WHY WAR IS A MORAL NECESSITY FOR AMERICA OR HOW REALISTIC IS REALISM?

Stanley Hauerwas
Duke University Divinity School, Durham, NC

I. THE IDEALISM OF REALISM

Pacifists always bear the burden of proof. They do so because as attractive as nonviolence may be most assume pacifism just will not work. You may want to keep a few pacifists around for reminding those burdened with running the world that what they sometimes have to do is a lesser evil, but pacifism simply cannot and should not be, even for Christians, a normative stance. To call, therefore, as Enda McDonagh and I have, for the abolition of war is an unrealistic proposal made possible by our isolation as academics from the real world. Nonviolence is unworkable or to the extent it works it does so only because it is parasitic on more determinative forms of order secured by violence. Those committed to nonviolence, in short, are not being realistic.

In contrast to pacifism it is often assumed that just war reflection is "realistic." It is by no means clear, however, if advocates of just war have provided an adequate account of what kind of conditions are necessary for just war to be a realistic alternative for the military policy of a nation. In the

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1For the text as well as a justification for our "Appeal to Abolish War," see my "Reflection on the 'Appeal to Abolish War," in Between Poetry and Politics: Essays in Honour of Enda McDonagh, eds. Linda Hogan and Barbara FitzGerald (Dublin, UK: Columba, 2003) 135–147.
first part of this article I will explore that issue. In the second part I will raise questions about how realistic it is to think war can be limited by exploring the American understanding of war as sacrifice. The understanding of war as sacrifice I believe was forged in the American Civil War and continues to shape how Americans morally comprehend war. For Americans war is a necessity for our moral well being. Which means it is not particularly clear what it would mean for Americans to have a realistic understanding of war.

In Christian tradition realism is often thought to have begun with Augustine's account of the two cities, hardened into doctrine with Luther's two kingdoms, and given its most distinctive formulation in the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr. Thus Augustine is often identified as the Christian theologian who set the stage for the development of just war reflection that enables Christians to use violence in a limited way to secure tolerable order. It is assumed, therefore, that just war is set within the larger framework of a realist view of the world.

With his customary rhetorical brilliance Luther gives expression to the realist perspective asking:

If anyone attempted to rule the world by the gospel and to abolish all temporal law and sword on the plea that all are baptized and Christian, and that, according to the gospel, there shall be among them no law or sword—or the need for either—pray tell me friend, what would he be doing? He would be loosing the ropes and chains of the savage wild beasts and letting them bite and mangle everyone, meanwhile insisting that they were harmless, tame, and gentle creatures; but I would have the proof in my wounds. Just so would the wicked under the name of Christian abuse evangelical freedom, carry on their rascality, and insist that they were Christians subject neither to law nor sword as some are already raving and ranting.

Luther is under no illusions. War is a plague, but it is a greater plague that war prevents. Of course slaying and robbing do not seem the work of love, but "in truth even this is the work of love." Christians do not fight for themselves, but for their neighbor. So if they see that there is a lack of hangmen, constables, judges, lords, or princes, and find they are qualified they should offer their services and assume these positions. That "small lack

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2Needless to say I think Niebuhr's use of Augustine to justify war in the name of "realism" to be a simplification of his work. Robert Dodaro provides a much more complex understanding of the two cities in his, Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).


4Luther, "Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved," Porter, 103.

5Luther, "Temporal Authority," Porter, 58.
of peace called war," according to Luther "must set a limit to this universal, worldwide lack of peace which would destroy everyone."6

Reinhold Niebuhr understood himself to stand in this "realist" tradition. In 1940 in his "Open Letter (to Richard Roberts)" Niebuhr explains why he left the Fellowship of Reconciliation; he observes that he does not believe that "war is merely an 'incident' in history but is a final revelation of the very character of human history."7 According to Niebuhr the incarnation is not "redemption" from history as conflict because sinful egoism continues to express itself at every level of human life making it impossible to overcome the contradictions of human history. Niebuhr, therefore, accuses pacifists of failing to understand the Reformation doctrine of "justification by faith." From Niebuhr's perspective pacifists are captured by a perfectionism that is more "deeply engulfed in illusion about human nature than the Catholic pretensions, against which the Reformation was a protest."8

Paul Ramsey understood his attempt to recover just war as a theory of statecraft, that is, that war is justified because our task is first and foremost to seek justice, to be "an extension within the Christian realism of Reinhold Niebuhr."9 Ramsey saw, however, that there was more to be said about "justice in war than was articulated in Niebuhr's sense of the ambiguities of politics and his greater/lesser evil doctrine of the use of force."10 That "something more" Ramsey took to be the principle of discrimination which requires that war be subject to political purpose through which war might be limited and conducted justly, that is, that non-combatants be protected.

