

## Christian Ethics in Fourth Generation Warfare: the Applicability of Christian Ethics in the Face of the Dilemmas of this Model of Conflict

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**ABSTRACT:** Christian ethics can be applied to solve the ethical dilemmas of war and since decision-making in armed conflicts is permeated by these dilemmas with problematic solutions, this work aims to verify the degree of applicability of Christian ethics in dealing with the ethical dilemmas of Fourth Generation warfare. Thus, aware of the importance of adapting the decisions of the war according to the values of the nation, attitudes that fit as acceptable according to Christian ethics are opportune, given that a large portion of the Brazilian population is greatly influenced by Christianity and its moral conduct presented. In this way, a bibliographical review will be carried out of theorists who address the theme of Christian ethics in war, such as Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and, above all, Geisler, as well as articles that fall within the theme of Fourth Generation armed conflicts. In order to achieve its objective, the paper uses a qualitative approach to the nuances of Fourth Generation conflicts. Next, the characteristics of Christian ethics and their relationship with armed conflicts are highlighted, emphasizing the three major currents of thought according to Geisler: activism, pacifism and selectivism. In addition, there is a brief overview of the International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Then, the objective of this work will be to verify the degree of applicability of Christian ethics to the ethical dilemmas characteristic of such conflicts. Finally, it is worth emphasizing that, in order to achieve this objective, the degree of applicability of the thinking of each current seen by Geisler in the ethical dilemmas of fourth generation conflicts will be considered individually, in order to reach the conclusion.

**KEYWORDS:** Christian ethics, Fourth generation war, just war.

### INTRODUCTION

The study of ethics is a branch of philosophy known as moral philosophy whose emphasis is on the study of moral behavior. Thus, *"Ethics is the theory of the moral behavior of men in society. In other words, it is the science of a specific way in which men behave in society"* (Vázquez, 1997, p. 23). It is therefore appropriate to consider ethics as being present in all our actions, reflecting values and identity, and it also determines our perception of ourselves, whether as individuals, cultures or institutions (Canada, 2006).

However, for the study of ethics, moral philosophy addresses a variety of thinkers and philosophers, each one throughout history, with their perspective on ethics that differ from one another. MacIntyre (2003) offers an overview of the history of moral philosophy, from Homeric times to the 20th century. The main thinkers covered in his work include Plato (428-348 BC) who discusses the nature of justice, Aristotle (384-322 BC.) exploring virtue ethics, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) with an emphasis on moral duty and the obligation to follow universal rules, Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) with utilitarian ethics, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) who brought criticism to traditional morality, G.E. Moore (1873-1958) with deontological ethics and a defense of ethical intuitionism, as well as other philosophers.

Thus, with MacIntyre (2003), the wide range of the study of ethics is evident, that is, there is no precise consensus on ideal ethical behavior, such a judgment changes according to several variables, be it the thinker, the time, the culture or another unknown. However, for the analysis contained in this work, the ethical line to be considered will be Christian ethics, which consists of a set of moral principles and values based on biblical teachings (Azpitarte, 1995).

In order to do this, it is necessary to check the value of focusing on Christian ethics in order to carry out a study. This justifies focusing on Christian ethics, since Christianity is the most widely adopted religion in Brazil (Pestana, 2021). In other words, even though according to the 1988 Constitution Brazil is a secular country (Brasil, 1988), Brazilian ethical behavior is greatly influenced by Christianity (Gurgel, 2016). This is relevant because it is interesting that military actions are justified and accepted

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by the national community, since the course of a war conflict can be determined by the acceptance of the conflict by the population of the nation involved (Pereira; Garrido, 2022). In addition, there is no totally correct or fully ethical solution to an ethical dilemma, the measures considered ethical vary according to the perspective of thought employed, so the choice of Christian ethics is justified because, as already mentioned, it has great relevance in Brazil, that is, it is widely used in Brazilian value judgments, which motivates the analysis according to this aspect of ethics.

On the other hand, Fourth Generation warfare is highlighted in this paper because it is a style of conflict that aims to affect the legitimacy of the state, i.e. the non-state enemy seeks to discredit state actions (Lind, 2005). In this context, it is valid for the government to take actions that are well accepted by its own nation in order to mitigate actions aimed at such delegitimization. Thus, the work sees the validity of the theme in the Brazilian context and, in turn, the relevance lies in verifying the applicability of Christian ethics, as it can reduce the delegitimization suffered by the state before its people.

It is also worth noting that this work does not seek to affirm that the state's political decisions are governed by a religious perspective; after all, Brazil is a secular state (Brasil, 1988). But knowing that the legitimacy of the state is a target in Fourth Generation wars, state actions must have a certain degree of moral approval from the nation, so checking whether the action to be taken would fit the nation's ethical context is valid. This point also justifies the topic addressed.

