

Theological Responses to the War against Ukraine: A Reply to Joshua Searle

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Why do the nations so furiously rage together, and why do the people imagine a vain thing?
George Frideric Handel, *Messiah*, Part II, Scene 6

Every war in human history raises theological questions about the use and utility of force by states, and ethical questions about how the church should respond. These questions are primarily (but not exclusively) by and for churches of the places under attack. So the war against Ukraine has raised questions for Ukrainian churches that must decide how they should respond to threats against both human life and their nation-state. No less acutely, churches in Russia, and the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) in particular, have been wrought between those who seek to justify the unprovoked and barbaric attack on Ukraine and its civilians and those few that rightly recognise the war as immoral or even demonic. Some Orthodox priests left Russia in the early stage of the war, but many have remained.

Long-standing ethical debates of just war versus pacifism, which are rarely discussed by churches in times of peace, are dusted down and given a new outing in times of war. However, these ethical debates must be grounded in a theology which is itself moored to the revealed word of God. The theological questions that war raises are captured beautifully by the eighteenth-century composer George Frideric Handel in his paraphrasing of the opening verses of the second psalm of the Hebrew Bible. The wisdom of the psalmist – masterfully redeployed in *Messiah* – is to link the machinations of the nations to the vanities and futilities of their leaders and followers. Writing in the run-up to Christmas 2023, and after two months of the Israel-Gaza war, we may see the theological questions raised by the war in Ukraine as enduring and recurring ones.

In a powerful essay in early 2023, Joshua Searle, co-founder and trustee of Dnipro Hope Mission, Ukraine, explored the extraordinary ethical challenges facing Mennonites in response to the war. His provocative title, ‘Putin has cured me of my pacifism’, is a quote taken from a Ukrainian Mennonite pastor who has been serving as a military chaplain. Briefly but sympathetically retelling their stories, Joshua defends such pastors and Mennonite soldiers from their presumed and (in some cases) actual pacifist critics. It is not the purpose of this essay to wade into a debate about pastoral care. Situational dilemmas like these faced by Ukrainian and Russian churches are best assessed by their members and their closest supporters, such as Joshua.

My reply to Joshua seeks to place the war against Ukraine in its wider global, political and theological contexts. This argument is more fully developed in my forthcoming book, *Security After Christendom*,² which surveys modern European and Eurasian theological thought and contemporary political history to arrive at a new Christian realism about war and security for an apocalyptic age. This article demonstrates how Russia’s war against Ukraine is a theological problem, considers Joshua’s questions about ethics in this light, and places these questions in the wider pacifist versus just war debate. It argues that the notion of a just war, in this or any context, lacks both utility in political terms and faithfulness in theological terms. This holding together of the political and theological is essential for any thorough-going response to war. In keeping the two together in tension, we find hope. But this hope is neither

in the promise of pacifist or just war position, nor in the prospects of Ukrainian victory and Russian defeat, but in the breaking of Christ into the world to defeat the raging nations and reveal their vanities.

Russia's War against Ukraine as a Problem of Christendom

In July 2021, Vladimir Putin published one of his essays on history. In it, he argued that Russian and Ukrainian people were part of a single Ancient Rus. 'The spiritual choice made by St. Vladimir, who was both Prince of Novgorod and Grand Prince of Kiev', he remarked, 'still largely determines our affinity today.'³ The essay was, according to two seasoned observers, 'no less than a historical, political, and security predicate for invading [Ukraine]'.⁴ Within eight months, and apparently according to a long-laid plan, Russia began its devastating and ill-fated invasion. There is little doubt that Putin's personal rationale for the war was a narrative of Russia as the guarantor of Christian faith and the Russian World (*Russkii Mir*) as the one true Christendom.

Christendom has long been experienced by Anabaptists as a problem. 'Christendom' refers to close relations between church and government, which have taken different forms in different contexts in the past. According to O'Donovan, Christendom is 'the idea of a professedly Christian secular political order, and the history of that idea in practice'.⁵ It may be assumed that the conditions of Christendom – majority Christian populations which support government according to Christian ethics and which promote a certain Christian culture – are dying away. Many of the contributors to this journal have written for the 'After Christendom' book series, which takes its gradual expiration as a starting point and consider it to be a resoundingly good thing. As Christendom was often the context in which a majority church persecuted or marginalised dissenting groups – including Christian minorities, such as the Anabaptists – the end of Christendom is greeted with a sigh of relief in much of the church in Western Europe – the region where Latin Christendom emerged.

