

The Responsibility to Confront Evil: A Pacifist Critique of R2P from the Historic Peace Churches

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During its 9th Assembly in Porto Alegre in 2006, the World Council of Churches embraced a document on the “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P), an issue that originated with the UN’s consultations on the need to protect vulnerable populations.¹ The WCC document emphasizes in detail the priority that ought to be accorded to peaceful means of preventing and reacting to conflicts, acknowledging at the same time the possibility that avoiding genocide, ethnic cleansing or other specific kinds of endangerment to peoples within a circumscribed political jurisdiction may necessitate the use of military force.

The document goes on to recognize that there are Christian communities within the WCC who oppose the use of force even in such well-defined and confined cases. The text voices admiration and respect for those who express genuinely non-violent convictions (§ 14). I wish to speak as one of these respected persons, whose understanding of our responsibility to endangered peoples differs from the majority of Christian voices. This minority, especially those coming from the Historic Peace Churches, is convinced that the call of Jesus to love both our neighbour *and* our enemy governs more than our personal moral behaviour. We boldly claim that it also ought to govern the decision-making of Christians with regard to political issues. To be sure, it is also the call of Jesus to resist evil at all times. But our obligation to resist evil – or more accurately to confront evil – does not permit us to strike out with force (Matt. 5:39). Love for one’s enemies is not possible when one exercises violence against them; love for our neighbours does not oblige us to use violence to protect

¹ The *Responsibility to Protect* report that was commissioned by the Government of Canada in 2001 was promulgated in September 2001 by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS). The Central Committee of the WCC issued a first recommendation to its member Churches in February 2001 titled “The protection of endangered populations in situations of armed violence: toward an ecumenical ethical approach”. It then embraced a report from the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs under the title „The Responsibility to Protect: Ethical and Theological Reflections” in July 2003, before the Ninth Assembly finally adopted the resolution “Vulnerable populations at risk. Statement on the responsibility to protect” (Porto Alegre, 2006)

them. In the following I wish to elucidate how these two faith claims – confronting evil while also loving the enemy – are related to R2P.

There is no consensus in the Churches on the issue of R2P, and so the differing voices need to remain in dialogue with one another. As a contribution to this dialogue, I wish to present just a few aspects of the theological understanding – especially the hermeneutics, Christology and ecclesiology – that leads us to the conviction that the Responsibility to Protect needs to be fundamentally revised before it corresponds to Christ's call that we care for the vulnerable of our world.

Some Standard Reasons for Remaining Skeptical about R2P

In the Peace Communities there is no single reason for opposing Responsibility to Protect. Many reasons for remaining mistrustful are based on purely rational grounds that are held by Christians and non-Christians alike, and indeed are also expressed in the WCC document "Vulnerable populations at risk" (2006). The following rational arguments for opposing R2P are important, because they point toward problems in the concept itself. Nevertheless, they are not at the heart of the Peace Community position. [Nota bene: Instead of the term "Historic Peace Churches", I use the term "Peace Communities" in this essay, because there are faith communities with a peace witness in many different confessions and in many Churches of the WCC. The focus is not on a given Church, but on groups of followers of Jesus living in critical engagement with their environment, as I will describe below.]

Some advocates of R2P might think that the following straightforward moral argument should be patently convincing:

1. The moral duty to endangered peoples is more important than the moral duty of respecting territorial sovereignty.
2. We ought to act in accordance with our overriding moral duties.
3. Therefore, we ought to establish the principles of R2P in international law.

The consequence of this subordination of territorial sovereignty to protection of endangered populations is that any given political leadership no longer possesses an exclusive and unrestricted right to govern, but also bears a duty to all social groups within their sovereign jurisdiction.

However, there are many who do not grant the first premise.² There are controversial political issues of great moment involved in redefining sovereignty.³ One might object

² Later in this paper I also show why the second premise also does not reflect the Peace Community conception of witnessing to the biblical story instead of responding to a universal moral imperative.

to R2P because it weakens the principle of national security or because it transfers powers to the international community without due control. The sovereignty of autonomous nations is a concept with a long history, anchored in the political philosophy, jurisprudence and constitutions of many individual states and of the international community as a whole. Revoking or at any rate restricting the fundamental notion of territorial sovereignty that has held sway since at least the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 is a measure of great sweep and cannot be meted out without a great deal of disputation.⁴ In particular, those nations that have a collective memory of injuries to their sovereign borders or political autonomy are most liable to resist this moral argument. Hence the misgivings and the political controversy.