Still on the context presented, the plausibility of the theme with Human Rights can be verified, given the dialogue with Christian ethics, especially in what presents the International Humanitarian Law (IHL), in which actors have responsibilities inherent to their condition as combatants, either in what concerns the *Jus ad bellum*, as the right to go to war or even, regarding the limitations of the means and methods of war, in the context *Jus in bello*.

Finally, it should be noted that the general objective of this work is to verify the degree of applicability of Christian ethics in dealing with the ethical dilemmas of Fourth Generation warfare. Consequently, it will answer: to what extent can Christian ethics be present in the solution of ethical dilemmas in Fourth Generation wars?

In order to achieve the general objective, the following specific objectives will be pursued: SO1. Identify the characteristics of Fourth Generation warfare;

SO2. Conceptualize Christian ethics and its relationship with armed conflicts;

SO3. Verify the degree of application of each current of Christian ethics analyzed by Geisler, individually, in the dilemmas of the Fourth Generation War.

## **1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **1.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF FOURTH GENERATION WARFARE**

Fourth-generation warfare is a concept that was developed by William S. Lind together with four officers from the United States Army and Marine Corps. Lind first developed the model of the first three generations and then observed the emergence of a fourth generation which he subsequently addressed (Lind, 2005).

According to Lind (2005), the Fourth Generation absorbs the characteristics of decentralization and initiative already present in the Third Generation; however, the generation in question highlights these aspects more drastically. In this conflict, the state no longer has a monopoly on war; non-state opponents such as al-Qaeda, Hamas and Hezbollah, among others, will be observed.

According to Lind (2005, p. 14), another point to consider about Fourth Generation warfare is the cultural issue: "*Fourth Generation warfare is also marked by a return to a world of cultures, not merely countries, in conflict*"

Finally, a major difference in Fourth Generation warfare, which separates it from a purely irregular conflict, is the question of legitimacy. In other words, apart from the cultural issue and the presence of non-state actors, the focus of this type of combat is not on the troops themselves, but on affecting the legitimacy of the state's actions. In this context, actions whose effect is psychological are of greater value than tactical combat actions, which shows the relevance of the media in this modality, which is sometimes an instrument used to affect legitimacy (Lind, 2005).

### **1.2 CHRISTIAN ETHICS: CONCEPT AND FOUNDATION**

Christian ethics are conceptualized as moral principles and values based on biblical texts. These precepts aim to guide a life in the pursuit of holiness, or moral perfection, achieved by divine grace or human effort (Azpitarte, 1995).

In the Old Testament, the Ten Commandments, found in the book of Exodus, establish a comprehensive set of guidelines to guide the behavior and interactions of Christians. In a nutshell, these commandments emphasize the importance of paying reverence to God, the need to respect life, property and interpersonal ties, and the importance of avoiding morally wrong attitudes. In addition, the Ten Commandments prohibit idolatry, blasphemy, working on Saturdays, dishonoring parents, murder, adultery, theft, false witness and covetousness (Bíblia, 1969).

In other books of the Old Testament, prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel clearly pleaded for justice and compassion on behalf of the oppressed, while also condemning the abuse of power and corruption (Bíblia, 1969).

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In the New Testament, Jesus Christ's teachings on love and mercy form the basis of Christian principles. The Sermon on the Mount, recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, is considered one of Jesus' most essential lessons, where he emphasizes the importance of humility, kindness and compassion. In addition, Jesus emphasized the relevance of social justice, caring for the less fortunate and treating others the way we would like to be treated (Bíblia, 1969).

In addition to the Holy Bible, some philosophers and scholars contributed to the development of Christian ethics. Agostinho (1995) understands that man is endowed with free will and there is good and evil, so he becomes responsible for his actions and has the obligation to use this freedom to live a virtuous life, otherwise he commits moral evil. Aquino (2004) states that the virtuous man, who does not live according to his passions, is ethical and consequently lives according to God's will. More contemporarily, Geisler (2006) understands the fundamental importance of having ethical values to guide conduct in a pluralistic society, and therefore promotes a work that deals with appropriate Christian conduct for various types of dilemma such as self-love, war, sexual relations, abortion, euthanasia and others.

Thus, it is possible to conclude that Christian ethics is a branch of ethics with a great deal of foundation, since it is not only contained in religious books but has been analyzed by philosophers since the patristic, scholastic and medieval eras, and practical applications have also been presented by contemporary scholars. This is how Christian ethics is characterized.

### **1.3 CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND ARMED CONFLICTS**

The question of Christian ethics in armed conflicts has been addressed by some Christian philosophers. Agostinho (1990) comments on the miseries of war. For him, war is often a result of sin and human imperfection, and there may be circumstances in which war is justified in order to defend the greater good and justice.

Aquino (2001) deals with the issue of war in his works and Oliveira (2020) makes a brief analysis of just war based on the philosopher's works, giving the cases of the lawfulness of war for him. In order to be just, war is based on three conditions. Firstly, the war must be declared by the head of state, i.e. a private person cannot wage war. Secondly, there must be a just cause, i.e. the people attacked must deserve it through some fault of their own. Thirdly, the intention of the belligerents must be right: *"War will be just if, in retaliating for the offense or insult committed by the adversary, it aims at peace. Peace is the desired end"* (Oliveira, 2020, p. 180).