Russian World ideology simply refuses to accept that Christendom is only a matter of the past. It also has a very different geographical conception of Christendom with a distinct and in its mind enduring historical trajectory. Russian World is a *neo-Christendom* idolatry, which imagines a religious and political community that spans from Moscow to Kyiv and beyond, with the aim of defending the virtues of Christendom.⁶ As a political idea it is a reaction not merely to the Soviet-era disenchantment and disorder that followed the end of the USSR in 1991 but also to what it regards as the permissive liberal values and 'gay propaganda' of the West.⁷

However, these neo-Christendom goals and their thirst for a return to cultural Christianity are also found across the Christian world, including in the West. The admiration of conservative American evangelicals for Russian Orthodoxy's brand of fundamentalism is a case in point. 'In fact', Orthodox theologians Aristotle Papanikolaou and George Demacopoulos argue, 'Putin has globalized the American culture wars, and one could argue that the new geopolitical East-West divide has been drawn on the basis of debates about what constitutes the secular.'⁸ It is inadequate to see Putin's claim to Christianity as a largely Eastern problem. No places or regions are immune to the idolatries of neo-Christendom.

Joshua's Concerns and Arguments

For political theologians influenced by Anabaptism, the war against Ukraine takes an expected form in its Christendom content. However, for Mennonites in Ukraine, it is no mere abstract theological problem. It raises complex ethical questions of what to say and do in response to the illegal and destructive invasion. Must they oppose all forms of military service (including chaplaincy)? Should Mennonites resist conscription? Can they possibly treat Russian and Ukrainian military actions as morally equivalent? If they do not, must they adopt a just war position?

In “‘Putin has cured me of my pacifism’”: Ethical Issues Confronting Mennonites in Light of the Russian War against Ukraine’ published in *Anabaptism Today* 5.1 (2023),⁹ Joshua Searle seeks to present and understand the views of Ukrainian Mennonites who have joined Ukraine’s fight against Russia. Having read the article several times and discussed its content and context with Joshua on a couple of occasions, we may identify six aims of the article. Some of these are explicit points made in the essay, others are implicit to the argument but voiced to me by Joshua in our discussions.

First, the article questions the implied and voiced criticisms of Mennonite soldiers and chaplains. These Mennonites are persons such as Pastor M, whom Joshua profiles in the piece and who provides the provocative quote about being cured of pacifism. Pastor M is clear that he would have no hesitation in using lethal force against a hostile Russian soldier.¹⁰ The defence of Pastor M’s situational ethics is the most compelling claim made in the whole article. Who are we, not facing a devastating invasion, to judge the use of defensive force?

The next two points appear to move us towards the just war camp. Second, Joshua problematises the absolutism and dogmatism of the pacifist position with respect to arms bearing – while being blind to other forms of violence (e.g. sexual violence) which may be prevented using force. Third, and by extension, Joshua opposes the relativism of modern Mennonite arguments when they merge with secular pacifism where Russian aggression and Ukrainian defence are made falsely equivalent. He argues that Pastor M is ‘helping to create the conditions for peace through his support for the Ukrainian army, since this army is defending not only Ukrainian territory, but also Christian values of justice and dignity against the tyranny of the corrupt and kleptocratic regime over which Vladimir Putin currently presides’.¹¹ Joshua goes on to quote Moltmann’s just war position based on his distinction between unjustified (in this case, Russian) violence and justified (in this case, Ukrainian) violence.¹²

A further two points are made, which follow from the just war position. Fourth, Joshua rightly insists on the moral demand to speak out against the invasion. He explicitly opposes those pacifists who remain neutral, although he recognises that this is not integral to the pacifist position. A more common problem is the pacifist who criticises war but is not willing to use force to prevent its violence. Therefore, fifth, and more controversially, Joshua supports the theological argument for defensive uses of extreme force. He concludes that, ‘it may sometimes be tragically necessary to inflict violence, even lethal violence, in order to restrain the forces of evil, as many of our Anabaptist friends in Ukraine have discovered in recent months’.¹³

