

Distinguishing the Lover of Peace from the Pacifist, the Appeaser, and the Warmonger

James A. Harold

ABSTRACT How is one to distinguish a true lover of peace from a mere appeaser, a pacifist, and a warmonger? Distinguishing them can be sometimes confusing, as they will often appropriate each other's language. The criterion for the above distinction does not only lie in outward behavior, as knowledge of inward attitudes is also required. A right understanding of these attitudes and motivations involve at least an implicit grasp of the true nature of peace, which is investigated as something more than the mere absence of war, insofar as peace is primarily a work of two moral virtues: justice and charity. It is in the spirit of justice and charity that the true lover of peace must then distinguish—both in one's own life and with nations—between what can be ignored and / or forgiven, and what must be redressed. Furthermore, the distinction between the lover of peace and the pacifist, with the possibility of pacifism being a distinct tradition from just war philosophy, is investigated. The argument is made that pacifism should not be considered outside the context of just war because one needs that context to address if and who demands restitution.

KEYWORDS Appeaser; "Harvest of Justice"; Hobbes, Thomas; just war; non-violence; pacifism; peace; Tolkien, J. R. R; *Transformation in Christ*; Von Hildebrand, Dietrich; war; warmonger

One of the historical verities of growing up in the 1950's was that Neville Chamberlain was a crass appeaser and Winston Churchill was the rock and savior of Western civilization. I do admit to holding that position to this very day, even though I would be hard pressed to defend it if challenged. Sometimes I come across an argument contradicting such putative verities of my core worldview, and if I were to accept Pat Buchanan's thesis that Chamberlain was not an appeaser but a peacemaker and that

Churchill was not a savior but a warmonger, that acceptance would constitute one such large reorientation.

There is another alternative. Perhaps the very words *peacemaker* and *appeaser* do not refer to any real distinction whatsoever. Maybe these words are reducible to mere ideological labels we apply to those people we either like or dislike? Granted the cynicism of this idea, it is the impression I get from media people discussing both George Bush and Barack Obama. If the news media were suddenly to be blinded as to actual identity of these people and all they had to evaluate were their words and actions—or, in other words, if they only operated exclusively on the basis of principle and not personality—practically the whole media would become utterly paralyzed.

Naturally, I do not think the above terms are in themselves meaningless, and in this paper I want to investigate what I think are real differences between the lover of peace as opposed to the pacifist, the appeaser, and the warmonger on hard times using the rhetoric of peace. It is a timely topic in this age of war both in Afghanistan and Iraq. Practically everyone, including Churchill and George Bush, thinks of himself as a lover and defender of peace, even if they make war against other nations. Can we distinguish them, on the one side, from the warmonger who cynically uses the language of peace to obfuscate his aggression, and on the other side, from the appeaser who is willing to sacrifice freedom, country, and family for peace? What is it that characterizes a real lover of peace from a mere appeaser? Is the pacifist a genuine lover of peace?

I will not here attempt a historical analysis as to whether my naïve opinion or Buchanan's thesis is correct. My interest is not with history. Although I grant the utter importance of people doing historical research to try to avoid the mistakes of the past, I must admit to being more than a little cynical about their results. I grant that historians are a step up from the news media, but who isn't? Still, it seems more and more obvious as I get older that history is indeed written by the victorious. People have axes to grind, memories are selective, revisionist history is the norm. Things are typically not as they seem, and in fact the truth can be the diametrical opposite of prevailing opinion. For all I know, Buchanan could be right.

The focus in this paper is philosophical, not historical. It is so a-historical that I propose going, not to history, but to literature for my concrete examples to illustrate philosophical principles. The reason for this is two-fold: *first*, to avoid controversy. Although I really do think of Chamberlain as an appeaser and Churchill (or Lincoln) as our savior, I know of people of manifest good will, knowledge, and intelligence who think, like Buchanan,

the exact opposite. The *second* reason is that of clarity. The novelist is in the position to let the reader know what his characters' inner motivations and intentions really are. The guesswork is typically taken out. And with respect to great literature, there is a certain timeless quality to it, neutralizing my point about history being written by the victorious. Thus I will use as concrete examples for my points not real, historical figures, but rather characters from Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, a story already familiar to most people.