Yet it is by no means clear if just war reflection can be yoked consistently to a Niebuhrian realism. Augustine's and Luther's "realism" presupposed there was another city that at least could call into question state powers. For Niebuhr realism names the development of states and an international nation-state system that cannot be challenged. Niebuhrian realism assumes that war is a permanent reality for the relation between states because no overriding authority exists that might make war analogous to the police function of the state. Therefore each political society has the right to wage war because it is assumed to do so is part of its divinely ordained work of preservation. "Realism," therefore, names the reality that at the end of the day in the world of international relations the nations with

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6Luther, "Whether Soldiers, Too, Can be Saved," Porter, 103. For a fuller account of Luther on the ethics of war see Joel Lehenbauer, “The Christological and Ecclesial Pacifism of Stanley Hauerwas: A Lutheran Analysis and Appraisal” (Ph.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, 2004). Lehenbauer's dissertation is an extremely fair account of my (and Yoder's) work in comparison to Luther's thought on war.


8Niebuhr, Love and Justice, 269.


10Ramsey, The Just War, 260.
the largest army get to determine what counts for "justice." To use Augustine or Luther to justify this understanding of "realism" is in effect to turn a description into a recommendation.

In an article entitled, "Just War Theory and the Problem of International Politics," David Baer and Joseph Capizzi admirably try to show how just war requirements as developed by Ramsey can be reconciled with a realistic understanding of international relations. They argue that even though a certain pessimism surrounds a realistic account of international politics that does not mean such a view of the world is necessarily amoral. To be sure governments have the right to wage war because of their responsibility to a particular group of neighbors, but that does not mean that governments have a carte blanche to pursue every kind of interest. "The same conception that permits government to wage war also restricts the conditions of legitimate war making. . . . Because each government is responsible for only a limited set of political goods, it must respect the legitimate jurisdiction of other governments."\(^{11}\)

Yet who is going to enforce the presumption that a government "must respect the legitimate jurisdiction of other governments." Baer and Capizzi argue that Ramsey's understanding of just war as the expression of Christian love by a third party in defense of the innocent requires that advocates of just war should favor the establishment of international law and institutions to better regulate the conduct of states in pursuit of their self-interest.\(^{12}\) Yet Baer and Capizzi recognize that international agencies cannot be relied on because there is no way that such an agency can judge an individual government’s understanding of just cause. As they put it, "absent effective international institutions, warring governments are like Augustine's individual pondering self-defense, moved by the temptation of inordinate self-love."\(^{13}\)

Baer and Capizzi argue a more adequate understanding of just war will combine a realist understanding of international politics with a commitment

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\(^{11}\) Helmut David Baer and Joseph E. Capizzi, "Just War Theory and the Problem of International Politics: On the Central role of Just Intention," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 26 (2006): 167–168. George Weigel argues in a similar fashion in his article, "World Order: What Catholics Forgot," *First Things* 143 (May 2004): 31–38. Weigel argues the Catholic tradition insists that "politics is an arena of rationality and moral responsibility. Unlike those theories of international relations which insisted that world politics is amoral or immoral, classic Catholic thinking about international relations taught that every human activity, including politics, takes place within the horizon of moral judgment, precisely because politics is a human activity and moral judgment is a defining characteristic of the human person. That is true of politics among nations, the Catholic tradition insisted, even if there are distinctive aspects to the moral dimension of world politics." (31) I could not agree more, but it is one thing to make such a claim and quite another to suggest that is the way the world works.