In addition to this difficulty there are significant pragmatic concerns. Even the advocates of R2P themselves concede the numerous practical difficulties involved in the concept. In order to make it work, all sorts of questions need to be worked out. Some of them hardly admit of international consensus. For example, there are issues of assessing crises (e.g. rules for determining when grievous mistreatment of a people has become genuine genocide or ethnic cleansing or the like), issues of implementation (e.g. rules for determining when the stage of “responsibility to prevent” has to be abandoned for the “responsibility to react”), issues of enforcement (e.g. rules for designating which governments are to be asked to intervene⁵) and so on. Some of the unresolved questions voiced from a Christian perspective include:

When protective troupes are sent into a conflict in order to defend defenceless people, is it really possible to prevent those groups from harming other people in such a way that they too will need to be protected? – How can one avoid demonizing one group of people in a conflict? How can we speak of „loving our enemies“ in this case? Are those persons who need our protection being treated as responsible agents? Are we empowering them to act or allowing them to contribute to a solution of the problem? – Who decides whether the criteria for an R2P action are fulfilled, and in accordance with whose informa-

³ See “The Responsibility to Protect: Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty” (Ottawa: December 2001), p. 13; Marc Saxer, “The Politics of Responsibility to Protect”, FES Briefing Paper (Berlin: April 2008), pp. 3-5.

⁴ A recent example from a contemporary dispute is the question whether Zimbabwe should be sanctioned because its recent election was significantly manipulated. The Security Council could not reach a consensus view because its “mandate specifies that it should only deal with matters that are a threat to international peace and security, and the differing sides on the resolution vote took opposite views of whether Zimbabwe constituted such a threat.” – New York Times, July 11th 2008, internet edition.

⁵ The situation in Darfur may serve as an example here. Although the Security Council agreed to send a peacekeeping force of 27,000 into the region, only 3,000 have been deployed. NATO has also not sent the requisite military helicopters that are supposed to be a part of this force; “Unerfülltes Versprechen”, *Welt-Sichten*, p. 7, Nr. 5, 2008.

*tion? Is an appeal possible? Who bears responsibility? Who is liable and who can be held to account?*⁶

These voices are obviously skeptical about whether instituting the paradigm of R2P would truly lead to greater justice and peace.

Who will be allowed to perform injury in the name of the international community? Indeed, R2P depends essentially on a completely even-handed application of the principle of international responsibility. If that ambitious goal cannot be assured, we must doubt whether the notion as such can be taken seriously. If the goal of an even-handed, unpartisan application cannot be assured, we ought to call a spade a spade: And that means that without a comprehensive UN agreement on each and every issue of principle and of application, there can be no talk of a revised ethical paradigm. We remain at the level of *realpolitik*, where certain powerful governments are willing to act in specific cases of human abuses, but always with a view to calculating and furthering their own national interests. To the contrary, R2P by its very definition only makes sense as a disinterested, that is to say neutral and unprejudiced, ethical paradigm.

But let us set our misgivings aside and assume for the sake of argument that an implementation of this ethical paradigm were indeed realizable. That is granting a lot. But if granted, it leads to a further insuperable obstacle for Peace Church communities. This problem is integrally related to one of the great virtues of the Responsibility to Protect. R2P is a majestic design for political relations, an overarching umbrella. Although it remains circumscribed in its application only to cases of endangered populations for which a specific government is responsible, nevertheless R2P can invoke the capacities of most agencies and services of the UN. With its three phases, prevention, reaction and rebuilding, it involves the entire gamut of UN activity beginning with political advocacy and developmental aid moving on to peacekeeping forces and outright military intervention right up to humanitarian relief and mediation of conflicts. This feature, namely its comprehensiveness, is in the eyes of its advocates one of the major virtues of R2P. "The responsibility to protect is not just about military intervention, but about an umbrella of responses, ... with prevention being the most important."⁷

⁶ See the document „S4C – Suffer for Christ: A response to the WCC paper concerning the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)“, formulated by the *Workshop for Peace Theology of "Church and Peace" and of the "International Fellowship of Reconciliation" (German Branch)*, Nov 17th, 2007. Signatories: Dr. Matthias Engelke, Dr. James Jakob Fehr, Ekke Fetkötter, Hanna-E. Fetkötter, Wolfgang Krauß, Marie-Noëlle von der Recke, Christoph Rinneberg.

⁷ Gareth Evans, „The responsibility to protect: Moving toward a shared consensus“, p. 7 in Asfaw, Kerber and Wederud (ed.) *The Responsibility to Protect: Ethical and Theological Reflections*.

