ethics of war and peace, “Protestantism, especially, harbors within itself contradictory notions of what peace is and what can lead to peace.”⁴ Protestantism’s emphasis on individual conscience and relative lack of theological hierarchy has left its denominations debating the ethics of war not only with each other, but also internally. Nonetheless, the move to just peace represents a striking departure from most Protestant denominations’ traditional perspectives on war. Most of the major Protestant denominations—the Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican traditions and their daughter churches—historically accepted just war thought, while allowing for individual conscientious objection. Theologically, this is perhaps unsurprising—their primary doctrinal concerns with Catholicism (and with each other) involved foundational beliefs. Politically, these mainstream denominations often enjoyed state support, not unlike the Roman Catholic Church before them. As such, they generally encouraged participation in the life of the state. Since the use of force has been seen as a necessary requirement of the state’s defense of order through its policing and military functions, these traditions have sought to reconcile limited violence with Christian principles, employing just war reasoning in their public judgments on the subject.

By contrast, other Protestant denominations, most notably the Anabaptists and Quakers, are considered “peace churches.” Historically these denominations often stood aloof from politics. Although most of these denominations believed that Christians had an important role to play in society—aiding the poor, encouraging reconciliation, speaking out for justice—they also argued that participation in government was inherently tainted. If government requires force to uphold order, it would be definitionally impossible to participate in governance without engaging in acts of violence or coercion. The pacifism that these denominations uphold is in principle absolute; it claims that violence is taboo.⁵

Recently, however, these two positions have moved closer together. As Huber poetically puts it, “In an age when nuclear mass destruction is possible, many streams that earlier flowed side by side without touching

in the Catholic tradition, dating back at least as far as Pope John XXIII’s 1963 encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*. The four elements of just peace outlined in the encyclical, namely human rights, economic development, solidarity and international order, bear much in common with Protestant just peace thought. It is a sign of the synchronicity of the mainstream Protestant and Catholic traditions that both traditions are moving in the same direction.

⁴ Wolfgang Huber, *Violence: The Unrelenting Assault on Human Dignity*, trans. Ruth C. K. Gritsch (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 85.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

are now converging.”⁶ While the majority of Protestant denominations still remain more optimistic about governance (and more tolerant of the use of force), the increasing emphasis on just peace creates a new linkage between mainline Protestants and the traditional peace churches.

I argue that the newly emerging doctrine of just peace is a reaction to certain changes in modern warfare that undermine the logics of the just war tradition, challenging its potential to usefully limit war. While just peace theory certainly serves as a fruitful critique of the just war tradition, its reactive nature may undermine it.

My argument proceeds in four steps. First, I outline the doctrine of just peace as it exists today. Second, I sketch the theoretical relationship between the just peace and just war traditions, arguing that just peace is a reaction to specific assumptions within just war thought. Third, I trace the history of the just peace doctrine, claiming that fundamental changes in modern weaponry and tactics have driven former just war churches toward a more pacifist perspective. Lastly, I evaluate the prospects for just peace thought. Is this a tradition that is here to stay? Does it have the theoretical rigor to compete with just war thought and principled pacifism? Does it really represent a third path?

What Does Just Peace Demand?

Depending on the denomination, just peace thinkers offer between seven and ten concrete suggestions for peacemaking. These suggestions can be condensed into four general categories. First, we must admit our own guilt and seek to rebuild damaged relationships. Second, we must identify the specific causes for conflict. Third, we must attempt to rectify these problems, including being willing to take the initiative unilaterally. Fourth, we must proactively work to strengthen international institutions and uphold human rights.

First, we must recognize our own responsibility for troubled relationships and seek reconciliation. By implication, both sides bear some responsibility for the conflict. Stassen argues that we must acknowledge “our complicity and bondage” lest we “spread the disease rather than participate in the cure.”⁷ This acknowledgment serves both a theological and a pragmatic purpose. Theologically, Christians called to participate in peacemaking must give up “self-righteous judging and controlling and begin to rely on the transforming initiatives of God’s grace.”⁸ An internal change is the basis for new external behaviors. Pragmatically, apology

⁶ Ibid., 93.

⁷ Stassen, *Just Peacemaking*, 59.

⁸ Ibid., 60.

may in itself be necessary for reconciliation to occur. Because “unacknowledged guilt is not merely a moral sin but also . . . a powerful barrier to reconciliation,” admitting one’s own guilt is a key step in just peacemaking.⁹ After all, the other may not be willing to engage constructively until we have admitted our own complicity. Stassen focuses on German admission of war guilt to make this point; another relevant example would be the truth and reconciliation commission in South Africa. The United Church of Christ’s *A Just Peace Church* similarly links these two dimensions of acknowledgment: “in addition to structural change, a transformation of values must also occur.”¹⁰

Second, we must look for the underlying causes of violence and attempt to address them. Just peace assumes that there are *identifiable* causes for conflict. War is not an inevitable phenomenon; it is a social product. Conflict and war are the result of injustices, which must be remedied in order to construct peace. Unlike the dichotomous relationship between domestic and international order in the just war tradition, just peace claims that order and justice must be simultaneously pursued on both levels. We must seek to resolve injustice wherever we find it, at home and abroad. Human rights and justice must be sought for all, “especially the powerless, without double standards.”¹¹ At times, our own domestic or foreign policies must be changed.

Correcting injustices can take many forms. Sometimes it is a matter of opening up a dialogue and allowing the other to present its claims. Dialogue is one of the fundamental principles of just peacemaking. If there is no conversation, then issues cannot be aired and common solutions cannot be discovered. Stassen identifies the habit of brushing conflictual issues under the rug as one of the “irrational processes” that stand in the way of making peace.¹² Nations must talk, and “in a manner designed to resolve conflict.”¹³

Part of this communication requires affirming our enemies’ “valid interests.”¹⁴ This means recognizing our common interdependence in terms of security. National borders must be recognized and respected, militaries must be arranged defensively (not offensively), and common institutions need to be developed.¹⁵ For example, just peace theorists

⁹ Ibid., 107.

¹⁰ *A Just Peace Church*, ed. Susan Thistlethwaite, 48.

¹¹ Ibid., 103.

¹² Stassen, *Just Peacemaking*, 63.

¹³ Ibid., 102.

¹⁴ Ibid., 77.