\(^{12}\) Baer and Capizzi, “Just War Theory,” 164–166.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 168.
to international order by emphasizing the importance of just intention.\(^{14}\) Which means a war can be undertaken only if peace, which is understood as a concept for a more "embracing and stable order," be the reason a state gives for going to war. The requirement that the intention for going to war be so understood is an expression of love for the enemy just to the extent that a lasting order be one that encompasses the interests of the enemy.\(^{15}\)

And pacifists are said to be unrealistic? The idealism of realist justifications of just war is nowhere better seen than in these attempts to fit just war considerations into the realist presuppositions that shape the behavior of state actors. Ramsey, Baer and Capizzi, and Oliver O'Donovan are to be commended for trying to recover just war as a theory of state craft, that is, as an alternative to the use of just war as a check list to judge if a particular war satisfies enough of the criteria to be judged just.\(^{16}\) Yet by doing so they have made the tensions between the institutions necessary for just war to be a reality and the presumptions that shape international affairs apparent.

For example, what would an American foreign policy determined by just war principles look like? What would a just war Pentagon look like? What kind of virtues would the people of America have to have to sustain a just war foreign policy and Pentagon? What kind of training do those in the military have to undergo in order to be willing to take casualties rather than conduct the war unjustly? How would those with the patience necessary to insure that a war be a last resort be elected to office? Those are the kind of questions that advocates of just war must address before they accuse pacifists of being "unrealistic."

Putting the challenge more concretely it can be asked why was it possible for the United States to conduct the second war against Iraq? The answer is very simple. Because America had a military left over from the cold war, a war that was fought according to an amoral realism, America

\(^{14}\) Baer and Capizzi argue that this means that going to war requires increasing reliance on international agencies. Weigel, in the article mentioned above, argues exactly the opposite. Indeed Weigel wrote his article in response to the Vatican's deferral to the United Nations concerning the legitimacy of the war against Iraq. Weigel defends the preemptive war strategy of the Bush administration in the name of preserving a more nearly just world order.

Martha Nussbaum argues that the very idea of a world state is not desirable because it is very unlikely that such a state could be held accountable. Moreover such a state would be dangerous. "If a nation becomes unjust, pressure from other nations may prevent it from committing heinous crimes (whether against its citizens or against other nations). If the world state should become unjust, there would be no corresponding recourse; the only hope would be for rebellion from within." Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership (Cambridge: Belknap, 2006) 313.

\(^{15}\) Baer and Capizzi, "Just War Theory," 170–171.

\(^{16}\) O'Donovan's account of just war can be found in his The Just War Revisited (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
could go to war in Iraq because nothing prevented America from going to war in Iraq. A war that is, moreover, justified as part of a "war against terrorism." Yet, in spite of the title of Jean Bethke Elshtain's book, *Just War Against Terror*, it is by no means clear you can fight a just war against terrorism.\(^{17}\) If one of the crucial conditions of a just war is for the war to have an end then the war against terrorism clearly cannot be just because it is a war without end.

I think the lack of realism about realism by American just war advocates, moreover, has everything to do with their being American. In particular American advocates of just war seem to presume that democratic societies place an inherent limit on war that more authoritarian societies are unable to do. While such a view is quite understandable I want to suggest that democratic societies—at least the American version of democracy—is unable to set limits on war primarily because it is democratic.\(^{18}\) Put even more strongly, for Americans war is a necessity to sustain our belief that we are worthy to be recipients of the sacrifices made on our behalf in past wars. Americans are a people born of and in war, particularly the Civil War, and only war can sustain our belief that we are a people set apart.

II. UPON THE ALTAR OF THE NATION

In his extraordinary book, *Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the Civil War*, Harry Stout tells the story of how the Civil War began as a limited war but ended as total war.\(^{19}\) He is quite well aware that

\(^{17}\)Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World* (New York: Basic, 2003). The subtitle of Elshtain's book is revealing just to the extent the subtitle suggests that America's role in the world, a role shaped by a realistic foreign policy shaped by American self-interest, is the necessary condition for fighting a just war.

\(^{18}\)In his article, "Authority, Lies, and War: Democracy and the Development of Just War Theory," *TS* 67 (2006): 378–394, David DeCosse argues that Catholic deference to political authority has inadequately integrated democratic ideas into just war theory as is evident by the lying that justified the Iraq war. Though I am sympathetic with DeCosse's claim that lying is analogous to the use of physical force I am not at all convinced that by paying more attention "to the rights, responsibilities, and virtues of democratic citizens in time of war" means we will insure more truthful speech about war. (393)

