

*by Daniel R. Heimbach*

## Introduction

Most Christian scholars will agree with Oliver O'Donovan's statement that "Christian ethics must arise from the gospel of Jesus Christ."

1

We agree that to believe in the existence of Christian ethics is to affirm a moral order that in some real way centers on and arises from the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that thinking otherwise requires denying Christian faith has any direct bearing on moral life. At the same time, most Christians also believe the moral order in which we stand addresses everyone in the world. We believe that moral judgments understood and affirmed by Christians pertain to all regardless of location, choice, culture, experience or religion. So, while we affirm a real moral order centered on the gospel of Jesus Christ, we also believe this moral order is universal and that Christian moral standards are not just in-house rules for members of the Christian community laying no claim on anyone else. And we believe that the moral order recognized and affirmed by Christian ethics is universal, not only in some potential or future sense, but right now in the sense of pertaining to the entire world in which we presently live. Thus O'Donovan is summarizing what most Christians believe when he says that "Christian moral judgments in principle address every man. They are not something which the Christian has opted into and which he might as well, quite as sensibly, have opted out of. They are founded on reality as God has given it."

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Indeed, it is for this very reason that Christians believe persons in other cultures untouched by Christian influence nevertheless fall short of God's universal standards of moral perfection, are judged by God for sin, and can only be saved through faith in Jesus Christ.

But, while most Christians believe we stand in a uniquely gospel centered moral order that applies to everyone and not just to Christians, not all Christians accept this to be so. While it has never been the majority view, it is nevertheless the case that a notable body of Christians do not agree on this point. Though affirming the true existence of a genuinely gospel centered ethic, some Christians have nevertheless denied that the gospel centered moral order in which Christians stand applies outside the Christian community. While these hope that Christian ethics will someday apply universally, they believe that right now we live in a world in which Christian ethics only apply to Christians, and that for now at least what is sin for Christians may not be sin at all for non-Christians.

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## The Historical View

## The Problem of Universal Ethics for Christian Pacifism

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Throughout the history of the church, Christian pacifism has been regularly associated with also denying the universality of Christian ethics. This connection is so prevalent that, until just recently, there have been no exceptions, making one suspect that one requires the other with Christian pacifism necessitating denial of universal applicability. But while this connection remains strong, the universal relevance of Christian ethics is no longer denied by all Christian pacifists. Dale Brown, representing the views of the Brethren in Christ, explains that "in Christian peace movements of the last century, differences have emerged between those who espouse nonresistance and nonviolent resistance."<sup>3</sup> In this statement, Brown uses nonresistance "to denote the pacifism of both primitive Christians and peaceful movements of the Radical Reformation of the sixteenth century" and nonviolent resistance to indicate a new sort of Christian pacifism that has emerged only recently.

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The first refers to traditional Christian pacifism which has characteristically denied the universality of Christian ethics, and the second refers to the new sort of nontraditional Christian pacifism that now seeks to apply pacifism universally. In what follows, I will first document the close connection linking historic Christian pacifism with denying the universality of Christian ethics. Then I will examine what drives this connection, and will close with comments on what is at stake when Christian pacifists break with tradition by trying to universalize their pacifist ethic.

**Tertullian** (155-240 AD), writing at the transition between the 2nd and 3rd centuries, was the first theologian known to espouse Christian pacifism. He strongly denied that any Christian can "make a profession of the sword,"<sup>5</sup> argued that Jesus "in disarming Peter unbelted every (Christian) soldier,"<sup>6</sup> and responded to "whether warfare is proper at all for Christians" by saying "I banish from us the military life."

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But, while Tertullian thought it was sin for Christians to be soldiers, he also claimed that Christian prayers "for the complete stability of the empire, and for Roman interests in general" were responsible for assuring "Roman's duration."

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These prayers included petitioning God for victory in battle because Tertullian explained that Christians prayed "for security to the empire; for protection to the imperial house; for brave armies (and) . . . what-ever, as man or Caesar, an emperor would wish."

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Tertullian quite openly asserted that Christians prayed that others would succeed in doing what for Christians would be sin, and in this way revealed he believed that Christians live in a different moral order than the rest of the world.

