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## Listening to a Discussion

The Fellows of the Center for International Peace and Justice

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# Listening to a Discussion

THE FELLOWS OF THE CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND JUSTICE

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**W**e thought it would be good for our readers to listen in while the contributors for this issue engaged in a dialogue. Each writer below gives a brief response to the thoughts of his fellows. This not only will allow readers to think through the difficult issues raised in this issue of *Leaven*, but also models the graciousness of Christian love that we should extend to brothers who disagree with us on important issues.

THE EDITORS

## **Concerning Other Roads to Peace and Justice**

*Guy R. Vanderpool*

Christian realism, pacifism, anarchism, and pragmatism have much to commend them, for all command the pilgrim “to imitate and serve” Jesus “and him alone.”<sup>1</sup> The realist position quite properly urges Christians to enter politics and government, for to these spheres they are sure to bring correct perspectives of important issues. Pacifism restrains me from both passivism and violence. Pragmatism reminds me that Jesus poured out love in a variety of ways. Anarchism warns me not to be animated by my own sense of what is right, but by Jesus’ life and teachings.

Anarchism’s insistence that Christians order their lives by what they love rather than by what they hate and not to “define themselves by what they are against”<sup>2</sup> applies particularly to me. For like Bertolt Brecht, I know “only too well”:

Even the hatred of squalor makes the brow grow stern.  
Even anger against injustice  
Makes the voice grow harsh. Alas, we  
Who wished to lay the foundations of kindness  
Could not ourselves be kind.<sup>3</sup>

Though I must recognize oppression in the present world before I can envision a new society in which peace and justice abound,<sup>4</sup> my colleagues motivate me to concentrate on doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly before God.

This is not to say, however, that their positions do not have limitations. Without claiming that mine is devoid of flaws, I believe it proceeds from a point of reference that the others minimize, namely, the pervasive synthesis between the church and its political, social, and economic habitat. Jesus remained independent of his economic and political environment. He could therefore speak and act credibly to bring about change. The church is fused with its economic and political environment. It cannot therefore speak and act credibly



to bring about change. Though the Church of Christ claims to be free of creeds and hierarchies,<sup>5</sup> it is not: its theology echoes the capitalist work ethic and its leaders manage it like a business.

The church's link with an individualistic, competitive culture prohibits it from contributing fundamentally to the public welfare. Christians determined to contribute to the public welfare must revolt against the church establishment. I disagree with George Tinder's claim, cited elsewhere in this issue,<sup>6</sup> that a Christian should not endorse "a certain kind of society or a particular program of action but rather an attitude, a way of facing society and undertaking programs of action." To confine oneself to "attitude" will only result in going along with capitalism's illusions of righteousness. Against Tinder, I believe socialism has more potential than capitalism for approaching the ideals of Jesus' sermons on the mount and the plain, and of Mary's dream of scattering the proud, bringing down the powerful, lifting up the lowly, filling the hungry with good things, and sending the rich away empty (Matt 5:1-9; Luke 6:17-38 and 1:51-53).

I believe moreover that Christians should have high expectations of government rather than concentrating on its defects. The U.S. government prohibits discrimination, conflict of interest, arbitrary punishment of workers, and misuse of funds; it provides liberal insurance, leave, and retirement systems. In contrast to the government, "Christian" institutions often bully employees and curry favor with capitalism's power elite. If the church is to be Jesus' agent, it must forsake its palatial buildings and choice acres, its ranks of "staff," and its parking lots crowded with the latest, most expensive automobiles. It must stop enabling members who occupy themselves with getting and spending, send their children to private schools, and decry taxes, public health, welfare, and education. Asked whether he had visited a certain congregation, a student replied that it was "too wealthy." Though the church advertises itself as a haven for sinners and outcasts, the actual message it sends to the penniless, to minorities, to refugees, and to dissidents is "Not Wanted."

Conflicting loyalty is inevitable in today's church. Christians cannot worship God and deify money and power. We must "not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world" (1 John 2:15-16).

Do we not face the same condition that the kingdoms of Israel and Judah did in ancient times? They wove idolatry into their political, economic, and religious fabric. We have woven capitalism into our fabric. We cannot see how it dominates Christianity. We enshrine its values just as Israel and Judah integrated the Canaanite pantheon into the worship of Yahweh.