For example, consider the following passage from *The Two Towers*:

Suddenly another voice spoke, low and melodious, its very sound an enchantment. Those who listened unwarily to that voice could seldom report the words that they heard; and if they did, they wondered, for little power remained in them. Mostly they remembered only that it was a delight to hear the voice speaking, all that it said seemed wise and reasonable, and desire awoke in them by swift agreement to seem wise themselves.¹

The voice this passage describes is that of Saruman, up in his Tower at Orthanc after losing the battles of Helm's Deep and at Isengard against the ents. Saruman is now practically defenseless against Gandalf, Theoden, and the riders of Rohan. Thus he says, "I say, Theoden King: shall we have peace and friendship, you and I? It is ours to command."

And then Theoden answers:

"We will have peace," said Theoden at last thickly [because Saruman was casting a spell upon him] and with an effort. Several of the Riders cried out gladly. Theoden held up his hand. "Yes, we will have peace," he said, now in a clear voice, "we will have peace, when you and all your works have perished—and the works of your master to whom you would deliver us."²

Naturally, Tolkien lets us in on the secret, Saruman is no peacemaker. He rather is a warmonger fallen on hard times, who then cynically uses the language of peace to further his ends.

But let us say you do not know the story and you are asked to guess who—Saruman or Theoden—is the man of peace? Appearances are deceiving. Saruman appears to be the man of peace in this passage, but someone

1. J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1970), 234.

2. *Ibid.*, 237.

not knowing the story but knowing the ways of the world, would hesitate. He would know that men of strife and of war often cynically appropriate the language of peace. Conversely, the real lover of peace, like Theoden, will sometimes sound like a warmonger.

This then is the problem: the cynical warmonger on hard times and the lover of peace appropriate each other's words. How can we separate them out? Let us begin by first trying to understand something of the nature of peace. In fact, the nature of peace will be our key. Thomas Hobbes' famous definition of the relation between war and peace is this: that war is "a tract of time, wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known." Then he states, "all other time is peace."³ Thus for Hobbes peace is merely a negation, an absence of war.

There is a sense in which Hobbes is correct, and that meaning becomes clear when we distinguish two senses of the term *peace*. There is first of all a formal sense, such as when two combatants sue for peace because it is mutually advantageous for them to stop hostilities. Perhaps both sides hate each other every bit as much as before, but for other reasons they mutually sue for "peace." Notice that peace in this sense can be directly willed, inasmuch as both sides "sue" for it. It is this sense that Saruman appeals to in the above passage. It is also in this formal or structural meaning where Hobbes' definition of peace makes sense.

The problem with Hobbes is that he does not seem to notice a far deeper and more adequate notion of peace than this formal sense. Let us call this deeper sense not a formal but a material meaning of the term—that is, referring to an actual quality—which is the meaning addressed by Aquinas. He maintains that peace is not a mere absence, but rather is something essentially positive in nature, primarily the work of two virtues: justice and charity. He states that justice removes the obstacles of peace, while charity engenders peace as love by its very nature as a "unitive power."⁴

Everyone has a sense for the fact that love has the power of uniting people, whether in the love of chess or country or the love of Christ. This unity is not one that is volitionally imposed from without, but organically engendered from within, as the effect of giving the due response—of love—to that which is precious of itself. One effect or fruit of this love is peace, and this kind of peace cannot simply be manufactured or directly willed by the parties involved, as with "peace" in its formal (Hobbesian) sense.

3. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958), 1.13 [106–7].

4. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II q. 29 a. 3 ad 2.

Peace in this material sense cannot be directly willed at all, as it really is an organic fruit of justice and charity.

