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Religion, Pacifism, and Nonviolence

James Kellenberger

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To Anne

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

There is woven into our cultural consciousness the sense that war is unavoidable. In the previous two and one-half millennia there have been few if any centuries without war. Wars and the rumors of wars seem to be part of social existence. Joseph Stalin saw wars between capitalist states as inevitable. For others the proclivity for war resides in our genetic inheritance with its predisposition to violence. Immanuel Kant thought that the inclination toward war was ingrained in human nature.

It is little wonder that war has been seen as unavoidable. History from antiquity to the present is replete with armed conflict. The Bible tells of wars fought by the people of Israel: the Promised Land was taken from the Canaanites with war action. In the fifth century before the Common Era the city-states of Athens and Sparta fought each other is a war that lasted decades. In the next century Alexander the Great began his wars of world conquest. At the end of the millennium and into the new millennium Rome expanded and maintained its rule by the force of arms. In medieval Europe feudal wars were regular events. The First Crusade was in 1095, followed by six more through the end of the thirteenth century. In Asia Genghis Khan in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and Tamerlane in the fourteenth century mounted their wars of conquest.

In antiquity, in the Middle Ages, and into the modern period there have been wars of various types and descriptions, varying in motive and scope: wars of conquest, wars for living space, wars to answer attack or to

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regain honor, irridentist wars, intrareligious wars, civil wars, two-state wars, regional wars, world wars, and wars between states and quasi-states.

Many go off to war imbued with the sense of a righteous cause, but as the realities of war register their attitude often changes. "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" (It is sweet and fitting to die for one's country) wrote the Roman poet Horace in the last century before the Common Era (*Odes*, III, 2). In his poem he explicitly finds "virtue" in war. Wilfred Owen in his poem "Dulce et Decorum Est" describes the horrors of gas warfare in the First World War, and he labels the "Dulce et decorum est" line from Horace's poem "[t]he old lie."

For many there may be a deep ambivalence toward war. War may be both seen as necessary and hated. Also, both those who see war – their war – as necessary and those who oppose war may fervently desire peace. Though the desire for peace may at times be hypocritically expressed or given only lip service, the desirability of peace is not an issue for most of humanity; the desire for peace is universal or nearly so, even when the reasons for turning to war are deemed to be overriding and war is seen as unavoidable.

In the Bible the Lord give Moses a blessing with which he is to bless the people of Israel:

> The Lord bless you and keep you
> The Lord make his face to shine
> upon you, and be gracious to you;
> The Lord lift up his countenance
> upon you and give you peace. (Num. 6.24-26)

The peace in the last line of this blessing is a spiritual peace that may be given to those receiving the blessing. In the Christian tradition peace is given by God in the person of Christ (Jn. 14.27); it along with love, patience, kindness, and gentleness, is the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5.22-23). Religiously such peace cannot be overestimated. Yet it is distinguishable from that peace that is the banishment of the violence of armed conflict and human violence in its other forms. The first has religious significance. The second has both religious and moral significance. The first is gained by, or given to, individuals. The second is interpersonal and social. It is peace in the second religious and moral sense – particularly in its religious sense and aspiration – that is our concern in this book.

Our interest is not in war per se or even in the panoply of human reactions to war, although in part it is in various religious attitudes toward war. The focus of this book's interest is on the religious repudiation of war and violence found in religious pacifism: the intersection at which religion, pacifism, and nonviolence meet. Though our discussion of pacifism will heed its moral as well as its religious grounding, special attention will be given to pacifism's religious grounding. What pacifism does and does not imply will be discussed. Pacifism rejects war, but in its most coherent and viable form pacifism rejects all violence: war is only the most horrendous form of violence. Pacifism is not passive. Pacifists may be retiring and passive, but if they are it is not because their pacifism requires them to be. Pacifists – religious and nonreligious – may also be active, voicing their opposition to way, demonstrating against war and specific wars, writing articles and books advocating for pacifism, and at times risking jail time for their beliefs or active opposition to a current war.

In this book's second chapter four ways of approaching war that have been sanctioned within religious traditions will be identified. They are: (i) to fight militarily in the name of one's state, (ii) to fight militarily in the name of one's religion, (iii) to follow the way of the just war theory, and (iv) to follow the way of pacifism.

Chapter 3 will treat the first two of these, bringing out how certain New Testament passages may be cited in apparent support of fighting militarily for one's country; it will be noted how fighting militarily in the name of one's religion – taking up arms in a crusade or holy war against infidels or unbelievers – has a history in medieval and later Christianity and a contemporary Islamist iteration in the Middle East.