The problem with all of this, however, is that when crises begin to rain down, this umbrella of diverse responses must be moved in one of the three possible directions. Since there are three different categories of response in R2P, one might say that there three directions to walk through the rain. It is of course the UN's Security Council that decides which direction to take. Affirming R2P, affirming the need to walk under a common umbrella implies accepting that those holding the umbrella upright may stroll in directions that one refuses to go. Unavoidably, one must accept the outcome of the discussions led by those who hold power.⁸ This is a major source of unease among Peace Community voices appealing to non-violent policies for aiding endangered peoples. We could accept R2P wholeheartedly if it were to drop the threat of implementing violence and institute only the responsibility to prevent and the responsibility to rebuild. But we are not given that option. Agreeing to the implementation of R2P means accepting the complete decision-making procedure, indeed legitimating and sanctioning the powers that be to choose a particular response. In a word: it means accepting the entire umbrella of responses; one cannot choose those responses that one finds more amenable (say, mediation work or humanitarian aid) and reject those that one finds distasteful or unconscionable (the employment of military force). Nor can one simply shrug one's shoulders and grudgingly accept disagreeable behaviour by others.

Given these obvious political facts, we cannot accept at face value the claim that "prevention is the most important aspect of R2P". The defender of R2P must accept the entire chain of responses. If we were to accept R2P, we would be morally culpable for its every implementation. In the following I wish to make two faith claims in response to this conception. First, it will be argued that faith communities appealing to the Lordship of Jesus and discipleship cannot acquiesce to a comprehensive decision-making procedure that includes as one inextricable element the deliberate exercise of violence. Second, an alternative vision of how this expression of faith can produce responsible acts of protection will be articulated.

A Forced Option? The Presumed Moral Dilemma of Violence

However, I first wish to examine one aspect of the contrary position in order to clarify the options facing us. Many communities of faith willingly accept the exercise of political, economic and social power. Certainly, power can be put to good use, and be-

⁸ The potential for subverting R2P for the sake of self-serving military intervention by powerful nations is a real worry. R2P give a humanitarian rationale for military intervention under Chapter XII of the UN Charter.

cause this is so, the R2P paradigm has gained support among some Christian communities. They argue for non-violent approaches, but say also that the violence might yet be necessary in order to care for the vulnerable. While we ought to focus our energies on seeking peaceful solutions for endangered populations, sometimes there are extreme situations where no peaceful solutions are possible. At that point we must reluctantly accede to the implementation of force. *Caring for the vulnerable is more important than the principle of non-violence.*⁹

This assertion invokes a supposed dilemma: either the Church remains passive and aloof when severe human rights violations occur (a sinful abdication of her responsibility) or the Church agrees to the use of violence and contradicts her own pacifist principles. The use of the term „dilemma“ suggests that the only alternative to passivity is the tragic necessity of violence. I would agree that this is a dilemma and that both of these alternatives are unacceptable. If I were truly confronted with this dilemma, that is, if I had only these two alternatives, then I would want to act as a “responsible” person.¹⁰ I think I would prefer to be devoured by the Scylla of violence than to drown in the Charybdis of passive inaction.

These two, mutually exclusive alternatives can be translated into two, mutually exclusive teachings about what the Church should be. Those who teach that believers should form a pure community separate from and untainted by world and society choose the path of avoidance and passivity in the face of such unbearable evils. Those who teach that Christian values need to critically inform and ultimately direct society, and hence who advocate an involvement of the Church with all aspects of society and state power, choose the path of action to enact and enforce those Christian claims in society. And so we can reformulate the presumed dilemma: Should we join a socially responsible, but blemished and compromised Church or should we flee to an exclusionary or separatist fellowship? That is the crux of the matter, and I wish to dwell on this point and suggest why a consistent Peace Community witness must reject these seemingly forced options. – In a word: Because our view of the Church diverges from both of these teachings, we oppose the employment of R2P.

⁹ The WCC document says that some Churches “may acknowledge that the resort to force for protection purposes in some circumstances will be an option that cannot guarantee success but that must be tried because the world has failed to find, and continues to be at a loss to find, any other means of coming to the aid of those in desperate situations”; in: “Vulnerable populations at risk. Statement on the responsibility to protect” (Porto Alegre, 2006) §14.

¹⁰ This position was most clearly described and adopted by Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

The Third Way – A Different Vision of Church and World

There is a third option that avoids both flight from the world and enmeshment in it. It is the Peace Community model. The other two models – the State Church and the Separatist models of the Body of Christ, if you will – share one essential conviction. Both models believe that the world is subject to the control of secular power structures. They only disagree about how we should react. One of the two groups flees from, the other works together with what St. Paul calls “principalities and powers”. By contrast, at the heart of Peace Community faith is the belief that Christ has “disarmed the rulers and powers of this world” (Col 2:15) and that although they are disarmed, we continue to contend actively with these powers. We do not fight against the powers with its own weapons of authority, control and violence, but with the weapons of Christ.