\(^{19}\)The following account is dependent on Harry S. Stout's, *Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the Civil War* (New York: Viking, 2006). Stout is to be commended for his courage as a historian to make candid that he is writing a "moral history" of the Civil War. He does not elaborate in this book what it means methodologically for him to assume a moral stance other than to accept just war as normative for the story he tells. One can only hope in the future he might tell us more about what it means for a historian to acknowledge that history is a moral endeavor. Though he ends his book making clear that he does not regard the Civil War to justify pacifism, he nonetheless remains deeply ambiguous about the reality of war. It remains true for him that "at its most elemental, war is evil. War is killing. War is
the language of total war did not exist at the time of the Civil War, but he argues by 1864 the spirit of total war emerged and "prepared Americans for the even more devastating total wars they would pursue in the twentieth century." Stout's story of the transformation of the Civil War from limited to total war is also the story of how America became the nation we call America. According to Stout,

Neither Puritans' talk of a "city upon a hill" or Thomas Jefferson's invocation of "inalienable rights" is adequate to create a religious loyalty sufficiently powerful to claim the lives of its adherence. In 1860 no coherent nation commanded the sacred allegiance of all Americans over and against their states and regions. For the citizenry to embrace the idea of a nation-state that must have a messianic destiny and command one's highest loyalty would require a massive sacrifice—a blood sacrifice. . . . As the war descended into a killing horror, the grounds of justification underwent a transformation from a just defensive war fought out of sheer necessity to preserve home and nation to a moral crusade for "freedom" that would involve nothing less than a national "rebirth," a spiritual "revival." And in that blood and transformation a national religion was born. Only as casualties rose to unimaginable levels did it dawn on some people that something mystical religious was taking place, a sort of massive sacrifice on the national altar. The Civil War taught Americans that they were a Union, and it absolutely required a baptism of blood to unveil transcendent dimensions of that union.

destroying. War may be a necessary evil, and in that sense 'right,' but it is nevertheless lethally destructive." (xii) Stout dedicates his book to his father who he says fought in a "just war," but if that was WWII there are very real questions if in fact WWII was fought justly. Of course it does not mean that those that fought in that war were unjust. I am hesitant to call attention to Stout's regard for his father's military service, but I think his ambiguity about war reflects the tendency we all have to justify war because of our love of those who fought in past wars.

20Stout, *Upon the Altar*, xv.

21Ibid., xxi. Stout documents how during the Civil War the flag became the central symbol of American patriotism. Prior to 1860 the flag was barely visible flying primarily on ships, but after 1861 the flag was flown on churches, storefronts, homes, and government buildings to signify loyalty and support. (28) The title of Stout's book as well as his understanding of the flag as a totem is supported by Carolyn Marvin and David Ingle in their book, *Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Totem Rituals and the American Flag* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). They argue "that violent blood sacrifice makes enduring groups cohere, even though such a claim challenges our most deeply held notions of civilized behavior. The sacrificial system that binds American citizens has a sacred flag at its center. Patriotic rituals revere it as the embodiment of a bloodthirsty totem god who organizes killing energy." (1)
The generals on both sides of the Civil War had been trained at West Point not only to embody American might and power, but they were also taught to be gentlemen. The title of "gentlemen" not only carried with it expectations that the bearers of the title would be honorable, but they would also pursue their profession justly. They "imbibed" the code of limited war which demanded that they protect innocent lives and minimize destructive aspects of war. According to Stout they were even taught by Dennis Mahan, a professor of civil engineering, that to use position and maneuver of interior lines of operations against armies rather than engaging in crushing overland campaigns that would involve civilian populations.22

Stout argues that Lincoln as early as 1862, prior to his generals, realized that the West Point Code of War would have to be abandoned. After Bull Run and frustrated by McClellan's timidity, Lincoln understood that if the Union was to be preserved it would require that the war be escalated to be a war against both citizens and soldiers. In response to Unionists in New Orleans who protested Lincoln's war policy, Lincoln replied,

What would you do in my position? Would you drop the war where it is? Or would you prosecute it in future with elder-stalk squirts charged with rose water? Would you deal lighter blows than heavier ones? I am in no boastful mood. I shall not do more than I can, and I shall do all I can, to save the government, which is my sworn duty as well as my personal inclination. I shall do nothing in malice.23

Crucial to Lincoln's strategy for the prosecution of the war against the population of the South was the Emancipation Proclamation which Lincoln signed on September 22, 1862. Lincoln's primary concern was always the preservation of the Union, but the Emancipation Proclamation made clear to both sides that a very way of life was at issue requiring a total war on all fronts.24 Emancipation blocked any attempt that an accommodation between