In Chap. 4 the just war approach will be examined. According to the just war tradition, if a war meets certain conditions it is a just war; otherwise it is not. Cicero, drawing upon even earlier sources, provided the nucleus of just war thinking. Later St. Ambrose and St. Augustine presented a Christianized form of the just war idea, and still later St. Thomas Aquinas elaborated the Christian idea. By the Middle Ages the just war approach was a received Christian way to evaluate war efforts. In Chap. 4 the contributions of these propounders of the just war idea as it is embodied in the just war theory will be discussed, as will the later evolution of the just war theory and of thinking about the proper conditions for a just war. As will be seen in this chapter, just war thinkers are not in perfect agreement about the true conditions for a just war. In time those reflecting on the conditions for a just war distinguished between the proper conditions

for undertaking war and the proper conditions for the way war is conducted. What is distinctive about the just war approach, as seen in the thinking of religious and secular proponents, is that some wars can be just and so permissible in their undertaking and their conduct. Because this approach to war was elaborated and approved by Christian religious thinkers, and tacitly followed by many Christians, it became one of the established religious approaches to war within the Christian tradition.

Chapter 5 will address the current status of the just war theory. In it several broad criticisms that can be brought against the just war theory will be reviewed. One relates to the sovereignty condition, which requires that a just war be declared by a sovereign (or the legitimate authority of the state). The criticism is that it is questionable whether states have sovereignty in this sense. Often a condition of a just war in its conduct that is advanced by just war theorists is that innocent civilians not be intentionally killed, but it has been argued that modern wars invariably involve the intentional killing of innocents. A further criticism is that wars, modern or not, violate justice because they violate the right of persons to be treated as persons. Also in Chap. 5 it will be seen how political figures have contemporaneously appealed to just war principles in delineating their governmental position and in justifying specific policies.

Chapter 6 will bring us to an evaluation of the principle of double effect. This is a principle congenial to the just war theory and is appealed to by just war theorists. It is a principle that under certain circumstances can relieve perpetrators of war actions that inflict suffering on innocents (or have other harmful or evil effects) from responsibility for those effects. The principle asserts that an action, such as a war action, done with an intention to bring about a good effect is permissible though it has other harmful effects, provided that those harmful effects are not intended, even if they are foreseen. This principle, it will be argued in Chap. 6, is deeply flawed, and if accepted as valid in a wartime application, it can be used to justify virtually any horrendous war action.

The subject of Chap. 7 is the fourth religious approach to war: the way of pacifism. Pacifism is a central concern of this book, and in the chapters that follow this one the implications of pacifism – what it requires and what is allows – will be discussed, as well as animadversions of pacifism and its moral and religious support. In this chapter the history of pacifism and nonviolence in early Christianity will be documented, and the roots of nonviolence in both Eastern and Western religious traditions will be noted.

Pacifism, however, has been given different interpretations and several of these interpretations will be examined in Chap. 7. The most coherent form of pacifism, this chapter's discussion will conclude, is the moral or religious acceptance of nonviolence and the repudiation of war and violence in personal relations and in all its expressions.

In Chap. 8 some seven arguments against pacifism will be presented and answered. These include the arguments that the refusal of pacifists to bear arms results in the deaths of innocents, that pacifism is pernicious it its effects, that it is internally incoherent, and that it is counter to human nature. Also in this chapter moral support for pacifism will be presented. Pretheoretical moral intuitions are divided on pacifism, it is conceded, but theoretical moral reflection does provide support for pacifism. It is argued that utilitarian thinking, Kant's deontological ethics, and virtue ethics can all be mustered in support of pacifism and that, as well, the requirements of moral justice provide an argument for pacifism. Pretheoretical morality is divided on the issue of pacifism, on whether killing in war is ever proper, but this is not to say that no support for pacifism or the repudiation of war is to be found in the received categories of pretheoretical morality. The argument against the just war theory based on moral justice that is presented in Chap. 5, and which it is noted in Chap. 8 is also an argument for pacifism, proceeds from a consideration of the pretheoretical moral concept of justice.

In Chap. 9 we will present another moral argument against wars: the terrible costs of war in recent centuries and in the foreseeable future, it will be argued, establishes the moral wrongness and evil of modern wars. These costs include the great suffering of civilians in combat operations and the post-war effects on both civilians and soldiers, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), This argument is not for unqualified pacifism (because it argues against only modern wars, not all wars), but if successful it shows the correctness of a pacifist approach to modern warfare.

When pacifism is understood as the acceptance of nonviolence and the rejection of all war and violence in personal relations and in all its expressions religious support for pacifism can be found in various world traditions. The subject of Chap. 10 is the multiplicity of religious support for pacifism. Chapter 10 will present that support in its breadth as found in traditions ranging from Islam and Judaism to Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. In addition, in a treatment of Christianity's support for pacifism, it will be argued that the Christian message of love

provides a deeper support for pacifism than the moral support offered by utilitarianism and deontological ethics.

In Chap. 11 the current status of pacifism will be considered. After the arguments against pacifism presented in Chap. 8 and their rejoinders have been briefly commented upon, several noteworthy twentieth-century pacifists will be cited, including Mahatma Gandhi and Bertrand Russell. In the Second World War, it will be observed, there were American conscientious objectors, and later many Americans protested the Vietnam War and other American war efforts. While many of these protestors objected only to specific wars, some were pacifists. The effort of one contemporary philosopher to reconcile just war theory and pacifism will be examined, and it will be observed that, though just war theory and pacifism finally are logically and morally incompatible, because no modern wars meet the just war criteria just war proponents and pacifists in recent decades have been able to protest against these war efforts together.