This last point explains why it is that everyone wants to be at peace within his or her soul, many do not and cannot possess it. That idea must be incomprehensible to someone like Hobbes, who simply identifies peace with its formal variety. But if peace has a deeper, more authentic sense as the fruit of justice and love, then it becomes understandable why it is that many cannot possess this virtue, despite their desire. They will have the virtue but not the necessary condition for its existence.

What is interesting about the essence of peace in its authentic (material) sense is that it will give us insight into the distinction between the lover of peace from the mere appeaser and pacifist, including also of course the warmonger fallen on hard times. To help me with this investigation of material peace, I will turn to the twentieth century philosopher, Dietrich von Hildebrand, who wrote his magnificent book, *Transformation in Christ*, while hiding from the Gestapo in Vichy France during the early days of World War II. Von Hildebrand was no pacifist, although he fought the Nazis with words and not guns, a fight for which he risked everything.

I will summarize his thought on the person of peace—in its authentic, material sense—in seven points, and then apply his points for distinguishing this kind of person from the appeaser and the pacifist—not from their words, which can be identical—but from their inner attitudes and motivations.

FIRST, the person of peace will have “a wholesome mistrust of himself.”⁵ If he is in a difficult situation with another person, he will try to separate out what is merely subjectively dissatisfying or upsetting to his pride from what is a real objective disorder. Only the latter situation—of there being a real objective disorder—is in the category of possibly needing redress, not the former.

SECOND, if there is a real objective wrong done against the person of peace, he will strive to distinguish what he can forgive and forget from what needs objectively to be redressed. Not every objective wrong needs redress. Sometimes the thing to do is simply strive to forgive and forget the slight.

This spirit of forgiveness is not automatic or natural, insofar as the competing and contrary spirit of resentment comes more readily to the victim of injustice. Thus, the spirit of forgiveness must typically be a work of con-

5. Dietrich von Hildebrand, *Transformation in Christ: Your Path to Salvation* (Manchester, NH: Sophia, 1990), 339.

quering ourselves. Even though this spirit refers primarily to an inward attitude, it is crucial for the next point, which involves confronting a person who has been unjust to us, for “we cannot reproach him to good purpose—that is, without provoking strife, unless we have ourselves attained to that serene attitude cleansed of all impulsive resentment.”⁶

THIRD, if the wrong is such that a redress is objectively called for by justice and by the nature of the situation, he will not simply pretend that nothing has happened. For example, if there is some grave injustice involving some third party under the responsibility and protection of the peaceful person, he cannot rightly simply walk away. He must confront the evil and seek redress.

Here the true person of peace is distinguished from both the appeaser and some pacifists, who, out of laziness, cowardice, love of comfort, or faintness of heart clings to outward peace. But “an attitude of silence and of letting things pass which in some circumstances has the appearance of consent and sometimes actually results in consent—can never derive from a love for true peace. For the real value of peace resides in being an outgrowth of love and an expression of genuine harmony.”⁷

The character that comes to mind here is the lethargy of Theoden before he was awakened by Gandalf. That Theoden was in effect a pacifist all right, and extremely disordered as he refused to defend his own people. The reader is relieved when this same Theoden later confronts his nemesis Saruman at Isengard, saying, “You are a liar, Saruman, and a corrupter of men’s hearts. You hold out your hand to me, and I perceive only a finger of the claw of Mordor. Cruel and cold! Even if your war on me was just—as it was not, for were you ten times as wise you would have no right to rule me and mine for your own profit as you desired.”⁸

Thus, the person of peace realizes that there are certain cases in which we are bound to defend our rights and the rights of others. There are times in which a warmonger needs to be stopped.

FOURTH, the person of peace will look upon the conflict with another from the perspective of God’s will and of objective right. He will not enjoy the wrangle, even if he finds himself in one, and will remain inwardly a lover of peace.

The Noble Faramir speaks to these last two points when he states:

6. *Ibid.*, 341.

7. *Ibid.*, 350.