Following five points which are primarily ethical – and, it appears, pastoral – the final point is theological. Joshua’s sixth point is that Anabaptist pacifism is not a prime value but is

derivative of its gospel calling to *Nachfolge*, full and complete submission to Christ. This submission, Joshua argues, may in exceptional times demand the use of defensive force in cold blood against a brutal army of invasion. The article presents absolute pacifism as a recent preconception of John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas rather than a long-standing Anabaptist conviction.¹⁴ By contrast, the traditional Anabaptist theology is deeply cognisant of the destructive power of sin and the God-ordained work of the sword in containing its violence.¹⁵

Between Just War and Pacifism

In making this argument, Joshua extends beyond a qualified defence of a just war position to adopt a broadly Christian realist position on international relations which recognises states as power maximisers while discerning their restraint according to ‘universal moral principles’.¹⁶ This is a well-trodden and entirely plausible path. Over the last hundred years, these two positions – just war and Christian realism – have often merged. While the two positions are certainly distinct, we may understand their coming together in terms of the conditions of the secular age where Christian ethics have limited efficacy in restraining the use of armed force in war. Christian realists have therefore often been sceptical about just war. In a late-modern age where most contemporary armed conflicts are fought by non-state actors, insurgents, terrorists and criminal gangs, this scepticism is especially warranted. Even in the Russo-Ukraine war – which is a throwback to an earlier modern age in which wars in Europe were between states – both sides have used private sector partners and both, especially Russia, have used fascist paramilitary groups.¹⁷

To say that the armed forces of both sides have contained fascists is not to draw a false equivalence or to return rapidly to the pacifist position which Joshua questions. But it is to denote that there are typically many sides and factions with competing agendas in any war. To explore Joshua’s qualified defence of the just war position and his subtextual Christian realism we must look more carefully at these positions in an environment of modern warfare that is brutal and chaotic. This is necessary for us to be able to assess the promise and perils of a new Christian realist position, which may be adequate to guide us in an age of armed conflict.

In his war-time essay, ‘Why the Christian Church Is Not Pacifist’ (1941), the Christian realist Reinhold Niebuhr accused pacifists of being gadflies, fritting between the roles of bystanders and activists.¹⁸ Some of Joshua’s frustration with absolute pacifist positions echoes Niebuhr’s dismissal of them. It is not at all unprecedented for the conditions of war to prompt theologians to re-examine their idealist principles. Niebuhr had been a liberal pacifist in the inter-war period but his dismissal of all pacifists failed to recognise that many of them are neither liberal nor idealist.

In *The Christian Witness to the State* (first published in 1964), John Howard Yoder was commissioned by the Mennonite Central Committee to write a response to Niebuhr in a new wartime context – the Cold War – in which the stakes had been raised by the development of nuclear weapons to serve the just cause of defeating Nazi Germany. In the essay, Yoder strays from the absolute pacifist position and advocates various uses of force in international politics, including a ‘police conception of limited war’ and support for the use of just war criteria to delimit ‘the cases in which the use of violence is the least illegitimate’.¹⁹ It is not merely original Anabaptists like Balthasar Hubmaier who support the limited use of the

sword but also the supposed talisman of Mennonite pacifism and proven sexual abuser, Yoder.²⁰

For various reasons, Yoder's own qualified just war position was not developed in his later work nor met with enthusiasm by the Mennonite community. By far the stronger vein of response among Anabaptists has been non-violent resistance. Famously, Ron Sider's address to the Mennonite World Conference in 1984 – at the height of the so-called 'second Cold War' under Ronald Regan – prompted the creation of Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), and invoked the Anabaptist practice of martyrdom in calling delegates to be 'prepared to die by the thousands'.²¹ Today the practice of accompaniment of civilians in wartime has expanded into the wider practice of Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP).²²

Far from being a call to martyrdom, UCP and the wider practice of non-violent resistance is profoundly realistic on two grounds. First, it relies on the making of pacific space within a world of nation states, not the protection of the territory of the nation state. The liminal position between the parties is the humanitarian space found in armed conflict. These spaces of churches and aid agencies are often fleeting but it is their expansion which creates the conditions for peace.²³ There are numerous cases of how non-violent resistance may create pockets of 'peace' within war.²⁴