In the generation following Tertullian, **Origen** (185-254 AD) was still more adamant about Christians living by standards of a moral order that does not pertain to others. He claimed that Jesus "nowhere teaches that it is right for his own disciples to offer violence to anyone, however

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wicked," and so no Christian may ever kill "any individual whatsoever."

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But then Origen goes on to claim that "none fight better for the king than we (Christians) do . . . by offering our prayers to God" for success of Roman soldiers warring against their enemies. Origen explains that "while others are engaged in battle" Christians "engage as the priests and ministers of God, keeping their hands pure, and wrestling in prayers to God on behalf of those who are fighting in a righteous cause."

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Thus Origen too claims that Christians live by moral standards that do not apply outside the Christian community.

The Anabaptist **Hutterites**, in the 16th century, made a clear and very radical disjunction separating Christian ethics from what God applies to the rest of the world. For the Hutterites, "the worldly power of the sword is abolished in the house of Christ but (is) retained in the world."

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They held that "God has two kinds of servants on earth" each operating by different moral standards,

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and that while "Christians may not wage war, administer worldly law or use force and the sword," God appoints non-Christian rulers who are expected to use force in maintaining civil justice and security.

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They clearly denied the universal relevance of Christian ethics saying:

We neither wish nor intend, however, to remove the governing authority of this world or to disobey it in what is good and just. There has to be government for the people in the world just as much as there has to be daily bread and the schoolmaster's rod for children. The masses refuse to be ruled by God's Word. They have to be ruled by the sword so that scoundrels and worldlings, who are not controlled by Christian morals, are compelled to abide by the grim morality of the world, in fear of the gallows. If they were not bridled and kept within bounds, no one would be safe from his neighbor, and the earth would be drenched with blood. Government, therefore, is God-ordained, and we rightly respect its officials because of their position.<sup>15</sup>

The Anabaptist **Swiss Brethren** proclaimed the same thing in *The Schleitheim Confession* published in 1542. In that confession they asserted, "the sword is ordained of God outside the perfection of Christ" and is "ordained to be used by magistrates of the world."

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But while ordained by God for non-Christian magistrates, the Brethren believed that Christians may not "employ the sword against the wicked for the defense and protection of the good," and for this reason Christians could not serve as soldiers or magistrates. They believed in two distinctly different orders of morality, both ordained by God but applicable depending on whether one was a Christian or not. For the Brethren, "the government magistracy is according

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to the flesh, but the Christian's is according to the Spirit; their houses and dwelling remain in this world, but the Christian's are in heaven; the . . . worldly are armed with steel and iron, but Christians are armed with the armor of God, with truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation and the Word of God."

17

The 17th century Quaker divine Robert Barclay (1648-1690) also denied that Christians may ever resist evil with force, but then he also argued it was not wrong for others. After categorically affirming that "it is not lawful for Christians to resist evil, or to war or fight in any case,"

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Barclay goes on to say:

As to what relates to the present magistrates . . . they are far from the perfection of the Christian religion . . . . (And) while they are in that condition, we shall not say, that war, undertaken upon a just occasion, is altogether unlawful to them . . . . (those) not yet fitted for this form of Christianity . . . cannot be undefending themselves until they have attained that perfection.<sup>19</sup>

**John Howard Yoder** (1927-1997), writing as a Mennonite and arguably the best known Christian pacifist of the 20th century, also denied the relevance of Christian ethics for nonbelievers. But Yoder developed the idea of coexisting and equally valid moral orders--one for Christians and one for others--to a far greater extent than expressed ever before. Yoder held that "the present historical period is characterized by the coexistence of two ages or aeons,"

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each operating on the basis of a different ethical system though each is of God. He claimed:

In the present period of history we have two separate anticipations of the kingdom, both of them valid foretastes of the final triumph but in different ways. The church points forward as the social manifestation of the ultimately triumphant redemptive work of God; the world, however, even though still rebellious, is brought into subjection to the kingdom of Christ or the kingdom of the Son. The kingdom of the Son is thus to be distinguished . . . from the kingdom of God.<sup>21</sup>

Yoder believes that non-Christians bearing political authority in the present world "are in spite of themselves agents of the divine economy, being used whether in rebellion or submission as agents of God's purpose." While not comprised of Christians, Yoder claims "the state's judiciary and police machinery, has the ultimate purpose of preserving the fabric of the human community as the context within which the church's work can be carried on."<sup>22</sup> According to Yoder, what pertains to Christians is the "order of redemption" and what pertains to everyone else is an "order of providence." He believes that Christ by the order of providence reigns "over man's disobedience, through 'powers' including the state (wielding the power of the sword)," and he does this "side by side with the 'order of redemption' where Christ rules in and through

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the obedience of His disciples."