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22Stout, Upon the Altar, 21.
23Ibid., 139. Grant and Sherman are, of course, those who are most associated with pursuing a brutal strategy in the war but Stout makes clear each was in quite different ways doing Lincoln's bidding. In a letter to General Halleck about his destruction of Atlanta, Sherman concluded, "If the people raise a howl against my barbarity and cruelty, I will answer that war is war, and not popularity-seeking. If they want peace, they and their relatives must stop the war." (369) Stout provides a very illuminating account of how the generals, and in particular Stonewall Jackson, in the Civil War were seen as "saviors." Indeed he notes that Jackson became a "messianic figure" who could "never die" because he incarnated the Confederate civil religion through a violent atonement. (229)
24On August 22, 1862 Lincoln sent a letter to Horace Greeley that was printed in the New York Tribune in which he made clear his primary purpose in pursuing the war: "My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all slaves I would do it, and if I could
the North and South could be found because now the war by necessity stood for moral aims which could not be compromised. Stout quotes Massachusetts's abolitionist senator Charles Sumner who supported the Emancipation Proclamation as a "war measure" in these terms:

But, fellow-citizens, the war which we wage is not merely for ourselves; it is for all mankind. . . . In ending slavery here we open its gates all over the world, and let the oppressed go free. Nor is this all. In saving the republic we shall save civilization. . . . In such a cause no effort can be too great, no faith can be too determined. To die for country is pleasant and honorable. But all who die for country now die also for humanity. Wherever they lie, in bloody fields, they will be remembered as the heroes through whom the republic was saved and civilization established forever.25

Stout's book is distinguished from other books on the Civil War by his close attention to what religious figures on both sides were saying about the war. It was ministers of the gospel that supplied the rhetoric necessary for the war to achieve its mythic status. To be sure, the South represented a more conservative form of Christianity than the North; Christianity was recognized as the established religion in the Confederacy's constitution, but for both sides "Christianity offered the only terms out of which national identity could be constructed and a violent war pursued."26

Stout provides sufficient examples of how Christians narrated the bloody sacrifice of the war, but Horace Bushnell's contribution is particularly noteworthy for no other reason than his Christianity was liberal. Early in the war Bushnell suggested that morally and religiously a nation was being created by the bloodshed required by the war. According to Bushnell through the shed blood of soldiers, soldiers of both sides, a vicarious atonement was being made for the developing Christian nation.27
Such an atonement was not simply a metaphor, "but quite literally a blood sacrifice required by God for sinners North and South if they were to inherit their providential destiny." Shortly after Gettysburg, Bushnell identified those who gave their lives in the war with the martyrs writing:

How far the loyal sentiment reaches and how much it carries with it, or after it, must also be noted. It yields up willingly husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons, consenting to the fearful chance of a home always desolate. It offers body and blood, and life on the altar of devotion. It is a fact, a political worship, offering to seal itself by martyrdom in the field.

As the toll of the war mounted the most strident voices calling for blood revenge came from the clergy. Thus Robert Dabney at the funeral of his friend, Lieutenant Carrington, CSA, told his listeners that Carrington's blood "seals upon you the obligation to fill their places in your country's host, and 'play the men for your people and the cities of your God,' to complete vindication of their rights." One Confederate chaplain even prayed, "We should add to the prayer for peace, let this war continue, if we are not yet so humbled and disciplined by its trials, as to be prepared for those glorious moral and spiritual gifts, which Thou designest it should confer upon us as a people." Such a prayer makes clear that the war had become for both sides a ritual they had come to need to make sense of their lives.