¹⁵ Ibid., 95–96.

affirm the United Nations as the centerpiece of a “new, global international system of security and cooperation.”¹⁶ The European Union also serves as a model for productive international cooperation. The key is creating a “politics of inclusion rather than exclusion.”¹⁷

Correcting injustice may also use certain forms of coercion. Within the just peace community, there is some dispute over the problem of coercion. Some thinkers classify almost anything as violence, and thus radically limit the sphere of persuasive action. The Peace Theology Development Team of the United Church of Christ argues that it is imperative to “assert that the state is based on consent rather than coercion.”¹⁸ The state’s primary role, then, is not to forcibly keep its citizens from harming each other, but to “create social justice and human welfare, rather than merely to restrain evil.”¹⁹ Most just peace thinkers, however, argue that there is a distinction between coercion and violence. Indeed, some mild forms of coercion—social pressure and fear of ostracism, for example—may be normal parts of the human experience, and perhaps necessary to our lives as social creatures.

Lastly, we must be willing to take unilateral action. Change can be brought about by figuratively disarming the enemy—altering one’s stance to reflect a peaceful alternative may shame (or charm) the other into responding. As Stassen describes it, “we need a new strategy of independent initiatives, directed toward transforming the reaction of the adversary.”²⁰ Such unilateral moves “build mutual credibility, decrease the sense of insecurity, and provide incentives so our adversary can begin to consider rational alternatives.”²¹

Why Just Peace? A Reaction to the Dominant Theory

Just peace theory challenges three assumptions in the just war tradition, namely, that war is inevitable, limited, and state-centric. This section sketches out the critique of just war theory offered by just peace thinkers, highlighting the ways in which just peace thought is a reaction to the older tradition.

Just war theory assumes that war is inevitable. While some wars should not be fought, because either the causes or the means are unjust, the logic of the tradition itself presumes that war is not *in itself* immoral. Put differently, just war theory asks *when* Christians (or more secularly, moral individuals) may participate in war, but does not ask the fundamental question:

¹⁶ Ibid., 97.

¹⁷ Ibid., 98.

¹⁸ Thistlethwaite, *A Just Peace Church*, 63.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Stassen, *Just Peacemaking*, 99.

²¹ Ibid., 101.

should there be war in the first place? In specifically religious iterations of the tradition, the inevitability of war is tied to the fallen condition of mankind—because we live in the earthly city, and not the heavenly one, we cannot expect any better.²² Violence is a necessity of life in a fallen world, because force is necessary to maintain order. While this is admittedly an unideal politics, it is a realist one—to fail to maintain order is to permit sin to flourish.

Just peace theorists contest this assumption, as they “do not believe that war is inevitable, that it comes and goes as by an inexorable and arbitrary decree of fate.”²³ The basis of this hope is the claim that coercion is not necessarily the basis of human relations, either within or between states. As Friesen argues, “though violent force is present in political institutions, political institutions cannot be reduced to this definition as if violent force were necessary for political institutions to remain political.”²⁴ Put differently, “humanity can overcome sin, create Just Peace.”²⁵ As part of the process, the church must remind the polity that “the state is based on consent rather than coercion,” and that the state’s role is “to create social justice and human welfare rather than merely to restrain evil.”²⁶

Just war theory also presumes that war can be limited. The existence of categories of causes and means deemed to be just presumes that both the ends and means can be restricted. Just war and just peace advocates would all most likely agree on the matter of cause—neither tradition stomachs far-reaching, idealistic ideologies that could lead to crusading. But just peace advocates have repeatedly made the argument across the last century that modern war makes the idea of limited means seem naïve. Weapons of mass destruction, the increasing use of guerrilla and terrorist tactics, and the militarization of societies raise questions about the practicability of civilian immunity.

Furthermore, just war theory considers the state to be the most significant actor. While early just war thinkers naturally used different terminology, their concern with “legitimate authority” suggests that they imagined a world made up of like units in competition with each other. The assumption that human loyalties and sympathies are (and perhaps should be) bound

²² Friesen cites St. Augustine, Martin Luther, and Paul Ramsey in this respect: *Christian Peacemaking*, 40.

²³ Historic Peace Churches and International Fellowship of Reconciliation Committee, “Peace Is the Will of God” (Geneva, Switzerland, October 1953), in *A Declaration on Peace* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991), 78.

²⁴ Friesen, *Christian Peacemaking*, 105.

²⁵ Thistlethwaite, *A Just Peace Church*, 58.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

primarily to the local political unit is seen by just peace thinkers as divisive. By contrast, just peace thinkers encourage approaches that consider the good of the entire international system, and ultimately, all of humanity.

One of the clearest discussions of this alternate perspective can be found in *Peace Is the Will of God*, written in 1953 by a group of historic peace churches and the International Fellowship of Reconciliation Committee. The document argues that world society naturally comprises various social groupings, “yet this is the very structure whose distortions are an immediate cause of war,” because group consciousness leads to inter-group competition and conflict.²⁷ The question is whether Christ wanted this order of society upheld, or whether the command to “love your enemies” calls for it to be overturned. The Committee responds that Christians have a distinctive “solidarity with all mankind,” and are called to a love that “overreaches the bounds which natural group solidarity sets to unselfishness.”²⁸ If everyone is our neighbor, then war can never be justified, as it takes “the lives of some of God’s children in the hope of protecting the lives and liberties of others.”²⁹

The just peace tradition shares this pacifist assumption. God’s relationship with mankind is described as friendship based on “mutuality, maturity, cooperation, responsibility and reciprocity”; our friendship with God makes it possible to imagine such a “friendship [as] possible on earth,” among all the earth’s peoples.³⁰ In order to achieve just peace, humans must “[bind] together to participate in changing the world,” as “Christ’s power becomes tangible through our bonding with one another.”³¹ Christ’s willingness to enjoy communion with the unclean and other outcasts reveals that “the power to change the world comes through human bonding with the despised.”³² The church must thus resist any and all forces that “perpetuate human enmity, that divide and destroy human community.”³³ Instead of focusing on the various organizations that divide us, we should recognize our “interdependence, understood as the covenantal relation of those abiding in friendship with God,” which “should lead us to a corporate identity capable of sustaining the difficult and divisive task of making peace, even vis-à-vis the state.”³⁴

²⁷ Historic Peace Churches, “Peace Is the Will of God,” 56.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 58.

³⁰ Thistlethwaite, *A Just Peace Church*, 54.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 58.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 59.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

Thus, the state itself must be constantly interrogated. The church is called upon to “witness to the fact that national sovereignty is not an end in itself, and it must advocate relaxation of rabid notions of national sovereignty in order to make possible the establishment of international institutions that promote effectively the mergence of justice and peace.”³⁵ As mentioned earlier, this requires moving away from the assumption that the state must be coercive, since this view “strengthens notions of national sovereignty and prevents any international movement from emerging.”³⁶ If coercion is sworn off as a tool of domestic sovereignty, it must logically also be abandoned as an international relations tactic.