Pacifism in its most coherent form rejects the violence of war and violence in all its manifestations. Nonviolence tautologically rejects violence, but this is not to say that it rejects all uses of force. However, if the nonviolence of pacifism allows force, the question of the difference between violence and force arises. This crucial question will be addressed in Chap. 12. The issue is not whether pacifism can allow activity. Both Jesus, the Christian paradigm of nonviolence, and Gautama Buddha, the Buddhist paradigm of nonviolence, were active. The issue is whether the activity of pacifism allows force and the character of the force it might allow. When a parent forcibly restrains her child in order to stop him from stepping off the curb on a busy street, her use of force is generally recognized as necessary and proper. This and similar cases establish that in some instances force is allowable. Allowable force, it will be argued in Chap. 12, is importantly intentional and is compatible with love and compassion, which it cannot exclude. In an elaboration of this analysis the actions of Jesus in driving the money-changers from the temple, as described in the New Testament, will be brought forward, along with the controversy that attends that description. Also pertinent is the parable of the Good Samaritan and the question of what the Good Samaritan would or could have done if he had come upon the robbers attacking their victim on the road to Jericho.

The subject of Chap. 13 is peacekeeping. Peacekeeping presents itself as a prima facie type of action that pacifism would allow and welcome; and international peacekeeping between belligerents is a recognized role for

the United Nations as a supranational organization. Various UN peacekeeping efforts will be examined and different modes of peacekeeping will be discussed. These range from traditional peacekeeping missions, which proceed with the consent of the belligerent parties and require no combat role for the peacekeepers, to "peace-enforcement" and in some cases to "state-making." Not all forms of peacekeeping, it will be seen, eschew violence. But some do, and several forms of international peacekeeping that are compatible with pacifism will be identified in Chap. 13.

In Chap. 14 a model for global peace that effectively rules out war will be presented and considered. Thinkers who have contemplated the requirements of a world without war have proposed one of two models. The first is a model of a new world order that does not tolerate international belligerence. The other is a model of new human relations with bonds that bind the peoples of the world in nonviolence. Chapter 14 will develop a model of the second sort, the model of a human biological family. In human families violence toward family members is unthinkable, and through socialization this value is instilled in the young. The human biological family provides a model for the wider human family. If humans felt themselves to be in a family analogous to their biological family and became socialized to regard other persons as family members, or if only national leaders and leaders of militant groups that are quasi-states felt themselves to be in a family-like primary group with a similar mutual socialization, then, it will be argued, war and violence against others would become as unthinkable as violence against the members of one's biological family. The model is the human biological family with its sociologically recognized socialization. It is not the family of all persons as neighbors recognized in Christian thinking, bound together by the command to love one's neighbor as oneself. Though it be true, as Christianity teaches, that all persons are neighbors who deserve love, this religiously postulated family is not a biological family with the interaction of socialization.

Chapter 15 addresses the scope of pacifism's nonviolence. Pacifism repudiates the violence of war and all forms of violence toward human beings, including psychological violence. But, Chap. 15 will ask, is nonviolence limited to human beings? Does it also apply to nonhuman animals? In the religious traditions of Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism the nonviolence of *ahimsā* extends to all sentient beings. While the concept of *ahimsā* does not inform the teaching of Jesus, Paul, and early Christianity, it can be argued that nonviolence toward nonhuman animals, with the vegetarianism or veganism that it entails, is implicit in "the ethic of Jesus."

So Albert Schweitzer argued. His argument and the religious sensibility it expresses will be presented and explored in Chap. 15.

Chapter 16 will contemplate the future of pacifism. Five alternative futurescapes will be sketched, each a possible scenario for the future. In three of them wars between belligerents continue to take place as either limited conflicts or as a new world war. In the fourth a supranational world order is adopted or imposed, which enforces peace using military might where necessary. In the fifth futurescape there emerges a sense of world family that puts violence toward other members of that family beyond the pale of consideration. Pacifism would have a role to play in the first four futurescapes. In the fifth, however, the advocacy of pacifism as a repudiation of war would lose its point, for the renunciation of war would already be essentially universal.

Signs that could herald the emergence of a global family that claims all the persons of the earth as felt members will be noted in Chap. 16. But the nonviolence of pacifism fully embraced extends to nonhuman animals as well and, as Chap. 15 brings out, if killing nonhuman animals is a form of violence toward them, vegetarianism or veganism is a part of nonviolence. In Chap. 16 currently evolving moral concerns about the treatment of farm animals will be noted, as well as the development of dietary options that provide an alternative to the consumption of animal products and begin to make feasible the acceptance of a vegetarian or vegan diet. For those like Albert Schweitzer and religious pacifists who share his reverence for life and recognize that the taking of nonhuman animal lives is a form of violence, it will be observed, vegetarianism or veganism is already a part of their nonviolence.