8. Tolkien, *Two Towers*, 237.

“War must be, while we defend our lives against a destroyer who would devour all [referring to the third point: confronting evil]; but I do not [referring here to the fourth sense] love the bright sword for its sharpness, nor the arrow for its swiftness, nor the warrior for his glory. I love only that which they defend: the city of the Men of Númenor [Minas Tirith] and I would have her loved for her memory, her ancients, her beauty, and her present wisdom. Not feared, save as men may fear the dignity of a man, old and wise.”⁹

FIFTH, von Hildebrand states, “We must guard against placing ourselves on a level with the adversary and from being infected with his spirit and morality. It must be an unequal fight—with a sharp contrast between his and our motives, principles, and methods. For our fight for the kingdom of God is by the same token a fight for true peace, whereas the fight of the children of the world is a fight for something that essentially implies strife and disharmony.”¹⁰

SIXTH, as was already noted, true peace has the nature of a fruit, a fruit that comes from being in a right relation to the world of value, and especially of God. Now it can be added that if someone is not yet in a right relation to the world of values, and especially if he has not yet discovered the Living God, then he should not expect to be at peace. If such people appear to be at peace, this suggests that they are superficially satisfied by the trinkets the world has to offer. They have not yet discovered with Augustine that man should be restless until he rests in God. Augustine’s own lack of peace, his restlessness and immanent disharmony with the world, was actually a great good for him because it led him on to search for God.

FINALLY (SEVENTH), what characterizes the true person of peace, as opposed to these shoddy imitations, is the experience of “being sheltered” that comes from a soul that rests in the living God. This experience of “being sheltered” is in turn contrasted “to the metaphysical precariousness of the state of man left to himself, to the anxiety that must fill everyone who draws the full consequences from the concept of a world without God, to the fearful unrest oppressing one who has awakened to the metaphysical situation of man unreconciled with his Creator—and knows “how terrible it is to fall into the hands of the living God.”¹¹

9. *Ibid.*, 355.

10. Von Hildebrand, *Transformation*, 353.

11. *Ibid.*, 364–5. Cf. Hebrews 10:31.

In this light one sees how the appeaser and especially the warmonger fallen on hard times cannot be at peace, despite whatever they say and whatever agreements they make with others, because in the end peace comes as a gift of God, of being sheltered in God and by God. And if this experience is missing, if the conditions for the possibility of this experience are missing, then there is an immanent disharmony in a person's soul and no genuine peace, whether or not there are real enemies against these people in the world. Such people will even be at war with themselves without knowing the root of their disquiet, looking for even phantom enemies to explain their unrest.

In contrast, the person of peace will fear God. He will look upon the world from the point of view of the hierarchy of values, and consider each situation from that point of view, rejoicing in the good. The good will not be for him some rhetorical talking point, but something serious and real. He will not be looking for enemies because he will inwardly be at peace, insofar as he has the experience of being sheltered in God.

So far our primary focus has been on the contrast between the true lover of peace with the appeaser and the warmonger fallen on hard times. Now I want to turn to the distinction between the pacifist and the true lover of peace.

Specifically, I want to contrast the von Hildebrand's vision of peace with American Catholic Bishops' document in 1993, entitled "The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace." In that document the Bishops tout pacifism to such a point that they explicitly and thematically speak of two distinct traditions: what they call "non-violence" and the just war tradition. They distinguish their idea of non-violence from pacifism. They identify pacifism with being "passive about injustice and the defense of the rights of others." In contrast, the Bishops' approach to non-violence is active, including "dialogue, negotiations, protests, strikes, boycotts, civil disobedience and civilian resistance."¹²

Besides its active nature, what else does their term *non-violence* imply? And what is the relation between this idea and just-war? Here it seems they have two interpretations, one contradictory to the notion of just-war and the other not. The contradictory and, I think, more extreme interpretation refers to those who "object in principle to the use of force." The less

12. American Catholic Bishops, "The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace," last modified November 17, 1993, <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/the-harvest-of-justice-is-sown-in-peace.cfm>, I B.

extreme interpretation is as follows: “In situations of conflict, our constant commitment ought to be, as far as possible, to strive for justice through nonviolent means.”¹³ Naturally, it should hardly come as a surprise that this second interpretation is itself thoroughly grounded in the just-war tradition.