In addition to the claim that loving one’s neighbor means loving equally all of humanity, the Committee also points to Christ’s example as a reason why the state should not be assumed to be self-evidently worthy of protection. The authors of *Peace Is the Will of God* argue that Christ had a choice “when seemingly faced with the choice of imposing his leadership by violence or permitting the extinction of his nascent kingdom,” and that his choice to die on the cross indicates that he “did not justify violence as a lesser evil . . . or as a means to a good end.”³⁷ This implies that a state’s right to self-defense may not be absolute; national security cannot trump the human security of the state’s people.

When Just Peace? A Reaction to Political Shock

Historically, most Protestant churches have traditionally accepted a just war perspective. So what has motivated the shift toward just peace by mainline denominations in the twentieth century? I argue that the just peace doctrine has emerged as a response to a series of external shocks—dramatic changes in warfare and the international system—that challenged just war theory’s core assumptions. Many Protestant theologians seem to agree with Friesen’s claim that “modern warfare is so destructive that the very pursuit of war as an instrument of national policy defeats the very self-interest of the nation which utilizes war.”³⁸ If modern war cannot be limited, just peace thinkers argue, it must be eliminated.

This section traces the evolution of the concept of just peace since World War I, highlighting the external shocks that have pushed the development of just peace theology. Each period has witnessed the development of a particular concept within just peace thought: the need for

³⁵ Ibid., 64.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Historic Peace Churches, “Peace Is the Will of God,” 66.

³⁸ Friesen, *Christian Peacemaking*, 40.

vigorous international institutions and law, the need to ban indiscriminately destructive weapons, and the need for far-reaching changes in the economic, social, and political relations between states to create a just world order.

In the Shadow of the World Wars: Hope in Internationalism, 1940–60

Although the term “just peace” was coined in the 1980s by the United Church of Christ, just peace’s roots reach back to the inter-war pacifism prevalent in many Protestant denominations. In the aftermath of World War I, many prominent theologians were morally disgusted by the unprecedented bloodiness of the war, and especially by the development of new technologies (in particular, machine guns and air forces) that were perceived as more indiscriminate and wasteful of human life than earlier ones. At this stage, the concern that evolving technologies had rendered the just war tradition inadequate did not yet lead to the creation of a new system of ethical thought. Instead, these theologians turned toward a type of pacifism. Yoder describes this as a “programmatic political pacifism,” which argues that war is wrong because it is counterproductive—it does not actually accomplish its stated goals.³⁹ Unlike other pacifisms, which focus on violence itself as wrong, this type of pacifism was more pragmatic. Violence could only be justified if it could be effective; otherwise, it could not be justly used. This form of pacifism, which Yoder—a Mennonite pacifist theologian—saw as naïve, lost favor in the late 1930s with the rise of Nazism in Europe.

The just peace tradition began to emerge in earnest in the years immediately after World War II. Protestant theologians were again shocked by a new form of total war, even more destructive, wanton, and widespread than the Great War. The horrors of genocide and the massive civilian destruction wreaked by firebombing (culminating in the nuclear attacks at the end of the war) made the just war tradition seem rather hollow. The just peace idea did not emerge as a condemnation of the recently ended war, which was judged to be a just war on the part of the Allies. Against the evil of Nazism, appeasement or surrender would clearly have been unconscionable. However, the scale of violence begged the question—could the war have been avoided *without* compromising the moral and humane principles that had legitimated it? Was the question really limited to evaluating the justness of a particular conflict, or should moral attention be paid to the underlying systemic causes of war?

³⁹ John Howard Yoder. *Nevertheless: The Varieties and Shortcomings of Religious Pacifism* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1992), 29.

In response, early just peace thinkers placed their hope in the creation of more robust international institutions that could mediate conflicts between states *before* they exploded into violence. The emergence of the United Nations, the successful prosecution of war criminals at Nuremberg and the subsequent rapid development of international law (especially human rights law) led many Protestant thinkers to optimistically consider the possibility of a new world order, characterized by law-governed relations between states, rather than by war. In 1946, for example, the World Peace Commission of the Methodist Church called for support for the “United Nations as the only organization which . . . offers an instrument for peace and order in the world,” pointing out that “world government must be the ultimate goal.”⁴⁰ Likewise, the National Council of Churches of Christ General Assembly (representing 33 denominations) composed “A Letter to the Christian People of America” in 1953, declaring a Christian “responsibility” to support the work of the United Nations, despite mounting criticism of the organization in political circles.⁴¹ Thus, Protestant denominations in the 1950s focused on how they could contribute to the codification of international law, and encourage states to devote themselves to the new international institutions being created.

Early just peace thinkers condemned the use and development of nuclear weapons, identifying the new technology as a symptom of the new dangers associated with modern war. For example, in a statement emphasizing the importance of the United Nations for the post-war order, the 1946 World Peace Commission of the Methodist Church demanded “that the manufacture of atomic bombs be stopped and that bombs now on hand be destroyed or turned over to the United Nations, and urged that the proposal for universal disarmament be enacted and enforced.”⁴² The Commission’s focus was on the potential of the new institution to address global concerns, rather than on the weapons themselves. Interestingly, the German theologian Wolfgang Huber seems to classify modern just peace thought in this vein, arguing that the destructiveness of modern war has led Christians to develop a position he terms “responsible pacifism,” which “insists on subduing violence through the law.”⁴³ The subsequent iterations of just peace thought—in the 1980s and 2000s—have continued to call for strengthening international institutions. Later generations of just peace

⁴⁰ “Peace Group Asks Support of U.N.,” *The Christian Century* (4 December 1946).

⁴¹ Gordon L. Anderson, “The Evolution of the Concept of Peace in the Work of the National Council of Churches,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 21 (Fall 1984): 730–54, at 741.

⁴² “Peace Group Asks Support of U.N.,” *The Christian Century* (4 December 1946).

⁴³ Huber, *Violence*, 92.

thinkers, however, have devoted more attention to the problem of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, the just peace movement again dropped below the horizon. In the United States, the primary reason seems to be internal tensions due to the Vietnam War. With many of the largest denominations split between supporters and objectors, any effort to develop a theology of just peace or to invest in the development of just peace practices and institutions, came to be seen as inherently political and divisive. Furthermore, the relative stability of the Cold War (and the fact that only conventional weapons were used in the era's numerous proxy wars) may also have allowed the motivating shock of World War II to wear off.