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Thus Yoder claims:

The time between the ascension of Christ and the defeat of the last enemy, when the kingdom of the Son will give place to the consummated kingdom of the Father, is thus characterized by the way in which the reign of Christ (ruling through the state wielding the sword) channels violence, turning it against itself, so as to preserve as much as possible of the order which is the pre-condition of (ideal) human society (in the coming kingdom of God) and thereby also a vehicle of the work of the church. The state being, in its judicial and police functions (wielding the sword), the major incarnation of this channeled evil.<sup>24</sup>

But while Yoder's idea of Christ reigning over unbelievers by an order of providence that employs human government wielding the power of the sword to restrain evil, he does not think Christians have any role in serving God that way. Thus Yoder denounces "any involvement in the apparatus of government" as being "reprehensible for a professing Christian." Christians do not live by the ethic God applies to non-Christians under "the kingdom of the Son" but must live by an entirely different ethic pertaining to the church and the coming "kingdom of God" (the Father); and if any Christian gets this confused he is an "erring brother" in need of confrontation and correction by the church.<sup>25</sup> He maintains that we must "distinguish between the ethics of discipleship which is laid upon every Christian believer . . . , and an ethic of justice within the limits of relative prudence and self-preservation, which is all one can ask of the larger society."

<sup>26</sup>

For Yoder, "the most significant axiom" of the pacifist-Mennonite approach to how Christians relate to the state, whether government or military service, is "recognition that Christian ethics is for Christians" and not for others.<sup>27</sup> Trying to apply Christian ethics to others makes no sense because "the spiritual resources for making such redeemed behavior a real possibility are lacking" outside the Christian community.

<sup>28</sup> God gives one ethic by which non-Christian rulers restrain the wickedness of other non-Christians and another ethic for Christians living by the standards of a new and different world to come. And so, for now, Yoder says:

the fundamental (ethical) duality with which the Christian speaking to the enviroing society must reckon is not the difference between church and state as social institutions, nor between interpersonal relations on the face-to-face level and large group relations or between legalism and "playing by ear," . . . but the difference between faith and unbelief as the presuppositions of his ethical message . . . . Outside the circle of faith, the presupposition cannot be the commitment of the individual spoken to and challenged, but only Christ's objective claim on him.

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## Contemporary Views of Pacifists

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**William McGrath**, writing for contemporary Amish and Mennonite Christians, also denies that Christians live by the same standards that apply to others. He says, "we conscientiously object to war because we believe the New Testament clearly teaches that it is against the will of God for Christians to participate in war."<sup>30</sup> But he also says, "we are not utopian idealists who believe that governments can exist without the use of force or that all armies can be abolished," by which he means they do not think it is wrong for non-Christians to fight as soldiers or to serve in governments that maintain armies. The state is morally obligated by God to maintain armies and to use force for the purpose of maintaining justice, but it is sin for Christians to participate in doing what is not sin for others.

31

Because Romans 13:4 'clearly teaches that it is the job of the state to administer justice and execute wrath and enforce the laws,' McGrath must conclude that "state and church have two different callings (with two different ethics) in this age of grace" and that is why "the Christian may not participate in any of the work of the state involving the administration and execution of justice by force" even though God requires the state to do so.

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Although, Earthly governments are ordained by God to keep order among sinful men by use of the sword; . . . the Christian cannot participate in any office or activity of government which is concerned with executing or administering law enforcement. The law enforcement functions of the government are legitimate for the state, but are outside the sphere of life in Christ.