For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Eph 6, 12)

Through Christ’s victory in cross and resurrection we struggle with a world that is still organised according to secular power structures, but whose priorities have been shown to be inferior to the way of peace. Peace communities only then follow Christ, when they relinquish the advantages and emoluments that would accrue to them by compromising with the principalities and powers. They refuse to exercise power and remain wary of the hold that money and status have on us all.¹¹ This form of witness is only possible if we live in counter-cultural communities that interact critically with structures of dominance (monetary, military, governmental, etc.). In the following I wish to flesh out several aspects of how this peace community understanding allows us to act responsibly for vulnerable peoples.

This position begins with a specific hermeneutical understanding. The ethics of Peace Communities are guided not by abstract and immutable principles available to all rational beings, but by the biblical story. We are convinced that divine ethics are communicated in the earthly, incarnational story of God’s relations with his creation, in the teachings of the Old Testament prophets and preeminently in the life of Jesus. Telling the story of Jesus: his birth, ministry, instruction to disciples, confrontation of religious and political authorities, arrest, death and resurrection allows us both to comprehend and to practice God’s ethics. These stories cannot be analysed into general principles and cannot be expressed as abstract values independent of their historical context.

¹¹ This implies as well that Peace Communities occasionally refuse to perform certain dictates of practical, civil reason, insofar as these contradict their faithfulness to Christ. These include refusal to perform military duty, refusal to pay taxes for military expenditures and the like.

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Cor 10:3-5).

The Peace Community is therefore not the holder and teacher of specific ethical values like freedom, equality or (in this case) responsibility. The ethics of faith are expressed not in principles and teachings, but in *witnessing* to the story of the life and work of Jesus and his Church. This has an immediate application for R2P: the responsibilities to prevent, to react and to rebuild, if we are to affirm them must be comprehensible, indeed must be construable in terms of the biblical story. Reformulating R2P in the words of faith, we understand our witness to Christ in terms of *car-ing for the needy, confronting evil and healing*:

Responsibility:	prevent	react	rebuild
Witness:	care for the needy	confront evil	heal

We will return to the second of these three points, because it is here where R2P cannot be translated into terms of Peace Community ethics.

There are several relevant christological observations made by Peace Communities. First, the incarnated Word of God, he whom we call Lord, came to those in need of salvation: the weak, the sick and the blind. He was involved with his world; he was “in the middle of the socio-political maelstrom of military occupation and underground war, “yet without sin”.¹² One might say that R2P is at the very heart of the Christian faith! Jesus begins his mission with words that express his sense of responsibility to protect:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. (Lk. 3:18-19).

Compassion for those in need and a willingness to act on their behalf is a truly Christian mode of being, and so we should be thankful to those who have brought R2P into the public debate, for they have brought Christ's own deepest concern onto the international political agenda. – Then we make a second christological claim. In the central act of God's agency, the incarnation of Christ, a finite, restricted amount of human action does an infinite amount of good. The truly human words and deeds of Jesus (for example bringing *some*, but not all people to repentance, healing *some*, but not all of the blind in Palestine), though limited in scope and efficacy, are not inadequate actions. As peaceful expressions of God's creative activity in the world, as acts of divine love that contradict the functioning of the powers and principalities of this world, they are unequivocally good and sufficient in themselves. Hence, it is possible to act *in a limited way* in the world, addressing and redeeming only *some* of the

¹² John Howard Yoder, *The Christian Witness to the State*, p. 57-58.

problems of this world, and yet to have done enough positive good. This is the finitude of incarnation. – A third christological claim must also be made: Jesus, although possessing divine authority, divested himself of power and might. He refused to use power or authority to achieve his aims. He lived and taught servanthood, self-sacrifice and forgiveness when combatting the forces of evil. He taught us to confront evil through loving our enemies. In the formation of his community Jesus chose the weak and not the powerful. Or viewed from the perspective of God the Father: Neither at Jesus' birth nor during his ministry nor at the Cross did God raise his hand to act with power on behalf of the Messiah. In the incarnation of Christ God overcomes strength with weakness, he combats evil with good. Summing up these three points: Christ is deeply concerned about the needy, he cares for those whom he can help and he refuses to employ violent means to achieve his ends.