Under the Nuclear Cloud: Internationalism and Disarmament in the 1980s

By the early 1980s, however, the political environment had changed again. While just peace thinkers still supported the development of robust international organizations, nuclear proliferation seemed to make a mockery of such diplomatic forums. The intensification of the arms race led to "criticisms of nuclear deterrence, rejections of means of mass destruction of all kinds, declarations of readiness to renounce arms, or pleas to find means of preserving mutual security."⁴⁴

The nuclear shock led to a re-invigoration of the just peace project. The National Council of Churches of Christ, which had dropped its emphasis on peacemaking in the midst of the controversy over Vietnam, explicitly admits being spurred in the 1980s to reconsider the issue of a just peace because "with the breakdown in 'détente,' the threat of a nuclear holocaust has again loomed large."⁴⁵ Several Protestant denominations, including the American Presbyterian and Lutheran churches, along with the United Methodist Church and United Church of Christ, also declared positions along the lines of just peace thought in the 1980s. The movement even included churches in Eastern Europe, particularly in East Germany. Thus, in the 1980s just peace evolved from a theological trend to an increasingly well-articulated doctrine.

A Security Environment Forever Changed

Just peace scholars in the 1980s argued that nuclear weapons, and especially the policy of mutually assured destruction (MAD), had radically changed the face of security by bringing the threat of indiscriminate

⁴⁴ Ibid., 101.

⁴⁵ Anderson, "Evolution of the Concept of Peace," 751.

destruction much closer to home. Just peace thinkers of the era point to the global nature of the threat, and emphasize the helplessness of ordinary civilians in the face of such weapons.

For example, a sense of crisis led the United Presbyterian Church, USA to make peacemaking a priority, beginning in 1980. Using the term *kairos*, “the fullness of time,” the Presbyterians recognized the creative potential embedded within the crisis itself.⁴⁶ In its background analysis, the Presbyterian Church made it clear that the changing political realities had driven the denomination to reconsider its stance on peace. While Americans had at one time felt safe behind their oceans, free to choose between involving themselves in foreign conflicts or luxuriously standing aloof, the new “global” reality undermined that sense of security. Pointing to increasing global interdependency, the report declared:

These assumptions have been challenged drastically. This challenge has affected Americans’ self-confidence and sense of control over events, even their courage for coping with crises. America can no longer choose to be involved in selected aspects of world affairs as a means of escaping dilemmas. It is thrust into every interchange and entangling conflict that occurs in any portion of the globe with an increasing sense of the impotence of military might to cope with these challenges and the ineffectiveness of traditional diplomacy in the face of them.⁴⁷

Thus, nuclear weapons had radically re-written the logics of international security and order. The old rules of foreign policy, “arguably adequate in other times—times of geographical separation between nations and boundary conditions that provided fore-warnings against surprise attack,” had become irrelevant.⁴⁸ The development of delivery systems for unprecedentedly destructive nuclear weapons that could reach any corner of the globe led to a “radical transformation” of “the meaning of security.”⁴⁹

Likewise, in 1988 the United Church of Christ declared itself to be a “just peace church” by a vote of the 15th General Synod, the result of a process begun seven years earlier. Responding to the collapse of *détente* and the rapidly escalating U.S.–Soviet arms race, the United Church of Christ initiated an internal discussion of the theological, ethical, and

⁴⁶ “Peacemaking: The Believers’ Calling,” adopted by the 192nd General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (Louisville, KY, 1980), 5. Available online at www.pcusa.org/peacemaking/believers.pdf. See also “Special Report: Peace and the Presbyterians,” *The Christian Century* (16–23 July 1980): 735–36.

⁴⁷ “Peacemaking: The Believers’ Calling,” 11.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

practical bases for a just peace. The denomination recognized that “our nation and our world—as well as our churches—stand at a crossroads.”⁵⁰ The result was an affirmation declaring the denomination to be a “just peace church” standing “in opposition to the institution of war.”⁵¹ As with other Protestant denominations, the United Church of Christ’s theological change came in response to the changing political reality. Nuclear weapons were “qualitatively” different from other weapons systems, representing “a break with the past”; the creation of the atomic bomb meant that “the institution of war had changed forever.”⁵² The central claim was that “because war no longer means what it used to mean, just war and crusade no longer fit the new context.”⁵³

The turn toward a just peace position was not limited to American Protestant churches. Arguably, the peaceful revolution that brought down the East German government in 1989 was closely tied to the development of just peace thinking (and organizations devoted to peacemaking) in response to the nuclear threat.⁵⁴ The Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) issued a memorandum in 1981 entitled “Protecting, Promoting and Renewing Peace.” The document declared that “the target of Christian ethics is only peace, never war”; by 1988 the East German churches had rejected the idea of a just war entirely and called for the development of a doctrine of just peace.⁵⁵ In this case, nuclear weapons were again the motivation behind a turn to just peace thought.

The claim that nuclear weapons had radically changed the global security environment, led just peace thinkers to conceptualize security itself in increasingly broad terms. Rather than referring only to the physical safety of discrete populations, the security rubric came to include psychological, environmental, and economic security. This focus on human, rather than national, security sharply differentiates just peace thought from the just war tradition.

For just peace thinkers in the 1980s, the nuclear arms race *itself* threatened not only the prospect of peace but also the survival of humanity. The indiscriminate nature of nuclear weapons led just peace thinkers to

⁵⁰ Thistlethwaite, *A Just Peace Church*, 25.

⁵¹ Pronouncement on Affirming the United Church of Christ as a Just Peace Church. General Synod 15 pronouncement. 85–GS–50 Voted. Available online at www.ucc.org/justice/peacemaking/pdfs/Just-Peace-Church-Pronouncement.pdf.

⁵² Thistlethwaite, *A Just Peace Church*, 26.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁵⁴ Stassen, *Just Peacemaking*, 29.

⁵⁵ “Steps on the Way to Peace. Points of Reference on Peace Ethics and Peace Policy. A Contribution of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany” (EKD-Texte 48) (3rd edition, 2001). Available online at ekd.de/english/1723.html.

deny the morality of a deterrent threat that held millions of civilians hostage.⁵⁶ This argument reached beyond the just war critique of weapons of mass destruction as violating the principles of discrimination and civilian immunity. For just peace thinkers, the problem is also one of fundamental human rights, namely the right to live free from fear. Human beings ought not to be held hostage, even for the sake of peace. From a just peace perspective, what can security possibly mean if it involves threatening millions of human beings with sudden annihilation? The United Church of Christ thus associates the threat posed by nuclear arms with apocalyptic despair.⁵⁷ The fear of a nuclear holocaust leads some to “experience hopeless oppression”; others “believe that God will use nuclear weapons to destroy a godless world.”⁵⁸ This despair undermines the pursuit of justice and human rights, paralyzing Christians from effecting meaningful change.