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**Edward L. Long**, a contemporary pacifist in the Presbyterian church, while urging that Christians unite with others to promote "peace thinking," nevertheless warns against appealing to a single moral rubric that applies to all the same way. Long denies we can even find moral consistency in the New Testament claiming that,

In the New Testament we find two (moral) attitudes . . . In Romans 13, Paul contends that rulers who maintain order are ordained by God for our protection against evildoers. . . (then) In Revelation 13, the beast is portrayed as the enemy of faith and of the freedom of Christians to follow their consciences and way of life . . . Both of these passages are (legitimate) responses to circumstances experienced by their authors . . . The contrast between Romans 13 and Revelation 13 should help us to see how important it is . . . to recognize the possible errors into which we can fall if we try to deal with human affairs in terms of only one of them.<sup>34</sup>

This leads Long to suggest a fundamental link connecting "peace thinking" with willingness to accept the validity of multiple approaches to ethics, none of which is truly universal, and so, he says, "There ought not to be a conscription of conscience in the cause of peace any more than there ought to be a conscription of conscience in time of war."<sup>35</sup>

**Dale Brown**, writing for present day members of the Church of the Brethren, reports that while

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some pacifist Christians now try to apply the pacifist ethic universally" to non-Christians as well as to Christians, and to the government as well as to the church," this has not been characteristic of the peace churches through history. Before the rise of this very recent trend, pacifist Christians had always maintained, and most still do maintain, "that one cannot expect unredeemed people to live the Sermon on the Mount . . . (and so) declared one ethic for Christians . . . and another ethic for the state."<sup>36</sup> And to demonstrate ongoing affirmation of what Brown calls "this kind of dualism," he quotes a Mennonite elder from Canada who during the Vietnam war told a group of Americans: "My church holds firmly to the nonresistant way. Not one of our members would ever be found in battle. But we are thankful for the Yankee soldiers who are fighting in Asia to protect us from the demonic forces of communism."<sup>37</sup>

**Richard Hayes**, a contemporary pacifist in the Methodist church, believes pacifism to be so central to Christian ethics that "the transcendence of violence through loving the enemy is the most salient feature of this new model polis."<sup>38</sup> But while he believes "all baptized believers" must be pacifists,

<sup>39</sup> he also believes it is never more than a community value system relevant only to those who join the Christian community. For Hayes, the pacifist ethic that Christians espouse is not for all, but rather comprises a different "righteousness" for a different community composed of Jesus's followers who are called to "intensify and exceed the most rigorous standards" of Israel's moral law.

<sup>40</sup> While he recognizes that "the governing authority bears the sword to execute God's wrath (Romans 13:14)", he says, "that is not the role of believers."<sup>41</sup>

For Hayes, pacifism is an ethic of "higher righteousness" whereby "a radical countercultural community" prefigures the "alternative order" of a new world to come.

<sup>42</sup> It is not an ethic that applies to Christians and non-Christians alike.

**Stanley Hauerwas**, also Methodist and perhaps the most widely recognized Christian pacifist of our day, remains in solidarity with historic Christian pacifism in denying that Christians live in a common moral order with the rest of the world. But while Christian pacifists have historically denied the universal relevance of Christian ethics for ostensibly biblical reasons, Hauerwas does so for exactly the opposite reason. He is a pacifist who claims to be Christian, but who denies the Bible contains any fixed truth for anyone including Christians. He claims that Christian ethics has no universal relevance because "there is no such thing as universal ethics" and every ethic requires some sort of a relativizing qualifier.<sup>43</sup> For Hauerwas, "the nature of Christian ethics is determined by the fact that Christian convictions take the form of a story . . . that constitutes a tradition, which in turn creates and forms a community."<sup>44</sup>

He believes that "attempts to identify Christian ethics with a universal human ethic fail to recognize that all accounts of the moral life are narrative dependent,

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and that "in fact we live in a fragmented world of many moralities--one of which is universal."<sup>46</sup>

From this outlook, Hauerwas discusses what he describes as "two different ethical perspectives . . . the one based on the Gospel, the other deriving from natural law assumptions. By the former (the Gospel perspective), war is the unambiguous sign of sin and can never be called good. By the latter (the natural human perspective), war can sometimes be a good, indeed a moral duty, necessary to preserve human community."<sup>47</sup> He claims that if moral order is "a law written on the conscience of all men and women by God," then it would seem "that war must be . . . the outgrowth of legitimate moral commitments." But if war "is the compromise we make to sin then it is not clear on what grounds, given the Gospel ethic . . . , (how) Christians can (ever) participate in war."<sup>48</sup>

Hauerwas argues for what he calls an "eschatological pacifist ethic" and rejects what he calls "optimistic political pacifism," referring to the assumption that peace can be achieved by turning unrepentant states into centers of pacifist government.