Second, non-violence has a proven track record of success vis-à-vis violence for justice movements due to its 'participation advantage' where mass public movements are easy to organise relative to armed rebellions. Chenoweth and Stephan found that between 1900 and 2006 non-violent resistance movements *were twice as likely to achieve success in their aims than violent insurgencies and campaigns*. Moreover, they have been most likely to succeed in the former Soviet Union and the Americas (arguably the two regions outside of Europe to be most affected by the conditions of being after Christendom).²⁵

In the post-Cold War period, there was a brief period of optimism where some scholars attempted reconciliation between pacifist and just war traditions, most notably in Glen Stassen's 'just peacemaking'.²⁶ While the pacifist position has evolved towards greater realism and efficacy, just war appears to have become more divorced from the actual practice of war. To its most careful supporters just war is a *tradition* to contain the worst excesses of war while to its ideological defenders it is a *theory* to sign off the modern wars of the West. Oxford's Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology, Oliver O'Donovan, argued from within the tradition that 'history knows of no just wars, as it knows of no just peoples'.²⁷ However, his successor, Nigel Biggar, made the dubious theoretical claim that 'well-trained soldiers can discipline themselves to use only necessary force to compel the unjust enemy to stop fighting'.²⁸ Both pacifism and just war traditions risk becoming caricatures if taken to their ideological extremes; holding them in dialectical tension, as Joshua does, is wise.

A dose of realism is required whenever war is on the agenda. In the shadow of the Second World War, the Christian realist, Martin Wight, warned of the risk that the study of international affairs would succumb to 'intellectual and moral poverty' under the forces of secularisation caused by, 'first, the intellectual prejudice imposed by the sovereign state, and secondly, the belief in progress'.²⁹ Wight also worried about the disorders of an age that he described in apocalyptic terms. Since 1945, decolonisation has meant that the number of states has increased by a factor of four; most wars are civil wars; most casualties in wars have been civilian; few wars end in decisive victory; around half of wars recur; and armed peacekeepers are only effective in limited circumstances. Contemporary defenders of just war

point to two armed conflicts – Ukraine today and the Second World War – but in the intervening seventy-five years very different and disorderly wars have been fought where the prospects for rightful and effective violent resistance are vanishingly small.

Alternatives to Just War

But this does not help Ukraine. To consider alternatives to just war we must consider the effectiveness of humanitarian action, non-violent resistance, and violent resistance since the Russian invasion. Since February 2022, around three hundred thousand people have died, many hundreds of thousands more have suffered life-changing physical and mental injuries, and over six million Ukrainians have fled as refugees. A sober consideration of the war in December 2023 requires us to recognise that there is little prospect of either side ‘winning’; a Russian counter-offensive in the Donetsk region is making some progress, despite the weaponry and financial support to Ukraine from NATO countries.

The picture with respect to humanitarian action and solidarity is more hopeful. Christians in Ukraine have worked across denominational boundaries to offer relief.³⁰ Anecdotally, the church elsewhere in Europe appears to have been disproportionately represented in the offering of homes and services to Ukrainian refugees and in proclaiming the need for open borders.³¹ With respect to provision, Christian relief organisations, working alongside secular organizations, have been central in the humanitarian response, as they always are in emergency situations.³² Humanitarianism, according to one of its leading historians, ‘begins and ends with faith, it sustains and is sustained by faith’.³³ This does not mean that faith is necessarily Christian, nor even necessarily supernatural, but it is based on belief of some kind – not simply rational self-interest.

With respect to non-violence, the picture is more mixed. It too is typically faith-based and has been secularized over time. Non-violent resistance in Ukraine has been under-reported as it so often is in situations of armed conflict. Yurii Sheliashenko, leader of the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement, observed in the violent early stages of the conflict that, ‘Ukrainian civilians are changing street signs and blocking streets and blocking tanks, just staying in their way without weapons’.³⁴ In Russia, non-violent protests, including many dissenting Orthodox priests, led to fifteen thousand arrests in the first weeks of the invasion,³⁵ undermining the legitimate claim to a ‘special military operation’ before a state crackdown slowed protests and arrests down to a trickle.