In addition to threatening humans’ psychological security, weapons of mass destruction threatened the planet itself. Thus, a concern with preservation of the environment emerged as a new prong of the just peace argument. The introduction to the United Methodist Bishops’ 1986 call to peace begins:

We write in defense of creation. We do so because the creation itself is under attack. Air and water, trees and fruits and flowers, birds and fish and cattle, all children and youth, women and men live under the darkening shadows of a threatening nuclear winter. . . . It is a crisis that threatens to assault not only the whole human family but planet earth itself.⁵⁹

Just peace, by identifying itself with the environmental movement, relies on a definition of security much broader than that assumed within just war theory. Quite naturally, this concern with the health of the planet quickly spread beyond the problem of nuclear weapons to other threats to the environment.

Just peace thinkers of the 1980s also came to see security as requiring a just economic and social order premised on human rights. Nuclear weapons threatened this type of security, as the skyrocketing military budget drained funds that could have been spent on schools, health care,

⁵⁶ “Peacemaking: The Believers’ Calling,” 13.

⁵⁷ Thistlethwaite, *A Just Peace Church*, 30.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵⁹ The United Methodist Council of Bishops (U.S.A.), “In Defense of Creation: The Nuclear Crisis and a Just Peace,” in Richard Brian Miller, *War in the Twentieth Century: Sources in Theological Ethics* (Knoxville, KY: John Knox Press, 1992), 417.

and environmental protection. The Presbyterians' "Peacemaking" declaration, for example, calculates world military expenditure in 1980 to be upwards of \$450 billion a year, with the U.S. expected to spend \$2 trillion across the decade.⁶⁰ Likewise, the United Methodist bishops' pointed out that "military and related spending [amounted] to more than half of all discretionary spending by Congress."⁶¹ The human costs of this buildup were disproportionately borne by the "most defenseless: the poor, the elderly, and the very young," who ought to have been most cared for by the state.⁶² Ultimately, the bishops were "convinced that the enormous cost of developing such defenses is one more witness to the obvious fact that the arms race is a social justice issue, not only a war and peace issue."⁶³ Likewise, the United Church of Christ's Peace Theology Development Team argued that "going heavily into debt to buy armaments to protect the disproportionate prosperity of a few is a . . . refusal of shalom."⁶⁴

*A Global Problem, a Global Solution:
International Institutions and Disarmament*

As in earlier iterations of the tradition, just peace thought of the 1980s called for a strengthening of international institutions to create conditions more favorable to global security. The central claim was that ideological conflict coupled with the arms race had generated a situation in which the "international structures of law and diplomacy [were] proving ever less capable of creating and preserving world order."⁶⁵ As the superpowers sought to maximize their power, particularly by relying on nationalism, the "concept of common security [was] devalued."⁶⁶ The United Methodist Bishops in their 1986 pastoral letter also urged "a renewed commitment to building the institutional foundations of common security, economic justice, human rights, and environmental conservation."⁶⁷

In addition to demanding a renewal of international institutions, just peace thinkers also specifically called for disarmament. While the various denominations disagreed slightly about the timetable for eliminating nuclear weapons from Western arsenals and the necessity of reciprocal action on the

⁶⁰ "Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling," 13.

⁶¹ United Methodist Council, "In Defense of Creation," 428.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Thistlethwaite, *A Just Peace Church*, 55.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 30.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ United Methodist Council, "In Defense of Creation."

part of the Soviet Union, they did agree that the United States should not wait to start the process. Acknowledging the security dilemma, they suggested that states had a moral obligation to think more creatively about how to ensure peace. Having discredited deterrence as immoral on many levels, they urged states to take unilateral measures to reduce the threat level. The United Church of Christ referred to these steps as “unexpected initiatives of friendship and reconciliation,” aimed at transforming relationships and restoring community.⁶⁸ Such steps included rejecting deterrence based on weapons of mass destruction, freezing testing and deployment of nuclear weapons, and building support for international institutions. The Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church decried to the “idolatry of deterrence,” arguing that “deterrence has too long been revered as the unquestioned idol of national security.”⁶⁹ Arguing that “deterrence must no longer receive the churches’ blessing,” the bishops called on the United States to work together with other nuclear powers to disarm.⁷⁰

In the Wake of September 11th: The Securitization of Social Justice

The end of the Cold War and the subsequent de-emphasis on the nuclear weapons program again shifted just peace thought to the back burner, until the events of September 11th, 2001 reinvigorated the debate. Once again, just peace theorists argue that just war theory cannot meet the challenges of this new threat: “The tenets of just war theory no longer apply in terrorism. There is no recognized authority, there seem to be no definite combatants, and we, at least, seem blind to the distinction between combatants and noncombatants.”⁷¹ As in the case of the Cold War arms race, the current generation of just peace thought claims that the world has fundamentally changed, necessitating a radical reconsideration of the ethics of war and peace.

In 2007, the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), published a memorandum arguing that “new threats to peace” have emerged since the end of the Cold War.⁷² As a “new order is emerging, states are collapsing.

⁶⁸ United Church of Christ, “Pronouncement on Affirming the United Church of Christ as a Just Peace Church” (www.ucc.org/beliefs/theology/general-synod-pronouncement.html).

⁶⁹ United Methodist Council, “In Defense of Creation,” 427.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 428. Specifically, the bishops called for a test ban (434), phased reductions (435), bans on space weapons (435), and a no-first-use agreement (435).

⁷¹ Susan Thistlethwaite, “New Wars, Old Wineskins,” in *Strike Terror No More: Theology, Ethics and the New War*, ed. Jon L. Berquist (Atlanta: Chalice Press, 2002), 279.

⁷² “Live from God’s Peace—Care for Just Peace,” Memorandum of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (2007), 5. Available online at www.ekd.de/english/live_from_gods_peace.html.

Global networks are being built; yet the vulnerability of people, states, and societies has increased.”⁷³ The EKD Memorandum recognizes that although non-state actors “are becoming increasingly important,” many states are failing and thus cannot live up to their responsibilities.⁷⁴ While the frequency of large-scale interstate wars has fallen since the 1990s, “irregular forces, ‘war fighters,’ warlords, and organized crime have undertaken the ‘privatization of force.’”⁷⁵ This has made small weapons, mines, and even dirty bombs more broadly available than ever before. The risk of terrorism has thus increased. This threat highlights the “vulnerability of our modern society” because of the “asymmetric threat” posed by terrorism and other forms of organized crimes to technologically dependent countries.⁷⁶

As in previous eras, for just peace thinkers the change in the threat environment demands a change in the ethical approach to conflict. In the United States, Mark Hanson, the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, called in 2004 for the development of “principles for a just peace that become as defining of us as have been the principles of just war.”⁷⁷ His position is clearly one of just peace: “We must reject violence in all its forms even as we work for peace and justice.”⁷⁸ Similarly, Simpson asserts that “just peacemaking characterizes the Lutheran normative default conviction and commitment.”⁷⁹

Intriguingly, the five factors identified by the United Church of Christ in the 1980s as radically changing the face of war and security aptly describe the “new” security situation after 2001:⁸⁰

1. Qualitatively new weapons
2. North/South conflict
3. East/West conflict

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 13.