Instead of concentrating on feeding, clothing, and housing the dispossessed, accepting minorities, and reforming oppressive political and economic structures, the church has focused on doctrine and worship services. Some churchgoers even dismiss privation as a feature of human existence, justifying it with Jesus' statement, "you always have the poor with you" (Matt 26:11). Yet Jesus was not giving a proof-text for tolerating poverty; he was calling attention to the brevity of his remaining days. The church stands condemned for supporting a political and economic system that, in Amos' dialectic, oppresses the poor, crushes the needy, poisons justice, deceives with false measuring balances, charges exorbitant rent and interest, and seizes property.

Some churches try to help the poor become "constructive participants" in the capitalist system. How can I expect a person who has been marginalized since birth to acquire values with which I have been socialized since birth? I must reject the presupposition that capitalism cures poverty. Nor should I be content to donate limited aid from my great resources. How can I be proud of a program like "Room at the Inn," which occasionally gives a few selected homeless people two meals and a night's sleep on the church's floor?

Though I agree with Christian pacifism and anarchism that violence is inadmissible, I must be ready to meet revolution's consequences. Becoming one with the poor requires that I empower them to eliminate capitalism's abuses. The effect may be a revolutionary mass movement. Self-justifying, self-righteous capitalists will perceive a threat and try to stop it. Some comrades will be tempted to meet force with force. How



will I respond? I must both continue to press for the success of the movement and keep Jesus of Nazareth in the center of it.

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 Richard C. Goode, "The Political Scandal of Christian Anarchism" in this issue.
- 2 Cf. Goode, "Christian Anarchism."
- 3 From "To Posterity," *Selected Poems*, Tr. H.R. Hays (New York: Grove Press, Inc., c. 1947), 177.
- 4 Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, c. 1987), 24.
- 5 Goode, "Christian Anarchism."
- 6 Donald D. Cole, "Christian Realism" in this issue.

## A Christian Pragmatist Responds

Neal P. Allison

As the learning process of life continues, I have found each of my colleagues' articles challenging, inspiring, and some of them somewhat disturbing. I enjoy participating in our ongoing discussion because each of their positions is viable in various situations, and as a Christian pragmatist, I am open to most all suggestions that can help accomplish God's will. All of us would agree that a nonviolent approach is the preferred response in dealing with difficult circumstances. A proactive approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is helpful and appropriate. Providing mediation and perhaps economic support to struggling regions will help prevent the type of conditions that create suicide bombers. But there also comes a point where one has to prevent physically the bomber from killing people indiscriminately. Christian pacifists often cite Jesus' insistence that we not return evil for evil; but the question remains, Is violence inherently evil? Does the Bible claim that to use force to prevent an evil act from occurring is itself evil? Our task in this world is to be connected to the Spirit of God and to spread his goodness throughout it. Pacifists never seem to address the violence in the temple clearing. *But Jesus does use force or at least coercion* in the temple clearing, and he does not tell the Roman centurion to stop his profession. If your occupation is that of a centurion, then be a good centurion and aid people. A Christian pragmatist must use any moral means at his disposal, including both nonviolence and force, to stop suffering in the world.

The world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is an increasingly cruel and vicious place in which to live, and terrorism and mass frustration are only going to increase as we become more overpopulated. What do advocates of total nonviolence do in Somalia, Bosnia, and Afghanistan where cruelty and oppression prevent people from receiving aid, or where individuals are crushed under the weight of warlords on power trips with twisted views of benevolent religions. God has given the tools and means to his servants to help stop this kind of destruction. Christians must not allow derived views of scripture to hamper goodness in the world. Letting violence and viciousness take our world, while neglecting to use every means to which God leads us to stop it, is not the world that he willed.

Christian anarchists, while providing an ever-present critique, must avoid an ineffective extremism. Anarchism's claim that coercion is only effective in the short term ignores the fact that individuals or governments often have to use coercion just to get to a semi-stable form of peace or justice. Christian anarchists seem to equate participation in the world of Caesar with the negation of one's allegiance to Christ. If we are to accomplish anything in the short amount of time that is the human lifespan, we must serve Christ through the means of Caesar. Although the political arena is often dirty and chaotic, aware Christians who continually focus on God's spirit will still be able to do great things. When we lose this focus, the dirty walls of politics start to fall in on us.