<sup>49</sup>

He says we should not think "that Jesus has given us the means to achieve a warless world,"<sup>50</sup>

and claims that "Christians do not choose nonviolence because we can rid the world of war, but rather in a world of war we cannot be anything but nonviolent as worshipful followers of Jesus the Christ."<sup>51</sup>

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So although Hauerwas is not restrained by biblical authority and denies any fixed moral truth, he ends up agreeing with historic Christian pacifism in also concluding that "the church does not ask the state to do more than it was meant to do,"

which he says means that "when Christians speak to the state they must "use (moral) criteria that are intrinsic to the state's purpose,"

that being to see that "the good are . . . protected" and that "evil doers are . . . restrained." And therefore, he says, government use of force "cannot be condemned in principle."<sup>52</sup>

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Finally, we will conclude this survey of the rather pervasive link associating Christian pacifism with denying the universality of Christian ethics by considering the work of **Ronald Sider**, a contemporary evangelical who while espousing Christian pacifism also tries hard to apply the pacifist ethic beyond the Christian community to society at large. Sider, who connects with both Mennonite and Brethren traditions of Christian ethical thought, clearly means to be associated with what Dale Brown refers to as the newly emerging "nonviolent resistance" strain of Christian pacifism as distinguished from historic Christian pacifism now classified simply as "nonresistant"

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an pacifism.

<sup>53</sup>

Unlike most pacifists who throughout history have always denied, and even now still continue to deny, the present universal relevance of Christian moral standards in favor of ethical dualism, Sider wants very strongly to take another path. While debating Oliver O'Donovan in 1984, Sider said, "I want to reject all these versions of ethical dualism. I do not believe that God has a

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double ethic, that God ordains a higher ethic for especially devout folk and a lower ethic for the Christian masses. I do not believe that God intends Christians to wait until the millennium to obey the Sermon on the Mount."

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But despite strong intentions to the contrary, even Sider also ends up struggling with affirming Christian pacifism and also maintaining the universality of Christians ethics.

Unlike traditional Christian pacifists, Sider does not think that Christian ethics modeled on the cross is "limited to family and church."<sup>55</sup> While he views the moral order in which Christians live to be eschatological in the sense that "Jesus . . . expected its completion to occur in the future,"

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Sider argues that "the messianic age" is in the process of breaking "into the present" as Christians cooperate with what God is doing through their efforts.

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And so, while "Jesus's teaching excludes lethal violence as an acceptable option for Christians," Sider believes that using power "is not inherently evil . . . and should be used by Christians in loving nonviolent ways in search for justice."□

58

But Sider struggles when asked to "comment on Romans 13 in relation to Jesus's teaching" and especially in regard to how "Paul's teaching on the use of lethal violence" relates to what he considers "Jesus's teaching on nonviolence."<sup>59</sup> In responding, Sider can neither discount the ongoing relevance of Paul's teaching, nor can he say it is consistent with his view regarding the ethics of Jesus. Sider is reduced to saying,

I know that in the Old Testament lethal violence was commanded and so some kind of distinction between public and private is assumed because murder is forbidden. One could then conclude that that is exactly the assumption that explains the alleged difference between Romans 12 (urging peace) and 13 (warranting government use of lethal force to restrain evil and uphold justice) . . . . at the very least he (Paul) means that although governments should do that sort of thing (use lethal force to restrain evil and uphold justice), Christians should not. That is certainly what the early Christians thought for 300 years.<sup>60</sup>

In other words, when confronted with Romans 13, Sider is forced back to affirming moral dualism which denies that Christians stand in a moral order that applies universally, or to somehow deny the relevance or reliability of what Paul teaches about God ordaining government use of lethal force to restrain evil and uphold social justice. It therefore looks very much as if Sider's version of Christian pacifism rejects ethical dualism, except when confronting Romans 13. At which point he must either revert to denying universality or consider denying biblical authority.