At first glance, just war, as Joshua suggests, appears to offer a more effective and political response to the Ukraine crisis. Unlike humanitarianism and non-violence, its origins are not faith-based,³⁶ although the political theologies of Christendom can legitimate war, as they have done in Russia. Nigel Biggar argues that Ukraine is fighting a just war and thus arming the Ukrainian state is right according to this ‘Christian teaching’. And yet the points Biggar makes in support of this position – the Ukrainian state is better than the Russian one, it is for Ukrainians to decide whether to join Russia, etc. – are not distinctively Christian at all but simply morally instinctive and politically realist. A military response is just, Biggar tells us, insofar as ‘armed resistance by Ukraine intends to stop and reverse the grave injustice being perpetrated by Putin’. External involvement by NATO must be limited: ‘It would be prudent to avoid direct conflict with Russian forces – and prudence is a Christian virtue.’³⁷ It is more accurate to say that prudence is a Christendom virtue with Aristotelian origins, which were developed by Augustine, Aquinas and others to guide statecraft in the Christian empire. And such an empire no longer exists.

The weaknesses of most just war *theory* positions are reprised in Biggar's argument about Ukraine, most especially the moral and descriptive simplification and the failure to understand the beastly cycles of violence that occur in all wars be they 'just' or unjust. Twenty years on from the Western wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which Biggar also defended as just, many hundreds of thousands of civilians have died, there is more and more evidence of Western forces torturing and executing prisoners,³⁸ and both countries have reverted to brutal dictatorships. In Ukraine too, the use of big data, satellites and precision-guided weapons has not made their use of military force 'dignified'. As the use of technology made battlefield movements more dangerous, the war has developed into attritional siege warfare in urban centres at a huge cost in human life.

Modern war simply cannot be limited in the way the just war theorists imagine. Those that support arming Ukraine in 2022 do so without strategy for conflict resolution and fail to acknowledge that *ceteris paribus* arms to Ukraine comes with devastating human costs and traumatic geopolitical consequences. They do so in the hope that advanced technology and economic support from the West, alongside Ukrainian patriotism and morale, will make the difference. These are plausible ethical positions – but they are not Christian ones.

On the other hand, Christian pacifists must honestly recognise that, without such arms, Ukraine is likely to have lost the war by now and still many civilians would have died. For one Orthodox scholar, a more plausible and ecumenical response engages just peacemaking on the one hand and Christian realism on the other.³⁹ However, a properly Christian response must recognise that the work of Christ and his church in history is not to protect the sovereignty of one somewhat morally better state from the aggression of another. The Christian purpose of 'peace among nations' does not equate to achieving victory in the wars of states. As Hauerwas remarks, the work of the church is to be, do and proclaim the gospel of peace for the nations. The Christian witness on war seeks to protect the diversity of peoples; not the survival of individual states, legally recognised territories, and regimes of power.⁴⁰ At the same time, examples such as the murder and torture of over one thousand civilians in Bucha in March 2022 provide an almost unanswerable case for the use of force to protect a people from genocide or other crimes against humanity.⁴¹

Beyond Just War (and Pacifism)

We do not find hope in such awful circumstances in either just war or pacifism but in the wider contours of history at the end of Christendom. Putin's invasion has turbo-charged a debate within the Eastern Orthodox world and, more broadly, theologies of post-Christendom. The 'Declaration of the Orthodox Theologians on the Russian World' (hereafter the Declaration)⁴² was issued, explicitly modelled on the Barmen declaration which opposed the Nazi world-view almost a century before. It was published in twenty languages, quickly collected almost fifteen hundred ecclesiastical and academic signatures, and prompted ecumenical support from church leaders and theologians.⁴³

The Declaration stands against the 'Russian World' and all forms of 'ethnophyletism', a term used in Orthodoxy to denote a form of tribalism entailing the conflation between church and nation. It declares that it is the prophetic role of the church to call out the heresy of such neo-Christendom ideology by reasserting gospel truths that security is not in Russia or Ukraine but in Christ. It condemns Russian World and similar teaching as 'non-Orthodox' in that it 'would subordinate the Kingdom of God, manifested in the One Holy Church of God, to any

kingdom of this world seeking other churchly or secular lords who can justify and redeem us'.⁴⁴