⁷⁷ Mark Hanson, “President’s Address,” Meeting of the Lutheran World Federation, Geneva, Switzerland, 1–7 September 2004. Available online at www.lutheranworld.org/LWF_Documents/2004-Council/President_Address_EN.pdf. p. 7.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 8.

⁷⁹ Gary Simpson, “Our Pacific Mandate: Orienting Just Peacemaking as Lutherans,” *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* 5(6) (June 2005). Available online at www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Journal-of-Lutheran-Ethics/Issues/June-2005/Our-Pacific-Mandate-Orienting-Just-Peacemaking-as-Lutherans.aspx

⁸⁰ Thistlethwaite, *A Just Peace Church*, 28–31.

4. Deteriorating national and world order
5. Apocalyptic despair

Only a few semantic changes are necessary to bring these concerns up to date. Instead of new weapons, we could insert new threats or new tactics—in particular, terrorism. The East/West conflict of the 1980s focused on the ideology of communism; in the twenty-first century the conflict is portrayed as centering on religion and the “clash of civilizations” between Islam and the west. The heightened awareness of the massive wealth and welfare divide between the North and South, the unilateral impulses of the great powers, and even the public sense of panic and despair unite the two periods.

Addressing the North/South Divide

In this latest iteration of just peace thought, a new area of emphasis has emerged. In addition to the concern with international law and disarmament evidenced in previous periods of just peace debate, the concern with just development and the creation of just economic, social, and political ties between states has become the focus. While earlier discussions of just peace, especially in the 1980s, did refer to the growing North/South divide as ethically unjustifiable, such concerns were not expressly tied to *security*. In the 1980s, no clear causal line was drawn between alleviating the North/South divide and removing the “need” for nuclear proliferation. Instead, the 1980s version of just peace invoked the North/South divide as a social problem that could be addressed *if* the great powers ceased their arms race. *If* the great powers spent less money on proliferation, *then* they would be able to invest in sustainable development of the South. Uneven development, therefore, was understood as an additional benefit to be reaped from disarmament, but it was not in itself a security concern.

The shock of the 2001 terrorist attacks and the ongoing war on terror put the spotlight on these development issues. Just peace thinkers identified the root causes of terrorism (and other forms of instability) in systematic injustices within the international system, calling for a radical overhaul of interstate relations, particularly across the global North/South divide.

The EKD Memorandum explicitly ties terrorism to several conditions. While acknowledging that the reasons for terrorism are “multifaceted,” the memorandum highlights the problematic “relations between the Islamic and Western worlds,” as well as socio-economic problems, and unresolved regional political issues.⁸¹ Cultural and religious tensions

⁸¹ “Live from God’s Peace—Care for Just Peace,” 12.

need to be addressed, and multilateral institutions need to be strengthened.⁸² As a result, “in such a closely interconnected world, cooperative action between states and societies has become indispensable.”⁸³

The current iteration of just peace thought seeks to identify the “multiple and identifiable root causes fueling animosity and conflict.”⁸⁴ Kimball identifies several factors contributing to terrorism, ranging from “resentment against the history of colonial domination,” to authoritarian governments with poor human rights records in the Middle East, to “economic disparity and perceptions of exploitation.”⁸⁵ He finds a U.S. foreign policy that is inconsistent with stated American ideals, such as U.S. support for “the status quo in countries with authoritarian governments and deplorable human rights record” particularly damaging.⁸⁶

If these are the problems, the solutions are relatively straightforward. We must commit ourselves to “the worldwide push for *human rights and democracy*.”⁸⁷ In addition to encouraging these reforms politically, we should also support the new generation of Islamist thinkers who are developing an authentically Islamic approach to democracy, seeking theological justifications for the reforms.⁸⁸

Furthermore, we should emphasize “*sustainable economic development*,” since relative deprivation is the “major cause of international violence.”⁸⁹ Economic opportunity appeals “to the self-interest of everyone,” and provides “practical, tangible” results that can create a breeding ground for hope rather than extremism.⁹⁰ Kimball suggests that these policies would be more cost-effective than the ongoing war on terror, not to mention more likely to succeed.⁹¹ Stassen also points out that “poverty with little hope for improvement and dictatorial governments with little hope for

⁸² Charles Kimball, “The Just Peacemaking Paradigm and Middle East Conflicts,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 23.1 (2003): 227–40.

⁸³ “Live from God’s Peace—Care for Just Peace,” 5.

⁸⁴ Kimball, “The Just Peacemaking Paradigm,” 234.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 229–30.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 232.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 234.

⁸⁸ The idea of finding a uniquely Islamic approach to democracy is not new; during the early twentieth century several scholars sought to reconcile Islamic legal principles with democratic ideals, including the South Asian author Mohammed Iqbal and the Egyptian ‘Abbas Mahmud al-‘Aqqad. Modern scholars working in this vein include Khaled Abou El Fadl, Hamid Hadji Haidar, Abdulaziz Sacedina and Bassam Tibi.

⁸⁹ Kimball, “The Just Peacemaking Paradigm,” 236.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 236.

peaceful change, are major causes of resentment, anger, and successful terrorist recruitment.”⁹²

Next, Kimball calls on the U.S. and other Western states (including Israel) to participate in “independent initiatives” to jump-start the Middle East peace process. The advantage of such initiatives, according to Kimball, is that “since they do not have to wait for long-delayed and complicated negotiations, they may be taken when the atmosphere is too hostile or distrustful to support successful negotiations. One side can help break the stalemate . . . through a series of visible and verifiable initiatives that decrease the threat to the other side.”⁹³ Lastly, Kimball calls on the West—and particularly the United States—to “acknowledge responsibility for conflict and injustice” and to look carefully at its history in the region.⁹⁴ The key to demonstrating that we recognize our past failures is to take positive actions to rectify current problems, thus linking these two steps.

As in the 1980s, some denominations have raised concerns about the ethical use of government funds. Stassen begins his 2002 article in the *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* with the financial cost of the war on terror:

Forty billion dollars has been shifted to military spending, not including special appropriations for the cost of the war on Afghanistan, special appropriations for Homeland Security, and appropriations to the Department of Energy to develop new, useable nuclear weapons and to prepare to resume nuclear bomb testing in violation of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Money has been shifted away from programs for education, colleges, the needy, health insurance for children, and other human needs. State budgets are in deficit, so states are making more severe cuts in education and healthcare.