Connected to these christological confessions there is a fundamental Peace Community conviction about the nature of the Church. This ecclesiology is of fundamental significance for our attitude to R2P. As Fernando Enns has emphasized:

“It is important for the churches to discuss and clarify their ecclesiologies, since this self-understanding becomes the shaping ground for her ethical convictions. For HPCs [=Historical Peace Churches] the church is that entity in the world that witnesses to and lives according to the truth of God's reconciling work in Jesus Christ.”¹³

The concept of discipleship, heeding the call of Jesus to follow him as a counter-cultural community, is at the heart of our concept of the Church. In this way immediate involvement in the world is assured, because the Peace Community exists as a witness to and example of a way of living that is recommended to the world. It's internal dynamic operates according to a logic of love and service. When a church community organizes itself according to the principle of discipleship, it deliberately contrasts itself to the society in which it lives. It becomes a community of mutual service with values that diverge from that society. Whereas the state is founded upon a system that ultimately enforces its legitimacy with violence (if necessary), Peace Communities are rooted in an understanding of servanthood and non-violence that rejects domination. It attempts to be faithful to Christ's example: self-emptying, relinquishing coercive power, replacing dominion by service, absorbing hostility through forgiveness.¹⁴ Another example of this is the effort to make decisions by consensus, empowering all voices within the community (as this is now also practiced in the WCC).

¹³ Fernando Enns, “From “Humanitarian Intervention” to “Responsibility to Protect”: Peacemaking and Policing – the View of the Historic Peace Churches”, paper delivered at Arnoldshain, Germany, November 2007, pp. 2-3.

¹⁴ Arnold Neufeld-Fast, “Christianity and War: The Pacifist View”, p. 22 in Asfaw, Kerber and Wederud (ed.) *The Responsibility to Protect: Ethical and Theological Reflections*.

This ecclesiological model does not regard faithfulness individualistically. Not individual action, but the action of the Church is faithful obedience to Christ. The community is itself the preliminary Kingdom of God. Whatever this community does, whatever this first foretaste of the Kingdom does, must be conceivable as also taking place in God's ultimate Kingdom in the fullness of time. No acts of violence are conceivable there; hence acts of violence cannot be acts of faith in the here and now. In addition, its members see Christ's community as counteracting society, maintaining a critical distance and yet having an effect on the greater culture around it. This model implies the rejection of the "principalities and powers" (Col 2:16, 3:15), that is, the systems of power, control and violence. The necessity of always resisting the temptation to take control, while yet remaining directly active in the world.

Rational and Empathic Ethical Motivations for R2P

Having now characterized this alternative model of the Church, one might question whether it does more than offer lip-service to its responsibility for the world. Do pacifists really care *to do something* about the threats of genocide and ethnic cleansing? Or do they merely want to provide a religious justification for their own inaction? Before addressing concrete actions that a Peace Community can perform, I want to elucidate the pacifist ethical motivation by contrasting it to two kinds of motivation that often lead Christians to support R2P.

This pacifist faith motivation differs from the two kinds of *ethical* motivation of R2P, which appeal respectively to 1.) our sense of duty and 2.) to our sense of emotional identification with sufferers. First, R2P argues that we have a rational duty to protect populations that cannot protect themselves. If we do not act, we shirk our responsibility. Being a rationally generalized position, it is universal in its application and does not allow us to shrink back when the implications of the imperative become distasteful. And so one must acquiesce in and consent to the need to use violence, albeit grudgingly and haltingly. But second, R2P also claims that we ought to have an emotional empathy for those peoples who are like us, but who suffer unjustly. Acting from this compassion is more important than any considerations about the possible negative implications that our involvement might have upon those sufferers. I find that both of these ethical motivations – the intellectual and the emotional – are close to Peace Community concerns, but still clearly diverge from them.

Consider first of all the point at which the Peace Community perspective agrees with and yet differs from the argument from rational duty which purportedly necessitates R2P. We grant the first thought and agree with the call of reason to be concerned with all endangered peoples. A responsible Christian community senses its responsi-

bility for all of humanity and especially for all endangered peoples. Nevertheless, the theology of the Peace Communities remains unmoved by the argument from rational duty. Whereas R2P argues that we have a moral duty to act from *universal* principles, we want to say that Christ invites us to adopt the *particular* lifestyle that he embodied.¹⁵ This open invitation appeals to those who hear the story of Jesus and decide to join the community of his disciples. A rational argument implies that all will be convinced and all rational beings will act upon that conviction; the community model, on the other hand, says that not all persons will be convinced. But those who have heard the Word of God will act upon it.