The Declaration gave moral and intellectual support to the moves to isolate the Moscow Patriarchate (the ROC) within the ecumenical Orthodox world. However, even some signatories subsequently sought to disassociate themselves from the explicitly post-Christendom framing of the Declaration, with the scholar Andrey Shishkov arguing that, 'the idea of a "symphony of authorities" is not criminal in itself as long as the church does not begin to support the morally unacceptable actions of the political regime'.⁴⁵ Christendom dies hard. The point that is difficult to swallow here is that *both* legitimate Ukrainian resistance and demonic Russian aggression *may* have ethnophyletist rationales as these are commonplace across all Orthodox churches and others that cleave to a Christendom model.

The political problem of the war is therefore also a theological problem. As the director of the Volos Academy for Theological Studies, Dr Pantelis Kalaitzidis, argued in a lecture of May 2022, 'The real challenge for Orthodoxy today is to formulate a theology of otherness and identity and to take seriously into account the consequences arising from [the war in Ukraine]'.⁴⁶ The security of ourselves and others, we might add, is not the security of Christendom against the world, but the security of the world that is radically included by those acting in imitation of Christ, according to his universal and eschatological purpose. The tragedy of war is truly global and *universal*.

Such radical inclusion and a theology of otherness suggest an apocalyptic key is necessary for the church to respond theologically to the war in Ukraine. A struggle of good versus evil that puts the world in peril is certainly playing out in the late-modern world. But the boundaries of good/evil are not those of Ukraine/Russia or Zelensky/Putin or Israeli/Gazan. This is not because the Ukrainian cause is not relatively better than the Russian one. (It is indeed better). The reason is that the boundaries are shifting away from national borders characterised by exclusion, violence and kleptocracy. The notion of a just international order is a modern secular myth. The evidence for system transformation towards new global spaces – both radically inclusive and conservatively exclusive – is overwhelming. The work of the church is not to support the nation state but to support this global transformation by creating more new and inclusive spaces. It is a work which Nick Megoran has called that of gospel peace.⁴⁷

Realistic Hope

In his article on the ethical dilemmas facing Ukrainian Mennonites, Joshua Searle does not argue for just war but 'a distinctive gospel-centred contribution to peace and justice in this new era of violence and enmity'.⁴⁸ But arguments to support the just war of Ukraine against Russia are not distinctive gospel-centred contributions; they are ubiquitous across the Western world and do not require Christian theology. They are entirely understandable but are unlikely to be effective in their stated intents. By contrast, the practice of non-violent resistance within the occupied territories of Ukraine is more distinctive, more effective, and just. Biblical ethics remains generative of its ethic. Non-violent resistance – in that it does not eradicate the other but offers them the opportunity to concede and reconcile – is the witness of radical inclusion called for by Christ.

Such an argument is a hopeful one, but it is not an idealistic or pacifist one. It is realistic because it sees inclusion emerge out of the ruins of the martial struggles of states, not by taking on and defeating the beastly powers. We run behind not ahead of the grace of God.

Radical inclusion is practical because it has seen many thousands of Christians and others acting in grace stand up to welcome Ukrainians into their homes and churches – and demand that their governments open their borders to them at a time when states across Europe are closing their borders. It is theological because it has, in the context of the war against Ukraine, led to a marginalisation of the ROC and its neo-Christendom teaching.

A more idealistic and unwise approach would be to place one's hope in the just and total victory of one side over another as this is something unprecedented in political history. Such idealism leads to dangerous proposals such as praying for the 'collapse of the Russian economy'⁴⁹ – an outcome which would likely lead to millions of civilian deaths in Russia and the Russian-occupied parts of Ukraine. It is here that Joshua and I disagree. However, on most theological questions of the war we find common ground. For our Ukrainian sisters and brothers suffering under the war we can at least offer some encouragement on dealing with Russia at the dawn of the Cold War from Martin Wight: 'Ruthlessly realistic analysis is not incompatible with hope, for hope is a theological not a political virtue.'⁵⁰ Seventy-five years later, amid another devastating war in Europe, we may revise his statement: hope is a theological and a political virtue.