Anarchists' claim that the church is the best example of human community is both enlightening and stirring. It is in this discussion that their critique of government is extremely effective in its provision of a viable standard for human living. Anarchists critique society in a manner that suggests a way to treat one another in order to be like the divine. The struggle for Christian anarchists, however, is how to carry this into



reality. If *shalom* means that everyone deserves access to a full life and justice, how do we arrive at such a state? How do we achieve such sublime goals in such a rough and painful world? If Christians are not open to various means to promote goodness, including the use of government, then we are not totally immersed in our task.

The Christian revolutionary holds a challenging position that provides a continuing critique of the present capitalistic American society. Without this prodding, such a society becomes far too enamored with itself, as is clearly shown in Guy Vanderpool's article. Has our own desire for the accumulation of mammon "corrupted" the way churches conceive of and participate in our world? Such corruption is difficult to avoid when corporate advertising constantly bombards us in our hyper-agitated over-indulged consumer society.

The Christian revolutionary must also beware of an overemphasis on the power of government to cure the ills of society. Government is not a perfect entity any more than is the church. The use of government in the New Deal was a necessary and tremendous aid to a desperate and suffering society. Christians should be open to the use of government when it is clearly being used to further God's will. Religious organizations or non-governmental organizations can contribute a great deal to alleviate human suffering, but only governments have the vast resources of specialized and expensive equipment to rush immediate aid to earthquake victims in isolated, mountainous, and landmine-strewn areas.

The Christian realist position is helpful, lest we forget how difficult it is to achieve peace and justice in our awful, cruel, and complex world. The realist's recognition that many derived views are "overly simplistic" helps me keep out of the ivory tower and reminds me that my real task lies in the trenches. Pragmatism is indebted to such a position in the evaluation of reality. Realism must be careful, however, that it does not fall into its traditional trap of spiraling pessimism. As Christians, it is our union with the Holy Spirit that provides a continuing sense of hope, purpose, and guidance for each situation we encounter. As we cultivate the awareness of this union, the call to hope becomes clearer and clearer.

All of the positions taken in our ongoing journey to further peace and justice in the world continually assist me in following the will of God. Ultimately, it comes down to the question, How do we best serve others? As a Christian pragmatist, I would have to respond, "Any way we can." It gives me a sense of joy and fulfillment to see the passion and concern that is evident in our various arguments. All of us love God deeply and hopefully, in our humility, he will continue to show us the paths he would have us follow.

## Rejoinder

*Lee C. Camp*

In a tradition that debunked the "social gospel" as "liberalism," it is no small matter that all five of us agree that the gospel has relevance for "this-worldly" issues of peace and justice. This common ground has provided a welcome space for the five of us to discuss vigorously the manner in which the Christian faith is "good news" to our communities, and I have learned much from these brothers and colleagues.

Richard Goode and I obviously have a great deal in common. Most of our differences, I take it, fall under the category of "random practical gnats," while our agreement falls mostly under the category of theological camels.

Guy Vanderpool reminds me that mere theory is not sufficient unto faithfulness. Guy's passion for taking seriously the needs of the poor and marginalized is greatly needed in our churches. In his article is a profoundly important quotation by George Tenet, who as director of Central Intelligence, spoke before a Senate committee in 2000. In his speech, Tenet suggested some of the causes of terrorism: "poverty, alienation, disaffection, and ethnic hatred." If he is correct, then the means typically employed by nation-states to achieve relative peace will not solve the problem of terrorism, and thus the current "war on terrorism" is simply unrealistic public policy. The New Testament proclaims that the antidote to "poverty, alienation, disaffection, and ethnic hatred" lies not in working more "effectively" or with greater "Christian" conscientiousness



within the nation-state, but in working as Christ worked—engaged in the ministry of reconciliation, which is rooted in a willingness to suffer as Christ did.

Thus I tend to think that Don Cole has put the whole question wrongly, as he apparently assumes that there exists an “ecclesiastical” sphere distinct from the “political.” Thence arises the question regarding the propriety of “Christian involvement” in “politics.” The question is not whether Christians will be *political*. As John Yoder put it, “the difference between church and state or between a faithful and an unfaithful church is not that one is political and one is not, but that they are political in different ways.” Don is quite right that “Christians have an obligation to nourish and enrich their communities,” and that we do not have the “luxury of trivializing problems that are pressing in upon people.” But I see Jesus as offering us viable political alternatives as to *how* we are to address such problems—we will best serve the world by being a faithful church, rather than by trying to run the world.