Furthermore, universal duty implies the necessity to act in all relevant cases, and indeed the proponents of R2P call for its universal application. This reasoning assures us that we can analyse a given specific situation and decide on the best possible response. We can and must act in a timely fashion to satisfy immediate, short-term needs where the rule of law and civil society have gone amiss. In a word, we need to gain control of situations that have gotten out of control, and R2P gives us a procedure for doing this. – The example of Christ, however, shows that we are not *forced* in our response. He too was tempted to take control, but he resisted this temptation (Lk 4:5-8). He too was only able to care for some of the sick and needy in Palestine. In the limitation of his humanity he did not react to all situations of need that existed in his world. Now he calls his community to act as well in a temporally limited fashion. We may see the need for significant political and social reform in many, many countries, but our obligation is to help at those places where we can. It goes without saying that individual communities are restricted in their ability to act. When we reflect on the finitude of Christ's incarnation, when we reflect on our own limitations, we must reject the abstract moral argument that obliges us to act in all situations of need. This compulsion to act (without knowing what is the right thing to do) leads us the dangerous conclusion that we must employ violence, because we know of no other option.

Now let us consider agreement and disagreement with respect to the argument from emotional empathy. Again, there is significant agreement. The great virtue of R2P and the reason that so many have spoken so passionately for its adoption is its heartfelt plea for political action to care for the widowed and orphaned peoples of this world. Does not Jesus say that our concern for those in need is an overriding value? In the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Mt 25: 31-46) God judges any deed good that is performed “merely” from compassion for the hungry and the thirsty, the homeless and the naked, the sick and the imprisoned. We affirm this teaching of Jesus.

¹⁵ As John Howard Yoder argues, philosophical truth is universal but Christ's incarnation is particular; cf. his essay “But We Do See Jesus: The Particularity of Incarnation and the Universality of Truth”.

However, the manner in which the premise of emotional empathy is employed by R2P is problematic. It is said that we ought to have a truly heartfelt concern for those peoples who are like us, but who suffer unjustly. This is not the whole teaching of Jesus. His words go much farther than that. Whereas R2P motivates us by an emotional connection to those whom we may sympathize with, Jesus tells us to love even those whom we find entirely unsympathetic.

You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. (Mt 5: 31-46)

Jesus does not only say that we should be compassionate and loving toward those whom we see as resembling us, but also toward those whom we regard as our enemies. Enemies are those with whom we cannot identify, and for whom we may have no natural compassion.

Emotional empathy motivates us to act immediately out of concern for those who are quite obviously endangered, right now. But love for friends *and* enemies makes us first pause instead of reacting. This teaching forces us to think about what we ought to do, and leads us to engage our enemy in dialogue. Why is our enemy performing acts that seem to be downright evil? What are his or her aims? Is it possible that there are aspects of the conflict that are hidden from us, and which need to be uncovered and addressed? Is it possible that lashing out against our enemy will only exacerbate the problem, because it contributes to a cycle of violence? – Because of such questions I find Jesus' difficult teaching about enemies more convincing than the appeal to our empathy.

Peace Community Action as Witnessing

I have discussed two broad motifs employed by Christians who champion the R2P model, universal reason and heartfelt empathy toward sufferers, and juxtaposed them to Peace Community beliefs in the non-universal nature of our witness to Christ and the importance of showing love to both friends and enemies. It is important to lay bare these divergent modes of argumentation, so that we can understand why brothers and sisters in faith come to different conclusions about issues of great moment. Having now sketched the pacifist faith position – the commitment to caring for all humanity, both friends and enemies, out of an obedience to and emulation of Jesus – we need to apply it more directly to R2P.

The Peace Community does not normally speak of responsibility for the world, but of *witnessing in the world*. Witness is the entire life of the counter-cultural community called together by Jesus. Although worship is the starting point for witness (including

prayer, preaching the gospel, breaking bread together, etc.), I wish to focus on other aspects of witness that grow out of worship. Which values direct this contrast-society of faithful living in the world? First of all, the fact that witness is given by a community of followers of Jesus is crucial. A single person may well act in obedience to Christ in a given situation. But “only a continuing community dedicated to a deviant value system can change the world”.¹⁶ The goal of Christ’s community witness is to change the world! Whereas every internal action of the community (worship) is a faithful response to maintain the Lordship of Christ within the community, external acts of service attest to an alternative mode of living that we offer to all humanity (in the hope that they also may adopt his Lordship). The relation of the Church to the world is not responsibility, but witness to the possibilities of reconciliation, as the Church of Norway Commission clearly stated:

The churches’ preaching of the gospel can never stop pointing out the opportunity for peace and reconciliation. It is an opportunity for both victims and perpetrators, but without them being placed on an equal footing. ... When confronted with the great international challenges of our times, the churches must above all maintain that recognition that the other party is like oneself - vulnerable and infinitely valuable in God’s eyes - is also a solid foundation in questions of security policy.¹⁷

The call of Jesus to form an alternative counter-culture or contrast-society that is a precursor of the ultimate Kingdom of God is also an answer to the needs of endangered populations. It provides a springboard from which acts of God’s love can be performed. The witness of the community is always a reference to the Giver and Sustainer of Life, who alone is in control of this world. When working with endangered peoples, members of the Peace Community never attempts to “control” a situation, but rather to “witness” to him who alone is in control.