Notes

¹ John thanks Joshua Searle, Lloyd Pietersen, Nick Megoran and participants in the Anabaptist Theology Forum for their comments and support.

² John Heathershaw, *Security After Christendom: Global Politics and Political Theology in an Apocalyptic Age* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2024).

³ Vladimir Putin, *On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians*, 12 July 2021
<https://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181>

⁴ Eugene Rumer and Andrew S. Weiss, 'Ukraine: Putin's Unfinished Business', *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 12 November 2021, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/11/12/ukraine-putin-s-unfinished-business-pub-85771>

⁵ Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 195.

⁶ Kristina Stoeckl, 'The Russian Orthodox Church's Conservative Crusade', *Current History* 116, no. 792 (2017).

⁷ Sonja Luehrmann, *Secularism Soviet Style: Teaching Atheism and Religion in a Volga Republic* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011).

⁸ George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou, eds, *Orthodox Constructions of the West* (Fordham, New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), p. 8.

⁹ Joshua Searle, "'Putin has cured me of my pacifism': Ethical Issues Confronting Mennonites in Light of the Russian War against Ukraine', *Anabaptism Today* 5.1 (2023).

¹⁰ Searle, "'Putin has cured me'", p. 14.

¹¹ Searle, "'Putin has cured me'", p. 17.

¹² Searle, "'Putin has cured me'", p. 17.

¹³ Searle, "'Putin has cured me'", p. 20.

¹⁴ Searle, "'Putin has cured me'", pp. 17–18.

¹⁵ Searle, "'Putin has cured me'", pp. 19–20.

¹⁶ Christian realists argue that states lust for power (*animus dominandi*, borrowed from Augustine) and maximise their interests to seek advantage and, where possible, domination over others. These scholars argue both that objective laws of international security are founded on fallen and sinful human nature and that 'universal moral principles' pertain to political action. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Knopf, 5th edn, 1985).

¹⁷ Ukrainian forces included the Azov battalion and similar neo-fascist groups in the early and chaotic stage of the war; Russia relied on the Wagner Corporation to secure and hold key gains in the East right up until the disbanding of Wagner following Evgeny Progozhin's rebellion in June 2023.

¹⁸ Reinhold Niebuhr, 'Why the Christian Church is Not Pacifist', in *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr* (ed. Robert McAfee Brown; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 102–19.

¹⁹ John Howard Yoder, *The Christian Witness to the State* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 2007), pp. 45–9.

²⁰ No reference to Yoder can go without comment in the light of his extensive sexual abuse of women as documented in Rachel Waltner Goossen, “‘Defanging the Beast’: Mennonite Responses to John Howard Yoder’s Sexual Abuse”, *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 89 (2015): pp. 7–80. Nevertheless, his works currently remain in the scholarly domain and are cited here in full recognition of the problematic nature of such citations.

²¹ Ronald J. Sider, ‘God’s People Reconciling’, Christian Peacemaker Teams, <https://cpt.org/sider/> (accessed 22 Aug. 2022).

²² For a discussion of the nature of space in accompaniment see Luis Enrique Eguren, ‘The Notion of Space in International Accompaniment’, *Peace Review*, 27 no.1 (2015), pp. 18–24.

²³ Lisa Smirl, *Spaces of Aid: How Cars, Compounds, and Hotels Shape Humanitarianism* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015).

²⁴ Huibert Oldenhuis et al., *Unarmed Civilian Protection* (Nonviolent Peaceforce: 2021, 2nd edn), available at https://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/images/UCPManual/2021_Course_Manual_Full.pdf

²⁵ Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 74.

²⁶ Glen Harold Stassen, *Just Peacemaking: Transforming Initiatives for Justice and Peace*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992).

²⁷ Oliver O’Donovan, *The Just War Revisited*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

²⁸ Nigel Biggar, ‘This Christian Teaching Suggests It’s Ethical for Ukraine to Fight (and for Us to Arm Them)’, *Premier Christianity* (29 March 2022) <https://www.premierchristianity.com/opinion/this-christian-teaching-suggests-its-ethical-for-ukraine-to-fight-and-for-us-to-arm-them/12765.article>

²⁹ Martin Wight, ‘Why is there No International Theory?’ *International Relations* 2, no. 1 (1960), p. 39.