Don situates the question of the use of violence within the old debate between deontologists and utilitarians: pacifist deontologists posit some sort of “monistic value orientation” and “unduly constrain [Jesus]’ significance” to a rejection of violence, while the utilitarians suggest that “circumstances matter” and must be forthrightly weighed in responding to “options we did not choose.” This way of putting the question of violence is unhelpful, and I have no interest in choosing sides in that debate. Instead, the New Testament repeatedly refers to the story of the cross and resurrection as the manner in which God has made peace and brought reconciliation, and it is this way to which disciples are also called. It is not always clear what faithfulness to this story looks like in concrete circumstances, but I cannot see how killing one’s enemies, or systematic war-making, or even systematic war-preparations, can ever bear witness to *this* story.

Neal Allison’s Christian pragmatism, I think, falls short precisely on this point: it fails to take account of the “narrative structure” of the life of the church. Neal repeatedly uses the adjective “effective” and very rightly wants us to be effective at doing the things God does, like doing justice, being merciful, and caring for the oppressed. Where we disagree is this: Neal suggests that any means to which God might mystically lead one are legitimate. But the New Testament consistently proclaims that the *means* proclaimed by Jesus are just as authoritative for disciples as are the *ends* proclaimed by him. The entire canon consistently proclaims that our primary task as the people of God is to be *faithful*. The whole of Hebrews 11, for example., makes this point: even when there’s no possible way of seeing how faithfulness-to-the-point-of-death could be *effective*, such faithfulness is, nonetheless, that to which we are called.

Further, it’s not clear how Special Operations forces or Lincoln’s waging of the U.S. Civil War are *effective* if the *goal* of our effectiveness is to bear witness to a now-present-but-still-coming kingdom of true peace, justice, and righteousness. In other words, ends and means are not so easily disconnected. For something to be “effective,” it must have a goal or *telos*. And if our *telos* is to bear faithful witness to a Jesus who loves even to the point of death, then the “use of force to secure a just end” simply will not be effective.

In other words, this raises the question again of ultimate allegiance. Neal overlooks one of the very reasons that David Lipscomb found the U.S. Civil War so despicable: brothers in Christ literally waged war against one another. Six hundred thousand men, most of whom called Jesus “Lord,” were slaughtered in a war in which alleged disciples killed their brothers.

Neal suggests that Lincoln had two goals: ending slavery and the “preservation of the Union.” Lipscomb shared at least one of these goals. His family had suffered personally because of their commitment to free their slaves well before the Civil War. But Lipscomb did not share Lincoln’s commitment to the “preservation of the Union” as a goal worthy of ultimate pursuit; instead, his ultimate goal was to bear witness effectively to the kingdom of God, knowing that allegiance to Lord Jesus must trump all other allegiances. Thus even the “preservation of the Union” is not a goal worthy of setting aside the way of Christ.

Lipscomb might remind us today that our “cherished way of life,” as the war-hawks play our patriotic heartstrings, is also not a goal worthy of setting aside the way of Christ.



## A Christian Anarchist Response

*Richard Goode*

For the Christian anarchist, the realist, pragmatist, and revolution positions operate on one fundamentally flawed premise. They all fail to acknowledge the fall. The Christian narrative begins with the proposition that sin has corrupted individuals and communities. All our thoughts, desires, ambitions, aspirations, and creations (e.g., political theories) are infected by sin and thereby fallen. Consequently both the means and the ends of nation-states are unavoidably informed by a flawed ethic. Nevertheless, realists and pragmatists presume that if they “play the hand dealt them,” the fallen process may lead to some good. A judicious use of violence may, somehow, contribute to the triumph of good. Far from “realistic” or “revolutionary” these positions are naïve and romantic. Even if the logic of violence were somehow consistent with the life and teachings of Jesus, because of the fall, nation-states are incapable of deciding both the occasion and the degree to which lethal force ought to be unleashed. Governments operate neither from the objective, altruistic motives, nor the judicious restraint to determine who is deserving of such mortal strikes. How does a government know which person—made in the image of God—is expendable? How many of God’s children can a government kill to advance its “good” policy objectives? Is it possible to avoid the Caiaphas syndrome (John 11:50) once we claim the right of force in the name of the “good” we envision? Who, pray tell, is sufficiently unsullied by the fall to make such determinations?