Likewise, in the run-up to the Iraq War in 2003, the United Methodist Church questioned the expense: “Estimated costs of a US war against Iraq range from \$50–200 billion, none of which is included in current US military budget. The US currently spends more than \$11,000/second on military expenditures. The US devotes more precious resources to military might than almost all the rest of the world combined.”⁹⁵ As a result, the

⁹² Glen Stassen, “Turning Attention to Just Peacemaking Initiatives that Prevent Terrorism,” *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*, available online at www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Journal-of-Lutheran-Ethics/Portfolios/Just-Peace-and-Just-Peacemaking/Turning-Attention-to-Just-Peacemaking-Initiatives-that-Prevent-Terrorism.aspx.

⁹³ Kimball, “The Just Peacemaking Paradigm,” 238.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ “What the United Methodist Church says on War and Peace with Iraq,” Global Ministries News Archives, Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, 5

denomination supported those who conscientiously object to paying their taxes when their contributions are used for war. After all, “Billions could and should be redirected from war making to meeting basic human needs such as adequate food, housing, healthcare and education—especially for children, both in the US and in developing nations around the world.”⁹⁶

*A Global Problem, a Global Solution:
International Institutions Reaffirmed*

Addressing the North/South divide almost inherently calls for an internationalist approach. Just peace theorists in the past decade have renewed the call to strengthen international institutions to serve as mediators and to reduce the risk of war. In particular, in 2003 the United Methodist Church reaffirmed “its support for the U.N. and calls upon all governments to fully support the U.N. in the fulfillment of its charter and in its highest calling to work for peace and justice for all the world’s people” (General Conference Resolution 307, “In Support of the United Nations”).⁹⁷

Critical of post–September 11th American foreign policy, Lutheran theologian William Tuttle argues that the U.S. must lead by shifting its policies from unilateralism to multilateralism:

Disparaging remarks about “old Europe”, the U.N., foreign aid, and multilateral institutions coupled with outright rejection of other, albeit flawed, international treaties set a tone of arrogance and played into the hands of those who would characterize the U.S. not as a moral leader but as a hegemon determined to seek the advantages of its great-and now- unbalanced power. Our leaders initially wasted the opportunity which “9-11” presented to step back from this petulant behavior.⁹⁸

Thus, as in previous decades, just peace calls on the world’s states, especially the great powers, to cooperate and to develop stronger international institutions. The hope is that such institutions can help mediate conflict today, and perhaps prevent tomorrow’s conflicts.

February 2003, available online at gbgm-umc.org/global_news/full_article.cfm?articleid=1405.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ William Tuttle, “Just Peace and Just Peacemaking—A Perspective,” in *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* 5(6) (June 2005). Available online at www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Journal-of-Lutheran-Ethics/Issues/June-2005/Just-Peace-and-Just-Peacemaking-A-Perspective.aspx.

Whither Just Peace? A Few Last Words

Having analyzed just peace thought both as a response to just war theory and to concrete historical circumstances—I turn in this section to the question of the theoretical and practical usefulness of just peace thought.

One useful aspect of just peace thought is its explicit challenge to just war theory. One is reminded of the subtitle of one of John Howard Yoder's books: *Being Honest in Just-War Thinking*.⁹⁹ Just peace's theoretical challenge can encourage further rigorous debate and more careful analysis within the just war tradition itself. Just peace thinkers are not unaware of this inter-relationship. Some explicitly point out that, if anything, just war theory has become too successful. Because the doctrine has been of such interest to political leaders, many theologians writing about the ethics of war have directed their reflections to policymakers.¹⁰⁰ Friesen argues that these "court theologians" are in many ways too close too power—their focus on policy makers as their audience "determines to a great extent what can and will be said about international relations."¹⁰¹ In particular, just war thinkers must fit their thinking into the realistic assumptions of leaders, which at the very least means accepting states and the state system as they are. Just peace thought, however, challenges even these basic assumptions, making it possible to imagine new alternatives. For example, if states are seen as sharing common human security goals, rather than being locked in national security competition, productive cooperation becomes more plausible.

In addition, just peace's perspective can contribute to just war theory by giving it "time to work."¹⁰² In particular, attempting to work through the pro-active peacemaking process of just peace can add strength to both the proportionality and the last resort clauses. Last resort is often criticized as being too loosely defined of a concept to actually serve as a brake on the rush to war. The heart of the problem is that just war theory "too seldom [spells] out concretely" the alternatives to war, making it hard to judge when last resort has been met; just peace can provide creative new perspectives on steps to be taken other than war.¹⁰³ If concrete attempts have been made to resolve injustices, and yet the other continues to perpetuate conflict, last resort may have been definitively reached.

Another productive facet of just peace thought is that, although it also speaks to power, it also places responsibility on "everyday" individuals.

⁹⁹ John Howard Yoder, *When War Is Unjust: Being Honest in Just-War Thinking* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996).

¹⁰⁰ Friesen, *Christian Peacemaking*, 31.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Stassen, *Just Peacemaking*, 233.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 234.

Just peace calls on ordinary people to think about their relationships with family, community and nation and to create open processes of mediation and dialogue on all of those levels. The United Church of Christ's document *A Just Peace Church* suggests specific ways in which churches can incorporate the just peace mission into their religious services and communal life.¹⁰⁴ It points out that "community issues such as job training and youth unemployment, fair housing, prison ministries, family violence and female athletic budgets are all Just Peace issues that need to be addressed," along with "personal peace issues" such as "problems in family communication or broken relationships."¹⁰⁵ Likewise, the Presbyterian statement on just peace also demands the "continual re-examination of personal and national policies and actions."¹⁰⁶ It calls on the church to develop liturgical and educational materials dealing with just peace, and to provide support and inspiration for programs aimed at peacemaking, on both the international and local levels.¹⁰⁷ The same steps that are suggested for creating peace on the international stage are suggested for this more intimate sphere, implying that world peace can be a grass-roots affair.

Just peace also makes specific demands of individuals to engage on the international level. To some extent, just war theory does this as well. By providing a set of criteria for ordinary people to evaluate the justness of a particular conflict and the means used to address it, just war provides a common vocabulary that can be used in the civil and political spheres to debate the legitimacy of war. Just peace texts go one step further, offering suggestions of concrete ways individuals can affect international relations, ranging from participation in politics (campaigns, etc.) to direct intervention and "peacemaker teams." There are programs in place in many Protestant denominations to train individuals in these skills.