Besides distinguishing pacifism from their own position of non-violence, there is a second distinction worth mentioning, although not discussed by the Bishops’ document. There are, on the one hand, moral obligations that apply to all men and women. Everyone has the obligation to obey, for instance, the Ten Commandments. On the other hand, there are also “evangelical counsels,” such as poverty, chastity and obedience, which are special obligations that are appropriate to some people but not to others. Non-violence is not formally one of these counsels, but perhaps it has something in common with them, insofar as it involves a more perfect following of Christ that is appropriate for some and not for others. For instance, it is appropriate for people in religious life to take a vow of virginity, which it is obviously not appropriate for those in married life. It is also not appropriate for a family man with responsibilities for the care of his children and spouse to take a vow of poverty. Similarly, it is not appropriate for a husband and father or someone in the military or police to take a vow of non-violence, when they have real responsibilities to others. Thus the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, “Legitimate defense can be not only a right but a grave duty for someone responsible for another’s life. Preserving the common good requires rendering the unjust aggressor unable to inflict harm. To this end, those holding legitimate authority have the right to repel by armed force aggressors against the civil community entrusted to their charge.”¹⁴ Notice that for those people with that kind of responsibility the *Catechism* does not use the language of morally elective acts, but of moral obligation.

It follows then that non-violence has something in common with the evangelical counsels, as it is an invitation extended to those who do not have special responsibilities to others, and therefore are free to follow Christ in these more perfect ways. Thus non-violence is in contrast to the virtue of peace, which is a requirement for all men to foster by willing the necessary conditions for its achievement.

The American Bishops, however, do not speak of non-violence as an

13. Ibid.

14. “Catechism of the Catholic Church,” last modified November 4, 2003, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P7Z.HTM, #2265.

evangelical counsel-like way (at least in that document), nor do they speak of the moral virtue of peace. Their idea is of non-violence as a co-equal and even competing tradition to the just war philosophy that is at least as old as St. Augustine. They state,

Despite areas of convergence between a nonviolent ethic and a just-war ethic, however, we acknowledge the diverse perspectives within our Church on the validity of the use of force. Many believe just-war thinking remains valid because it recognizes that force may be necessary in a sinful world, even as it restrains war by placing strict moral limits on when why and how this force may be used. Others object in principle to the use of force, and these principled objections to the just-war tradition are sometimes joined with other criticisms that just-war criteria have been ineffective in preventing unjust acts of war in recent decades and that these criteria cannot be satisfied under the conditions of modern warfare.¹⁵

There are a number of criticisms that can be made of this passage. FIRST, if by pacifism and non-violence one means to “object in principle to the use of force,” which I identified above as the more extreme interpretation of their position, then we are not dealing with a second tradition but with an error. The soldier and the policeman, as well as the father and husband, have serious moral responsibilities and obligations to protect and defend those who are entrusted to them. It is morally wrong for such persons simply to walk away from those responsibilities.

While a morally elective act is good if performed, but one is not rendered guilty if not performed, a morally obligatory act is good if performed, but a person is rendered morally guilty if not performed. The second is the kind of action—that is, an instance of a strict moral obligation—at stake with those who have responsibilities to defend others. It is, in other words, a fleeing from a “grave duty,” as the *Catechism* puts it. In fact, this radical interpretation even conflicts with the Bishops’ own document, when they state, “Such obligations [for nonviolent alternatives] do not detract from a state’s right *and duty* to defend against aggression as a last resort” [italics added].¹⁶ How can a state have a duty to defend against aggression when one objects in principle to the use of force?