Simply stated, the realists, pragmatists, and revolutionaries allow fallen humanity, rather than Jesus Christ, to dictate our ethics. Take international relations for example. In the name of national security and global peace, realists, pragmatists, and revolutionaries teach that nation-states must amass enough destructive force to intimidate adversaries. Should an enemy consider attacking, it must be assured that the costs incurred will be severe. Because a power-checks-power strategy is the most expedient way to keep order among a planet of enemies, whatever lethal arsenal the other side stockpiles “we” race to respond in kind and nullify any advantage the opposition may gain, even if it costs \$1,000,000,000 per day and threatens every God-created life on the planet. So, where is the good news in this logic? How do the life and teachings of Jesus influence the politics of realism, pragmatism, and revolution? One wonders, for example, whether any weapons systems (e.g., biological, chemical, nuclear) are out of bounds? Is there a point at which the Christian ought no longer to respond to the enemy’s power in kind because to follow the enemy’s lead would sacrifice Christianity’s essential ethical principles? Or do the ends of achieving compliance justify most any lethal and coercive means?

Here I find the appeal to the American Civil Rights movement enlightening. Admittedly, Martin Luther King, Jr. sought social justice for the African American through some political means, but that was far from his ultimate objective. Christian leaders like King, Jim Lawson, and A. J. Muste envisioned “the Beloved Community,” which John Lewis noted was “nothing less than the Christian concept of the kingdom of God on earth,” and achievable only by “redemptive suffering.” Although derided by detractors, King, et al., persisted, announcing that nonviolence was not some pragmatic “technique, tactic, strategy, tool.” Nonviolence was the Beloved Community’s genius for achieving something really good. Moreover, if the situation grew so tense and violent that someone may be killed, it was the duty of the Christian to suffer and die, taking the violence of the other upon oneself rather than inflicting it. “Love the hell out of them,” Lewis recalls King pleading. “And he [MLK] meant that literally. If there is hell in someone, if there is meanness and anger and hatred in him, we’ve got to love it out.”<sup>1</sup> The success of the Civil Rights movement, therefore, is not in its political savvy, but in the genius of nonviolent Christianity—redemptive suffering. You cannot beat the hell out of people. Nor can you scare, coerce, or govern the hell out of them. You can only love it out by embracing redemptive suffering and identifying with the disinherited.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the greatest deficiency I find in the preceding essays is the presumption that human existence is a closed system. Christians are not forced to manage current realities via human terms, while piously long-



ing for “our ultimate destiny in heaven.” The Christian anarchist will never recognize those rules. We are not bound by “things as they are.” Nor does humanity play the hand it has dealt itself. Because of the advent of Christ, everything is different. God’s will can be done on earth precisely as it is enacted in heaven. Jesus did it. History has recorded it. That is reality.<sup>3</sup> Good Friday, for example, proved the vulnerability of redemptive suffering the most powerful force. So, with all due apologies to Aristotle, the resurrection of Christ on Easter morning exploded the “box” of political thought. Ever since Easter it has been absurd to place human limits on what is “realistic.” The ethic of Jesus and the ongoing action of God have become the normative political standards for human existence. To ignore the transcendent, exclusive genius of Christianity as *the* political reality may even tend toward idolatry and atheism. “Jesus defeated the Powers not by being better than they at their trade of domination, but by refusing to meet them on that terrain, at the cost of his life.” And God validated Jesus’ politics in the resurrection.<sup>4</sup> Because of Easter, the *ekklesia* is the only political institution enabled to rise above the fall.

In conclusion, Jesus’ mission was the reconciliation of all people to God and one another—to restore relationships as they ought to be. Toward that end, every aspect of Jesus’ life and teaching exhibited his clear choice of solidarity with the disinherited. He came for the disinherited. He chose to be despised among the disinherited. He embraced the vulnerability of the disinherited. He called his disciples to be disinherited with him. Why? He envisioned a more authentic, godly inheritance than “things as they are.” Christian anarchism, therefore, calls the *ekklesia* to lead humanity, in imitation of Christ, toward an approximation of *shalom*, justice, inclusiveness, and toleration—as only it can do. Not in some mystical, metaphysical realm in the sky by-and-by, but in today’s world. Only the *ekklesia* can live the unconditional, sacrificial, suffering *agape* love, and ignore the fictional boundaries humans contrive (i.e., national, ideological, class, gender, race, and ethnic boundaries, or records of past injustices). This is how we live and work to bring all people into union with God and one another.