### The Link Between Pacifism and Denial of Universal Christian Ethics

I turn now to examine what drives the strong link connecting Christian pacifism with denying the universality of Christian ethics:

- First, I observe how Christian pacifist denial of universality all seems to arise from having to dismiss Paul's teaching in regard to God-ordained government using lethal force in Romans 13. Of course, any pacifist arguing from the Bible must immediately deny that the ethic of the New Testament is the same as the ethic God approves in the Old Testament. This means Christian pacifists can never say that God's moral standards are unchanging and timeless, but are driven to espouse the idea of a new moral order inaugurated in the New Testament. If this was all, they would be able to say that even though between the Old and New Testaments God changed from one moral order to another, that nevertheless Christian ethics have existed and applied universally since the time of Jesus. But Christian pacifists cannot easily say that because of Romans 13.

- Second, I observe that when Christian pacifists deny the universality of Christian ethics they tend to do so rather narrowly. Christian pacifists are not usually opposed to all aspects of universality "only some" and really only one aspect in particular. They do not deny that Christian ethics are potentially universal. They do not deny that in the future Christian ethics will someday be applied universally. And they do not deny that Christian moral standards apply universally right now for Christians in the sense that Christian standards are for Christians all over the world. Some may even say that Christian moral standards are universal, for everyone, right now, in regard to private life. In fact, the only thing that Romans 13 truly prohibits Christian pacifists from saying is that Christian moral standards are universal, for everyone, right now, in regard to the role of God-ordained government.

- Third, I observe that, while Christian pacifists might theoretically classify government use of force in a category apart from other areas of moral responsibility, and so treat government use of force as perhaps an exception to an ethic otherwise universally applicable to Christians and non-Christians alike, Christian pacifists have never shown any interest in taking this path. Rather than saying that Christian ethics is otherwise universal except for when it comes to government use of lethal force, Christian pacifists have always instead preferred to claim that Christians stand in a completely different moral order than applies to anyone else, and that Christian moral standards in all areas are all different than what applies outside the Christian community. I am not sure why this is so, but I suspect it is because Christian pacifists must handle Romans 13 from a stance that already denies God's moral order is eternally unchanging. In other words, I suspect that, because Christian pacifists must already say that between the Old and New Testaments God changed from one moral order to another, they are not free to consider the idea that Christians live in a moral order that applies the same to everyone--except for the role God assigns government in Romans 13.

- Fourth, I observe that Christian pacifists wanting to break with pacifist tradition by rejecting ethical dualism and affirming the universality of Christian ethics have very few options. They must either affirm biblical authority while trying to argue that Romans 13 does not authorize government use of lethal force, or they must say that Christian pacifism no longer relies on the Bible. If pacifists want to claim radical fidelity to New Testament teaching, they cannot ignore

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Paul's teaching on government use of lethal force in Romans 13. But if they rely on Romans 13 as radically as the rest of the New Testament, they cannot argue that New Testament teaching is thoroughly pacifist, unless Paul's reference to "the sword" can be interpreted to deny that God authorizes government use of lethal force. This is not the place to review all the ways pacifists have tried to do this. But suffice it to say their efforts have been most unconvincing chiefly because none can be reconciled with the way Paul's original readers would have understood what he wrote. But if Romans 13 does authorize government use of lethal force and pacifists still insist on applying pacifist principles to government, their only other option is to cease relying on biblical authority to take a course by which they can deny that Romans 13 is relevant to the ethic they think applies universally.

I will use these observations now to assess the ways in which Sider, Hayes, and Hauerwas have been dealing with the issue of universalism in regard to Christian ethics. While Sider is trying hard to break with pacifist tradition by championing universal application of Christian ethics, he cannot do so without contradiction. As an evangelical, Sider cannot deny biblical authority, including what Paul says in Romans 13. But doing that is impossible to reconcile in any credible way with claiming that God truly expects everyone in the world, right now, to live by pacifist principles—including government.