SECOND, there is a methodological point worth making: one tradition is better than two because with two you have the further problem of working

15. Bishops, “Harvest,” I B.

16. Ibid.

out how they each relate to the other, or, in other words, uniting them into one intelligible system. The problem will not go away with a simple declaration of a “tension” between “the two streams of the tradition.”¹⁷ Granted this tension there is still the necessity to see how both fit together, as two aspects of one vision of the reality of peace and war. For example, work towards a single vision can be accomplished by pointing out how non-violence works analogous to an evangelical counsel, how there is the need even for those in a conflict to be inwardly a lover of peace and to not enjoy the conflict, and how everyone has the responsibility to settle disputes peacefully. There is nothing here that conflicts with just-war philosophy. In the end, the very idea of two traditions is unnecessary because there is not two traditions but one: an understanding of the nature of peace and war as a synthetic whole.

THIRD, instead of the wilderness of “two traditions,” where there is tension all right but little insight into what a person concretely ought to do, it is far more efficacious in a situation where there is an affront—either towards some individual person or (analogously) to a nation—for one to go through the above von Hildebrandian approach on peace. That is, to look cold-bloodily at one’s own motivations. Is the offense against me justified? It may very well be justified, however unpleasant it is for me to admit. If so, there is no injustice and not even an occasion for me to forgive, much less the call for redress. Now let us assume that the affront refers to a real injustice, does it call for redress? Perhaps the injustice is such that it can simply be forgiven and forgotten, and so on. There are, however, occasions in which this is not possible, especially given a person’s responsibilities to others, and in such cases neither pacifism nor non-violence is appropriate.

With this analysis of peace, there is nothing of this two traditions idea. On the contrary, every man is obliged to love peace, to yearn for it, to be restless if not possessing it, and every man in certain circumstances has the obligation to defend the innocent and those for whom one is responsible.

FINALLY (FOURTH), there is the problematic point—to say the least—of blaming the just war tradition for not “preventing unjust acts,” which is akin to blaming the Ten Commandments for all the follies of humanity. In fact, now with this new tradition of non-violence, does anyone seriously think that the propensities towards evil in human nature will appreciably go down? If the evil of the world does not go down, can we then justly blame the non-violence tradition? If the Bishops complain that non-violence really is an old tradition—it is, after all, supposed to be a *tra-*

17. Ibid.

dition—how come it escapes blame? If someone responds by saying that the reason the evil of the world does not go down is because people do not live this philosophy, the very same thing can be said about just-war.

While there are many true aspects to a philosophy of non-violence, those aspects can be brought out and highlighted when seen only in a relation to just war and our obligations towards others. Thus what we really have here is not a tension between two distinct traditions as a relation between war and peace that needs to be understood. Such an understanding will have the effect of uniting both approaches into a single vision. But instead of seeing how just war and peace co-exist, the Bishops seem to want to promote their trendy vision of non-violence. To the extent they do this outside of the context where just wars occur, they open themselves to the charge of unreality and naiveté. For every Gandhi in India and Karol Wojtyła in Poland, there are ten thousand martyrs. One can easily imagine the result of the Bishops' approach of "dialogue, negotiations, protests," etc., directed to people having the worldview of a Hitler or Stalin. Against those people, individuals adopting the Bishops' approach typically end up either dead or in death camps.

It seems to me the kind of evil the Bishops' document presupposes is one that does not imply death camps and genocide. Somehow there is a severe disconnect between those horrific realities and the remedies of dialogue, negotiations and protests. I would feel less queasy about their philosophy of non-violence if the realities of evil were seen more squarely in the face, as well as the price to be exacted in giving this kind of evil a free hand (beyond of course dialogue, negotiations, and protests).

I do not think we can have a discussion of pacifism independent from an analysis like von Hildebrand's seven points concerning the nature of peace. A responsible pacifism is only appropriate within that context and is especially appropriate when baptized and set within the conditions of an evangelical council. It is only appropriate when one is free from the real obligations that persons have to each other.

Naturally, there are worse things than being a martyr, but there are also worse things than war too. It is one thing to choose for one's self the path of martyrdom, it is quite another to choose that path for someone else.

Despite my cynicism towards journalists and historians, I need not be cynical of the idea of a peacemaker and the real differences between the peacemaker and appeasers, pacifists and warmongers on hard times using the rhetoric of peace.

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