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 John Lewis, *Walking With the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), 85–7.
- 2 According to historian Vincent Harding, wherever he went, Martin Luther King, Jr. carried a copy of Howard Thurman’s *Jesus and the Disinherited*. (See Harding’s introduction to the 1996 edition.)
- 3 G. H. C. Macgregor, “The Relevance of an Impossible Ideal,” in *Peace is the Way: Writings on Nonviolence from the Fellowship of Reconciliation*, ed. Walter Wink (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2000), 26–7.
- 4 John Howard Yoder, “On Not Being in Charge,” in *War and Its Discontents: Pacifism and Quietism in the Abrahamic Tradition*, ed. J. Patout Burns (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996), 85.

### Continuing the Conversation

Donald D. Cole

These articles are part of a larger, ongoing conversation led by Lipscomb’s Center for International Peace and Justice. With apologies to my pacifist colleagues, I am in “violent agreement” with much of what I read in each of the articles. Whether in agreement or disagreement, however, I find something in each article that adds materially to the conversation. Neal Allison’s review of Reinhold Niebuhr’s notion of the possibility of applying pragmatically ethical principles that are derived deontologically is intriguing, particularly in light of Lee Camp’s objection to “consequentialist reasoning.” Although I disagree with most of his opinions on government, I think Guy Vanderpool is right to point out that the church has long been insufficiently attentive to the human suffering about it. He is also right to suggest that the modern church is more likely to be *shaped* by the general society of which it is a part than it is to be a *shaper* of society in a manner that glorifies God.

Lee Camp believes strongly that the church must be pacifist. His argument is a useful corrective to those who, with the best of intentions, would turn the apparatus of the state into a man-god. Still, his argument does not in my view get one all the way to the conclusion he wants to draw. And so the conversation contin-



ues. I cannot let pass without comment, however, his contention that “the realist ultimately makes Jesus out to be a naïve idealist, unaware of the way in which the world ‘really works.’” Nothing could be further from the truth. This imputation to realism is borne, as I suggest in my article, of a decidedly limited view of Jesus’ life and teaching. Camp is right to note that “the ‘realist’ ought not be allowed to hold the assumption that he or she is being more ‘realistic’ than the Christian gospel. For the Christian, what is most real is the rule of Jesus as Lord over the cosmos.” But Christian realists, at least this one, do not contend that their realism is more realistic than the gospel. In any event, this is not about ontological precedence. Realism is about facing up to and addressing as best one can realities that impose themselves upon us, and doing so in a way that achieves the best possible outcome. That does not mean, as Camp asserts, that realists see violence as “the way to restrain chaos, a way to check the loss of innocent life.” It does mean, however, that realists do not necessarily rule out the use of coercion and violence as one possible way to achieve these things, depending on the severity of the situation and even then always as a last resort.

The piece by Richard Goode is exceptionally powerful. I say this not because I agree with his conclusions but because he asks exactly the right questions. Can there be a “creative synthesis” between citizenship in God’s kingdom and citizenship in a temporal nation-state? Goode thinks not, and I think so. Again, the conversation continues. Goode notes with approval Kenneson’s admonition that the Christian must refuse to “engage the world on the world’s terms.” The problem with such a statement is not so much that it is wrong but that it can lead to equivocation. For example, there is a sense in which Kenneson is correct. By the world’s logic, such things as Christ’s crucifixion and his empowerment of the helpless make no sense. This moves Paul to say, “God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom” (1 Cor 1:25). But there is also a sense in which not only *can we* engage the world on the world’s terms, *we must* so engage the world. This is true in the sense that we engage people not as abstractions but as people encumbered with circumstances often not of their choosing. One example must suffice here.

Goode notes that “Peace and justice...are necessarily in a synergistic relationship. If they ever find themselves disassociated, it is a sign that *shalom* is being violated.” In some ultimate ontological sense, Goode may be accurate. But the world inhabited by persons—we need not call it “real”—frequently finds peace and justice at odds. Indeed, *shalom* is often violated. And this is not because nation-states have, as Goode suggests, “contrived” a definition of peace as order. Rather, it is because peace as order is sometimes all that is achievable in some circumstances, while “justice” is all too frequently elusive. Moreover, we ought to resist the temptation to castigate such a definition of peace as “merely ‘the absence of bloodshed.’” Such a formulation treats cavalierly the situation of countless people who crave merely the absence of bloodshed. Although Rousseau was right to say that order in dungeons does not make them desirable places to live, we ought never to undervalue how great an achievement is the prevention of large-scale killing—and sometimes, however ironic and regrettable, that requires our resort to force.