Hayes has less difficulty limiting the relevance of Romans 13 because, while respecting the Bible as a human record, he substitutes the human voice of the Christian community for the transcendent authority of God. But, because Hayes relies on the evolving human voice of the Christian community over what the Bible actually says, he is left with no grounds for claiming that Christian moral standards apply to anyone else. Thus, for Hayes, Christians are pacifists only because the community, or at least a significant portion of the community, has agreed to affirm pacifism. These members of the Christian community would like others to affirm pacifism as well, but because their ethic is no more than a human decision pertaining only to themselves Hayes cannot hold that Christian pacifism has any power to obligate others. Hayes therefore has no problem with Christians agreeing to a standard that does not agree with Romans 13, but his way of doing so disqualifies the relevance of Christian ethics for anyone other than members of the pacifist component of the Christian community.

Like Hayes, Hauerwas also substitutes the evolving human voice of the Christian community for the transcendent authority of divine standards revealed in the Bible. But Hauerwas constructs his version of humanly determined Christian pacifism with one important difference. While Hayes does not completely rule out the possibility of universal ethics and relies on the human voice of community only to approach his way of understanding Christian ethics, Hauerwas categorically denies there is, or ever could be, any such thing. According to Hauerwas, "attempts to identify Christian ethics with a universal human ethic fail to recognize that all accounts of the moral life are narrative dependent" and for that reason "there is no actual universal morality."<sup>61</sup> Thus

Hauerwas too is freed from having to reconcile Christian pacifism with Romans 13, but at the cost of denying biblical authority is relevant to anyone at all, including Christians.

## Conclusion

This leads me to make the following conclusions:

1. First, that pacifism cannot be universally applicable and biblically Christian at the same time.
2. And, second, that Bible-honoring Christian pacifism cannot be sustained as a coherent system without denying the universality of Christian ethics.

The first means that trying to impose pacifist principles in a way that applies to everyone all the time, including operations of government, simply cannot be reconciled with treating Romans 13 as applicable to a universal moral order. One may go one way or the other, but not both ways at the same time.

The second means that a high view of biblical authority for regulating the moral order in which Christians stand cannot be maintained without affirming some sort of ethical dualism, and that claiming to have a high view of biblical authority while promoting universal pacifism is so inherently discordant these positions cannot be held together without contradiction or false impression.

And these conclusions about what makes Christian pacifists struggle so persistently with affirming the universality of Christian ethics leads me to a final comment regarding those now breaking with tradition by trying to apply their pacifism beyond the Christian community:

It appears to me that this recent trend among Christian pacifists is stymied by a dilemma from which there is no way out except reverting to traditional pacifist dualism, or else ceasing to be Christian, or pacifist, or both. On the one hand, those trying to apply pacifism universally must rely on biblical authority to establish the sort of moral relevance required to obligate the entire world. But if so, they are checked by New Testament teaching authorizing government use of lethal force. On the other hand, if those seeking to universalize pacifism undermine or reject biblical authority to avoid the relevance of New Testament approval of government using lethal force, they lose the sort of authority required to obligate everyone in the world.

It seems to me these Christians have no way out except reverting to traditional pacifist dualism or ceasing to be pacifist. Some in this dilemma may possibly insist on continuing to pursue universal pacifism at the cost of rejecting Christian ethics, but that would be a disaster of far

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greater magnitude. Finally there may, of course, be some who knowingly choose to embrace inconsistency, and these we should pity while warning anyone vulnerable to their message.

*Professor Heimbach serves as Professor of Christian Ethics at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, North Carolina. He has served as chairman of the Seminary's Christian Ethics Department. He presented this paper at the 60th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in November, 2008.*

*A 1972 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, he served from 1989 to 1991 as the Deputy Executive Secretary and Associate Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council. From 1991 to 1993 he was the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower.*

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### Endnotes

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4. Ibid., 36.
5. Tertullian, *The Chaplet*, 11.
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8. Tertullian, *Apology*, 33.
9. Ibid., 30.
10. Origen, *Against Celsus*, 3.7.
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42. Ibid., 196 and 322.
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49. He develops this most clearly in Stanley Hauerwas. "A Pacifist Response to the Bishops". In *Speak Up for Just War or Pacifism* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988).
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59. Sider and O'Donovan, *Peace and War*, 19.

60. Ibid.

61. Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 61 and 63.