What does that distinction mean in practical terms? Witness without taking control means acting in the conviction that the value system of this world is not God’s value system, and that the faith community brings God’s values into particular situations in this world. As long as we seek to employ violence to remove those who are in control, we merely exchange one form of control for another. We remain within the value system of society in general. To radically revise the world, we need a “deviant value system”. It should be clear from this that only peaceful means can truly transform the world. Although the community of faith does not operate according to the principles of civil society, it acts in a way that has a real and substantial effect on human lives: the

¹⁶ Yoder, *Nevertheless*, p. 136.

¹⁷ “Vulnerability and Security: Current challenges in security policy from an ethical and theological perspective”, prepared by the Commission on International Affairs in Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations, p. 32.

way of Christ is the way of peace *in* the world.¹⁸ So even though one might contend that the community of faith in virtue of its being a counter-culture bears no responsibility for society as this is conventionally understood, it seeks actively to serve that society.¹⁹ The life of the Church in its juxtaposition to the world has a social and political effect on that world.

Peace Communities exist throughout the world in many different Christian confessions that are represented in the WCC. These communities, just like the international political community as a whole, are waking up to the needs of endangered populations that are being mistreated or ignored by their own governments. In the last few decades a large number of diverse peace groups have begun to work with these peoples, witnessing to God's grace by helping them actively. One of these groups asks the Church: "What would happen if Christians devoted the same discipline and self-sacrifice to nonviolent peacemaking that armies devote to war?"²⁰ Having adopted this lifestyle of discipline and self-sacrifice, some Peace Communities are already active in training and sending out mediators and healers (compare: 'responsibility to prevent' and 'to rebuild'), and groups are engaged in observing the actions of governments in crisis situations and militarized areas around the world (witnessing by confronting evil instead of 'responsibility to react'). Some examples of such groups working chiefly in the English-speaking world (not all of which are expressly Christian by confession) include:

- Christian Peacemaker Teams
- Peace Brigades International
- Friends Peace Teams
- Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Israel and Palestine
- Peacemaker Training Institute of the Fellowship of Reconciliation
- Witness for Peace
- Nonviolent Peace Force
- Michigan Peace Team

What can we do? What should we do to care for the needy, to heal and to confront evil? The following list of practical actions is based on activities and ideas that are being actively pursued by Peace Communities, but which require the concerted ac-

¹⁸ Action by the community of faith is not understood to be the fulfilment of duties and responsibilities. Nor do we execute God's laws. Rather, we continue the fellowship of disciples instituted by Jesus. We respond to the example and the invitation of Jesus to join him in his lifestyle.

¹⁹ This is surely what J.H. Yoder meant when in an early document he spoke approvingly of the "social irresponsibility" of the Mennonite church; cf. Mark Th. Nation, "Demanding Signs, Desiring Wisdom or Preaching Christi Crucified? John H. Yoder's Contributions to a Peace Ethic", manuscript.

²⁰ This is the lead question of Christian Peacemaker Teams, which is based on a question raised by Ronald J. Sider at the Mennonite World Conference in Strasbourg, 1984.

tion of all the Churches. We call upon all member Churches of the WCC to join us in affirming the way of peace that Jesus Christ has commanded us to follow him and to work actively to build such communities.²¹ We take solace in the fact that the geographical spread and social scope of all the Churches make it possible for us to develop a network of Peace Communities to work for and build peace throughout the world. As the document on “Vulnerability and Security” of the Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations states: “the churches’ local presence and involvement at grass-roots level can mean that church bodies and leaders enjoy a special trust among the population in areas of conflict. ... If the churches take the service of reconciliation seriously, they can in the best case contribute to engendering or restoring trust between ethnic groups and nations, as we have seen in East Timor, South Africa and Guatemala, for example. This work of building peace starts before conflicts break out and has to continue long after they have been formally and politically resolved.”

