

In chapter 8, Davis goes on past the proverbial “big four” to engage a lesser talked about moral issue; war. For millennia Christianity has compromised its responsibility to speak forcefully, and with any kind of moral authority, on war and violence. I base this assessment on Christianity’s willingness to cozy up to the Roman Empire in a bid for power, comfort, wealth, and prestige, after Constantine’s dream about crosses on shields sweeping the world was interpreted, by Christianity, to mean that he should declare Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. Thus, the Roman Empire was re-made the Holy Roman Empire and Christianity was globalized at the tip of a Roman spear. Christianity further denigrated her moral authority when approving of the crusades into the Holy Land 700 or so years later. Christianity has a long history of not taking the prophet Micah seriously when he declares, “... they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift sword against nation, neither shall learn war anymore ...” (Micah 4:3b).

Why is war a moral issue? As the ongoing Ukrainian/Russian and Israel and Hamas/Hezbollah wars have shown us, war causes death and dying; even of the innocent. “Thou shalt not kill” is the sixth commandment. War always causes people to kill one another. Though God does not regard the killing of innocents as any more heinous than any other loss of life, we certainly do. Anytime people are willing to even entertain the concept of killing another person (yes, this pertains to the death penalty too) it is a moral issue. People living and dying fall squarely into the realm of morality. Whether that is through war, euthanasia, physician-assisted suicide, or abortion (for those who consider an embryo a person) any time we deal with the potential loss of life it is a moral issue.

This means that Christianity and the Church, even despite its already acknowledged spotty record on excusing violence and killing through war, has a responsibility to hold political governments to account for their actions and behaviors in even contemplating a war not to mention once a war has been engaged. Thus despite its historically questionable behavior on the subject, the question for contemporary Christian thinkers and the Church becomes what do we do now? Today? Can the Church and Christian religion offer some way forward toward making peace? As those who are opposed to war primarily base that grounding on the preservation of life, especially the preservation of innocent life, it would seem so. Christianity is rife with the idea not only of preserving life but honoring life. This is what was discussed in the previous chapter. Holding the tension between preserving life and honoring life.

In recent years a new philosophy, distinct from pacifism and just war theory, has started to gain some traction; that of just peacemaking. “Just peacemakers see themselves as carrying through on a theological commitment to pacifism with a more energetic program than most pacifists espouse.”<sup>1</sup> I personally resonate most with this line of thinking myself as you can clearly hear both the OT prophets and Jesus himself speaking to who God is in the wording, just peacemaking. The Old Testament is rife with attestations to the justice of God; that God is just. Jesus tells us blessed are the peacemakers. Passive inaction is not the way. Neither, in my opinion, is justifying war. I would dare say we have to come up with better solutions even despite our fallen inclinations. We were made good and it would behoove us all to remember that truth *first* before hammering on our broken world needing violence to fix it. The resurrected Christ proves that methodology wrong.

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<sup>1</sup> Davis, James Calvin. In Defense of Civility: How Religion Can Unite America on Seven Moral Issues That Divide Us. Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, KY; 2010. p 121