Stout's account of the religious character of the Civil War, perhaps, is best illustrated by the most celebrated speech ever given by an American, that is, the Gettysburg Address. Stout observes that something "emerged from Gettysburg that would become forever etched in the American

in death, it would render him a Christlike messiah for the reconstituted American nation." (146)

Stout, Upon the Altar, 249. Stout quotes from a sermon preached after Lincoln's assassination by N. H. Chamberlain concerning the flag. Chamberlain said: "Henceforth that flag is the legend which we bequeath to future generations, of the severe and solemn struggle for the nation's life. . . . Henceforth there on it is deeper, for the crimson with which the blood of countless martyrs has colored it; the white on it is purer, for the pure sacrifice and self-surrender of those who went to their graves up bearing it; the blue on it is heavenlier, for the great constancy of those dead heroes, whose memory becomes henceforth as the immutable upper skies that canopy our land, gleaming with stars wherein we read their glory and our duty." (454–454)

Ibid., 251. The language of laying lives on the altar is repeated often in sentiments expressed by wives on hearing of their husbands' deaths (200) as well as soldiers reflecting on the deaths of their friends. (340) Stout quotes a pastor at a funeral for two soldiers crying out: "We must be ready to give up our sons, brothers, friends—if we cannot go ourselves—to hardships, sufferings, dangers and death if need be, for the preservation of our government and the freedom of the nation. We should lay them, willing sacrifices, upon the altar." (341)

Ibid., 201.

Ibid., 197.
imagination. A sacralization of this particular battlefield would mark it forever after as the preeminent sacred ground of the Civil War—and American wars thereafter.\textsuperscript{32} Stout is surely right making these words all the more chilling.

It is for us the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

A nation determined by such words, such elegant and powerful words, simply does not have the capacity to keep war limited. A just war, which can only be fought for limited political, purposes cannot and should not be understood in terms shaped by the Gettysburg Address.\textsuperscript{33} Yet after the Civil War Americans think they must go to war to insure that those who died in our past wars did not die in vain.\textsuperscript{34} Thus American wars are justified as a

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\item \textsuperscript{32}Ibid., 269.
\item \textsuperscript{33}In essay after essay Paul Ramsey insisted that at the heart of the just war was the requirement that a war have a recognizable political purpose. Indeed from Ramsey's perspective a failed nation is one unable to fight a "good war," that is, "a war in which force begins and ends in subordination to national purpose and policy, even the purpose of the arbitration of a civil war waged to determine what a national purpose shall be." (\textit{The Just War}, 15) Accordingly Ramsey thought a nation's "self-interest" should be constitutive of any reason given for going to war. Therefore Ramsey argued that the goal of American foreign policy should be the creation of a system of free and independent nations. (\textit{The Just War}, 8) Yet in a "democracy," however, it proves quite difficult to convince civilians they should go to war to maintain a reasonable balance of power in Asia.
\item \textsuperscript{34}Ramsey recognizes that war has a sacral quality. On the same page he argues that war can only be fought by nations capable of disciplining war to a national purpose, he says "but who can deny that there is a strong feeling for the sacred in the temporal person at work delaying and weakening political resolve until a more inclusive entity is vitally challenged—the nation which is felt to be immortal and transcendent over the individual in value and in the per durance of its life? Thus the nation affords a provisional solution of the ambiguity of finite sacrifice, and only if this is the case does the nation or any other political entity become the 'subject' of political agency capable of legitimating finite sacrifice." (\textit{The Just War},15) But Ramsey does not tell us what keeps finite sacrifice finite. Interestingly enough I suspect you can only keep the sacrifice of war finite if you have a church strong enough to discipline a nation's ambition. Which presents an interesting challenge to just war thinkers, that is, do they think the church in America has the strength to keep the finite finite? Critical though I may be of "Constantinianism," at least the
"war to end all wars" or "to make the world safe for democracy" or for "unconditional surrender" or "freedom." Whatever may be the realist presuppositions of those who lead America to war those presuppositions cannot be used as the reasons given to justify the war. To do so would betray the tradition of war established in the Civil War. Wars, American wars, must be wars in which the sacrifices of those doing the dying and the killing have redemptive purpose and justification. War is America's altar. Confronted by such a tradition of war the attempt to justify war using just war considerations, no matter how sincerely done, cannot help but be ideological mystifications.35

In his book, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, Mark Noll asks why the Civil War, in contrast to past wars, produced no "deep theological insights from either elites or the masses."36 At least one of the reasons may be, as Noll amply documents, is that religious thinkers in America assumed that the people of America had a covenental relationship with God.37 America was identified with the tribes of Israel in which it was assumed that the federal union "created a higher bond than the bond constituted by the unity of all Christian believers in the church."38 This was combined with the confidence of the Enlightenment that the common man was capable of reading scripture without guidance from any other authority which meant that it was a simple matter to read God's providential will off political

Constantinian churches at one time had the power to keep the finite finite by at least reminding those that ruled that they were destined to die. Once "the people" are said to rule themselves the church, at least the church in America, seems to have lost that ability.