On the other hand, there are aspects of just peace thought that may limit its effectiveness both in theory (as an ongoing critique of just war) and in practice (in terms of creating the foundations for a peaceful world order). First, in comparison with much contemporary just war literature, just peace's proponents use explicitly Christian language. This choice, while of course authentic to the denominations in which just peace has developed so far, threatens to make the conversation insular, isolating it from both other religious perspectives and from the secular international relations ethics scholarly community.

¹⁰⁴ Thistlethwaite, *A Just Peace Church*, 91–101.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 97.

¹⁰⁶ "Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling," 23.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 9.

The use of specifically Christian terminology and theological assumptions is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, this specifically Christian approach increases the tradition's legitimacy and purchase among mainline Protestants. Calling on Christians to follow ever closer to Christ's example and to struggle to create His kingdom in their own lives, it has the power to mobilize the faithful.

On the other hand, the assumption that there is something uniquely *Christian* about this approach complicates ecumenical dialogue. Certainly there has been a great deal of discussion amongst Christian denominations—both Protestant and Catholic—on the subject of just peace. But, as just peace scholars realize, the world is a diverse and interconnected place. In order for peace to be achieved, there must be an interfaith conversation about what sort of peace to aim for—what the content of justice is—and about how to apply the just peacemaking criteria in real world situations. Any tradition that is specifically Christian in its origins, language and assumptions may run into challenges in non-Christian contexts, whether due to difficulties in translating its principles into another religious context, or to politicized inter-communal hostility, which may dismiss any outside perspective out of hand.

To encourage the development of just peace as a diverse and inclusive tradition, the Protestant just peace community has recently reached out to include non-Christian perspectives in the conversation.¹⁰⁸ Stassen argues that openly acknowledging the religious roots of our assumptions enables a richer dialogue, and urges Christians, Jews, and Muslims not to abandon the specific roots of their concepts of human rights, but rather to become “trilingual”: “Each speaks the language of its own faith, as well as a language of human right shared by other faiths, and the experiential language of the struggle for peace and justice.”¹⁰⁹ Stassen and Thistlethwaite have put this theory into practice, spearheading an effort to bring together scholars and leaders of the three Abrahamic faiths to share their views on just peacemaking.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Similar interfaith efforts have been launched by contemporary just war scholars as well, including Vesselin Popovski, Gregory M. Reichberg, and Nicholas Turner, editors of *World Religions and Norms of War* (New York: United Nations University Press, 2009); Richard Sorabji and David Rodin, editors of *The Ethics of War: Shared Problems in Different Traditions* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006); and Howard Hensel, editor of *The Prism of Just War: Asian and Western Perspectives on the Legitimate Use of Military Force* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2010).

¹⁰⁹ Stassen, *Just Peacemaking*, 159.

¹¹⁰ The result has been a series of publications, including “Abrahamic Alternatives to War: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives on Just Peacemaking,” ed. Susan Thistlethwaite and Glen Stassen, United States Institute of Peace Special

Broader ecumenical dialogue will help increase the likelihood that just peace thought will play an active role in shaping the behaviors of states in the international system. Even so, another stumbling block remains—the language of international law and of international relations theory is secular, a fact that makes it possible for decision makers to discuss each other's justice claims in a more value-neutral way. So far, however, there has not yet been a robust *secular* analysis of just peace. Both pacifism and just war theory have developed secular vocabularies, which are essential for ethical perspectives to be incorporated into international relations. Stassen acknowledges the importance of developing a secular lexicon, calling for just peace to develop a new language for public conversation.¹¹¹ In a modern, pluralistic context Stassen argues that we need “both . . . an explicitly Christian ethic with a strong scriptural base and . . . a public ethic that appeals to reason, experience, and need.”¹¹² We must “emphasize human rights,” and seek “to speak a similar language.”¹¹³

Lastly, and I am afraid rather cynically, I am not certain that just peace theory can stand on its own in terms of providing a practical alternative to the prevailing norms of international relations. It is not that just peace theory does not have its political sympathizers, in proponents of the English School or liberal institutionalism more broadly. But to be frank, I remain unconvinced that its suggestions for creating peace—through strengthened international institutions, ongoing dialogue and mediation, gradual disarmament, and alleviating social and economic injustices and so on—would necessarily create security. These are certainly admirable policies, and ought to be pursued for a variety of moral and practical reasons. They are certainly necessary for the pursuit of justice.

But just peace theory goes one step further, suggesting that these steps *would improve the world's security situation*. This to me seems problematic. First, the security dilemma suggests that even actions taken for defensive purposes can be interpreted by the other as threatening. Thus, the existence of militaries—or even states at all—inherently creates tensions that could potentially escalate. Just peace stops short of calling for a radical disarmament and the complete dissolution of all militaries; and despite its

Report 214 (October 2008), and *Interfaith Just Peacemaking: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives on the New Paradigm of Peace and War*, ed. Susan Thistlethwaite (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Other texts reflective of the effort to generate and sustain an interfaith conversation on just peace include *Peace-Building By, Between, and Beyond Muslims and Evangelical Christians*, ed. Mohammed Abu-Nimer and David W. Augsberger (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009).

¹¹¹ Stassen, *Just Peacemaking*, 93.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 159.

concerns about the ways in which the boundaries of states corrupt our sense of humanity and connectedness, it stops short of calling for world government. On a theoretical plane, I think these understandable concessions to the world as it is undermine just peace's hopes for the world as it might be.

Second, while I clearly see the logic of just peace's 1980s perspective on narrowing the north/south gap, its reiteration in the 2000s seems less rigorous. In the 1980s, the argument was that money saved on military budgets could be more usefully employed in sponsoring economic and social development in the global south. Thus, the funds saved through planning for peace could be used to create more justice, in a general sense. However, the new perspective reverses this logic, claiming that reducing the gap between the north and south would in itself generate the conditions for peace. I am aware that there is a great deal of theoretical sympathy for this position, both from theological and political perspectives, but I remain unconvinced of its causal validity. Wealthy states have fought each other in the past, and not all poor states become terrorist havens.

Nonetheless (to borrow another of Yoder's favorite terms), I am not suggesting that we give up on just peace theory. In comparison with just war, it is a young tradition, and over time it seems likely to develop an increasingly rigorous approach. Indeed, its attempt to generate a robust interfaith dialogue may be the first step in that direction. And, *even if* just peace always remains on the idealistic fringe of political realities, it serves an essential function. At the very least, it reminds us that there are two questions—when may war be just? and what creates peace? In so doing, it encourages us to be serious in our just war thinking, and more importantly to work as diligently toward establishing the foundations for a lasting and just peace as we do toward establishing the conditions for military security. N V