Means by which the Churches can care for the needy (*responsibility to prevent*):

- Prevent conflict by networking with potential victims or perpetrators of genocide
- Establish an early warning system of the Churches, who should implement methods of hearing suffering persons in desperate situations
- Advocacy and lobbying for strengthening peace initiatives for prevention
- Promote peace activist ideas and training
- Encourage inter-cultural exchanges
- Inform the Churches about the arms industry and their distribution
- Warn about the growing militarisation of governments throughout the world
- Call for the separation of military action from any kind of humanitarian initiative
- Protest against arms sales

Means by which the Churches can heal (*responsibility to rebuild*):

- Adopt refugees
- Participate in the healing of wounds of past conflicts (trauma therapy)

It must be emphasized that the work of healing broken communities is also a preventive measure. As long as resentment, abject poverty and social disruption exist, seeds are being sown for future conflict.

²¹ This was also one of the recommendations of a recent international peace conference in Korea: „Wir müssen ein Netzwerk von Menschen aufbauen, um das Thema einer genuinen Sicherheit für die ganze Schöpfung als Grundvoraussetzung des Lebens zu erarbeiten. Nahrung, Obdach, Kleidung, Würde, Glauben, Volkszugehörigkeit, etc. müssen geschützt werden“; Internationales Friedenssymposium Deutschland – Japan – Korea: „Frieden und Menschliche Sicherheit. Globale Unsicherheit und Überwindung von Gewalt“, held from March 31-April 4, 2008, in Seoul, Korea.

Means by which the Churches can confront evil by peaceful means:

- Train peace workers to work in solidarity with endangered peoples and to document human rights abuses
- Train communities in nonviolent conflict resolution
- Remind politicians of the limits of their actions (e.g. fast action is not good action)

A final non-option

There is one final matter. R2P calls for violent intervention only as an *ultima ratio*, a last resort. Such action is to be sanctioned only when we have been forced into a corner, when we have no other option. As followers of Jesus, we acknowledge the possibility of being forced into a corner. Jesus was. It would be easy for us to say that these innocent, endangered peoples should emulate the final act of the earthly Jesus and allow themselves to be killed, blessing their murderers. But we refuse this idea resolutely. Our faith does not call for multiplying sacrificial offerings. We do not encourage passive acceptance of evil. We do not believe in numerous redemptive deaths any more than we believe in redemptive violence. True, God's peaceful action is pre-eminently revealed in Jesus' Passion. Whereas his disciples were open to the idea of using a sword to protect themselves, Jesus did not believe that violence was the way of God. What then of the situation where someone has been forced into a corner? The question is actually twofold. "What should I do if I were confronted by extreme violence and there was no way to protect myself without using force?" is a different question than "What should we do when we see that others are being confronted by extreme violence?" The first scenario is a matter of personal conviction. Here it is important that we never condemn the actions of those whose lives are in immediate danger – whether they act in peace or in violence.

But if we are honest about it, the speculative question about forced options is usually meant in another way. We want to know whether we are morally permitted to intervene when others are confronted with life-endangering situations. And here there are not merely two options, but a whole range of possible actions. If we believe that violence is not practicable and never serves the long-term good, then we can look to other means. Here I would call for the way of peace, because only peaceful means can truly transform such situations.

The Peace Community believes in action. Peaceful action is not inaction and non-violence is not a refusal to act. Jesus teaches loving one's enemies, a third way beyond the alternatives of passivity and violence. – Our recommendation to ourselves and to all the Churches is to relinquish the temptation to force a solution to an intrac-

table political problem. Let us confess to ourselves and to the world that we need to adopt the path of Jesus, overcoming enmity and violence through active non-violence. Let us direct our compassion toward vulnerable peoples, getting in the way when they become the victims of armed violence. The Churches ought to “act in solidarity with those in need of protection ... without the protection of weapons”.²² It has been argued that the use of force may be necessary, because of the overriding importance of caring for the vulnerable.²³ But if we do care for vulnerable peoples, then we ought to be prepared as a last resort to risk our own non-violent intervention. This was the way of Jesus, the embodiment of God’s humanitarian intervention.

²² See the document „S4C – Suffer for Christ: A response to the WCC paper concerning the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)”, formulated by the *Workshop for Peace Theology of “Church and Peace” and of the “International Fellowship of Reconciliation” (German Branch)*, Nov 17th, 2007. Signatories: Dr. Matthias Engelke, Dr. James Jakob Fehr, Ekke Fetkötter, Hanna-E. Fetkötter, Wolfgang Krauß, Marie-Noëlle von der Recke, Christoph Rinneberg.

²³ Here we observe an element of the theological just-war doctrine being revived in order to achieve a legitimation of the use of military force through the Churches.