35In an essay on Martin Luther King, Timothy Jackson distances himself from King's pacifism observing "in a fallen world, at any rate, I believe that protecting the innocent may move some Christians, properly, to take up the sword against evil, as in the American Civil War." ("Martin Luther King," in *The Teaching of Modern Christianity on Law, Politics, and Human Nature*, Vol. I, eds. John Witte and Frank Alexander [New York: Columbia University Press, 2006] 456). One would like to know what "evil" Jackson assumes the sword was taken up against in the Civil War. Was it the "evil" of secession? Was it the "evil" of slavery? Does the reality of the "cause" of the war matter for Jackson-like appeals to the Civil War to justify the use of the sword? I think Jackson's appeal to the Civil War to justify Christian participation in war exemplifies the presumption that finally "pacifism" just will not do; yet show me how in the light of Stout's history of the Civil War that the Civil War can be used as a justification for just war reasoning? Of course I think slavery should have been brought to an end. I think, moreover, pacifists should have been more prominent in that struggle. We can point to the example of John Wolmann and other Friends who tirelessly worked to convince slaveholders of the evil of slavery, but obviously slavery was and is a judgment on Christians. But to say war is the alternative form of faithfulness is surely a mistake.

37Ibid., 18.
38Ibid., 61.
events. The war did not force American Christians to deeper theological insights because the war was for America our church.

III. PACIFISM AS REALISM

Where has all this gotten us? I think it helps us recognize that we live in the worst of all worlds. Realism is used to dismiss pacifism and to underwrite some version of just war. But it is not at all clear that the conditions for the possibility of just war are compatible with realism. At least it is not clear that just war considerations can be constitutive of the decision-making processes of governments that must assume that might makes right. Attempts to justify wars begun and fought on realist grounds in the name of just war only serve to hide the reality of war.

Yet war remains a reality. War not only remains a reality, but if Stout's account of ongoing significance of the Civil War is close to being right, war remains for Americans our most determinative moral reality. How do you get people who are taught they are free to follow their own interests to sacrifice themselves and their children in war? Democracies by their very nature seem to require that wars be fought in the name of ideals that make war self-justifying. Realists in the State Department and Pentagon may have no illusions about why American self-interest requires a war be fought, but Americans cannot fight a war as cynics. Can it be that those who actually have to fight a war—because they have faced the reality of war—have no illusions about the reality of war, but those who would have them fight justify war by using categories that require there be a "next war"?

Pacifists are realists. Indeed we have no reason to deny that the "realism" associated with Augustine, Luther, and Niebuhr has much to teach us about how the world works. But that is why we do not trust those who would have us make sacrifices in the name of preserving a world at war. We believe a "sacrifice" has already been made that has brought an end to the sacrifice of war. Augustine and Luther thought Christians might go to war because they assumed a church existed that provided an alternative to the sacrificial system war always threatens to become. If the Civil War teaches us anything it makes clear what happens when Christians no longer believe

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39Ibid., 19. I argued a similar case in Unleashing the Scripture: Freeing the Bible from Captivity to America (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993).
40One of the great virtues of Noll's study is his chapter on Catholic viewpoints on the Civil War and, in particular, French and Italian Catholic responses to the war. Noll thinks conservative Catholics rightly assessed American inability to disentangle race from slavery or to free the Bible from the certainties of "common sense" because they saw that American culture was characterized by a set of elective affinities: "fundamental principles of the Protestant Reformation linked to a liberal economic order linked to unfettered access to the Bible linked to liberal democracy linked to practical materialism linked to a bloated and dangerous republican government linked to theological confusion." (157)
that Christ's sacrifice is sufficient for the salvation of the world. As a result, Christians confuse the sacrifice of war with the sacrifice of Christ.

If a people do not exist to be Christ's people, war will always threaten to become a sacrificial system. War is a counter church. War is the most determinative moral experience many people have. That is why Christian realism requires the disavowal of war. Christians do not disavow war because it is often so horrible, but because war, in spite of its horror, or perhaps because it is so horrible, can be so morally compelling. That is why the church does not have an alternative to war, but rather the church is the alternative to war. When Christians lose that reality, that is, the reality of the church as an alternative to the world's reality, we abandon the world to the unreality of war.