³⁰ For example, the Dnipro Hope Mission, to which I am an international advisory board member.

³¹ In the UK, all major churches were quick to join government and relevant civil society organisations in offering to participate. Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, ‘Church Response to Russian Invasion of Ukraine’, 25 August 2022 <https://ctbi.org.uk/church-response-to-russian-invasion-of-ukraine/>

³² Pope Francis’ metaphor and William Cavanaugh’s portrayal of the church as ‘field hospital’ is illustrative here. William T. Cavanaugh, *Field Hospital: The Church’s Engagement with a Wounded World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016).

³³ Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2018), pp. 23–89; see also William Bain, ‘Political Theology and International Relations: From History to Emancipation’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 67 (2023) <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/squad097>, p. 9.

³⁴ Symon Hill, ‘As a Christian Pacifist I Can’t Encourage Ukrainians to Take Up Arms. But Neither Will I Condemn Them’, *Premier Christianity* (25 March 2022), <https://www.premierchristianity.com/opinion/as-a-christian-pacifist-i-cant-encourage-ukrainians-to-take-up-arms-but-neither-will-i-condemn-them/12749.article/>

³⁵ OVD-Info, ‘Persecution for Anti-War Views’ <https://ovdinfo.org/> (accessed 22 Aug. 2022).

³⁶ William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

³⁷ Biggar, ‘This Christian Teaching’.

³⁸ An official Australian Government inquiry found a practice of executions by their special forces. The USA and UK have refused to conduct full inquiries, but a BBC investigation found 54 executions of prisoners by 1 unit in a 6-month tour. Hannah O’Grady and Joel Gunter, ‘SAS Unit Repeatedly Killed Afghan Detainees, BBC Finds’, *Panorama* [BBC TV] (12 July 2022) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-62083196>

³⁹ Perry T. Hamalis, ‘Just Peacemaking and Christian Realism: Possibilities for Moving Beyond the Impasse in Orthodox Christian War Ethics’ in *Orthodox Christian Perspectives on War* (ed. Perry T. Hamalis and Valerie A. Karras; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), pp. 335–59.

⁴⁰ Stanley Hauerwas, ‘The Church in a Divided World. The Interpretative Power of the Christian Story’, *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 8.1 (Spring, 1980), p. 75.

⁴¹ Robert E. Williams and Dan Caldwell, ‘*Jus Post Bellum*: Just War Theory and the Principles of Just Peace,’ *International Studies Perspectives*, 7, no. 4 (November 2006), pp. 309–20.

⁴² Theofilos Abatzidis et al., ‘A Declaration on the “Russian World” (*Russkii Mir*) Teaching’, *Public Orthodoxy* (13 March 2022) <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2022/03/13/a-declaration-on-the-russian-world-russkii-mir-teaching/>

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⁴⁴ Abatzidis et al., ‘A Declaration on the “Russian World”’.

⁴⁵ Shishkov argues: ‘The introduction of the heresy of ethnophyletism into theological circulation is a stab in the back to Orthodox Ukrainians who are defending their lives and freedom with weapons in their hands.’ Andrey Shishkov, ‘Some Reflections on the Declaration of the “Russian World” Teaching’, *Public Orthodoxy* (13 April

2022) <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2022/04/13/some-reflections-on-the-declaration-on-the-russian-world-teaching/>

⁴⁶ Volos Academy for Theological Studies, 'The War in Ukraine and the Emergence of a New Theological Agenda in Orthodoxy' (11 May 2022) <https://mailchi.mp/8fbfb55daa1c/lecture-by-the-director-of-the-volos-academy-in-geneva-the-war-in-ukraine-the-emergence-of-a-new-theological-agenda-in-eastern-orthodoxy?e=bded5df083>

⁴⁷ Nick Megoran, *Warlike Christians in an Age of Violence* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018).

⁴⁸ Searle, "“Putin has cured me”", pp. 14–15.

⁴⁹ Searle, "“Putin has cured me”", p. 17.

⁵⁰ Martin Wight, 'The Church, Russia and the West', *Ecumenical Review* 1.1 (1949), pp. 25–45.