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Some thoughts on War, Peace, and Pacifism
NWC Panel Discussion
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Preliminary:

1. "Pacifism" comes from the Latin words *pax facere*, literally, "to make peace," and should not be confused with "passivism."

One the one hand . . .

2. I am drawn to pacifism and non-violent resistance because of the progressive biblical witness which moves from an Old Testament, where God appears to sanction wholesale annihilation, to a New Testament in which Christ proclaims that peacemakers will be blessed and enjoins his followers to treat others as they want to be treated, bless those who curse them, "turn the other/right cheek," in short, to "love your enemies."
3. Furthermore, this is modeled in the work of Christ, most significantly in Christ's non-violent self-sacrificial offering given on the cross in which he absorbed the violence of the world through his redemptive suffering. To imitate Christ then would indicate that Christians are called to some level of non-violent redemptive suffering.
4. This counter-cultural vision stands in direct contrast to the cultural affirmation of "redemptive violence."
5. Beyond the biblical and selective traditional support for the theoretical position of pacifism, I am encouraged by the revolutions of non-violent resistance initiated by Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.
6. The possibility of global nuclear destruction raises serious issues for me of the possibility of a "just war."

On the other hand . . .

7. Christian communities espousing and practicing nonviolence can be said to depend in some way on a nation willing to establish and maintain justice against evil-doers within and without. Might they owe some contribution to the nation?
8. I am also drawn to Reinhold Niebuhr's vision of "Christian Realism" which acknowledges that in an imperfect world, imperfect human beings must compromise their ideals, to some degree, in the name of a greater good. However, they should do so humbly and confessing their own sin along the way. Care is to be taken to "protect" with justifiable violence which does not become a "crusade" in which ultimately only "might makes right."