Now, in more recent studies on Christian ethics in war, we find Norman L. Geisler as one of the great scholars on the subject. Unlike the comprehensive writings of Aquino (2004) and Agostinho (1990), Geisler (2006) has a vision that seeks to synthesize Christian ethical thinking in war, objectively identifying the Christian stance on sensitive issues in armed conflicts. In turn, Geisler's thinking needs to be explored in greater depth, since this work aims to analyze it mainly from his perspective.

In short, Geisler argues that there are basically three Christian positions on war: activism, pacifism and selectivism. These positions are discussed below.

#### **1.3.1 Activism**

In this line of thinking, Christians should take part in all wars, since they have a duty to obey their government. The biblical arguments that support this point are the texts that refer to absolute obedience to the government, which state that every government is established by God, so disobeying the ruler's order would be tantamount to disobeying God himself. In addition, philosophical arguments can be found in Plato that converge on unrestricted obedience to the government, even if it is an unjust government (Geisler, 2006).

To illustrate, the most relevant biblical texts that support activism are cited: *"that the Most High has dominion over the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever he wishes"* (Dn 4:25), *"to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's"* (Mt 22:21), *"you would have no authority over me unless it were given to you from above"* (Jo 19:11), *"Remind them to be subject to every human institution for the Lord's sake"* (1 Pe 2:13), *"be subject to every human institution for the Lord's sake"* (1 Pe 2:13):11), *"Remind them to be subject to those who rule, to the authorities"* (Tt 3:1), *"Be subject to every human institution for the Lord's sake"* (1 Pe 2:13), *"Let every man be subject to the higher authorities; for there is no authority except from God; and the authorities that exist were instituted by Him. So whoever opposes authority resists the ordinance of God; and those who resist will bring condemnation on themselves"* (Rm 13:1-2).

Finally, some of the philosophical arguments that Geisler (2006) points out will be exemplified, all based on Plato's texts: the government must be obeyed because it is the father of man, i.e. it is under the patronage of the government that the individual was brought into the world; the government must be obeyed because it is the educator of man, i.e. the government is the author of man's education; the governed has pledged himself to obey his government, i.e. the consent of the governed to make that government his government, by pledging allegiance to it, obliges him to obey its laws or suffer the consequences.

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### **1.3.2 Pacifism**

Another current of Christian thought is the pacifist view, which argues that it is never right to take part in war. Here, biblical and social arguments will be found. The arguments based on the religious book are basically based on the Decalogue's restriction on murder. On the other hand, the non-biblical argument will be based on the harm that war causes to society (Geisler, 2006).

The arguments supported by the Bible are divided into three points by Geisler (2006). The first is the restriction of the Decalogue, which clearly states that one must not kill and, in turn, the wars portrayed by the Holy Book itself are not ordered by God, in fact, they portray a more barbaric state of humanity or they were wars used as theocratic instruments in the hands of God, or they were a "permissive" will of God, not his full will. The second would be that resisting evil by force is a sin, "*Do not resist the wicked*" (Mt 5:39), at which point pacifism is saying that it is wrong to use physical force to take lives in order to resist evil. The third and final point is that public and private ethics are the same, referring to Dietrich Bonhoeffer (2023), Geisler (2006) states that official duties are the same as private ones, i.e. fulfilling the duty of the state does not exempt one from fulfilling the private duty of not killing, just as King David was punished for his sins as a monarch in the Bible (Bíblia, 1969).

Finally, the social argument is based mainly on the evils of war. Geisler's (2006) first point is that war is based on the evil of greed, and using Plato again, he states that all wars are fought for the love of money, noting that this statement is in line with some biblical passages: "*Whence wars and contentions among you? From where, if not from the pleasures of your flesh? You covet, and have nothing; you kill and envy, and can obtain nothing; you fight and make war*" (Tg 4:2), "*For the love of money is the root of all evil*" (1 Tim 6:10). Second, war results in many evils, which is clearly noted, since "*there is perhaps no way to estimate the sorrow, pain, and even cruelty and torture usually associated with war*" (Geisler, 2006, p. 124). Thirdly, war creates more war, since "*No war to date has really left the world war-free*" (Geisler, 2006, p. 124). In short, the pacifist argues that war is both unbiblical and against society.

### **1.3.3 Selectivism**

Geisler (2006) outlined the last point to be considered, that it is right to participate in some wars. In this argument, the basis is that selectivism is actually a synthesis of activism and pacifism, because, to a certain extent, activism and pacifism are correct and selectivism arises to limit the two strands to the point where they intersect.

The first point is that some wars are unjust and should not be fought, and to reach this conclusion we can see activism being countered in some biblical passages, such as the three young men who disobeyed the king's commandment requiring idolatry, or Daniel who broke laws forbidding prayer to God, or the disobedience of the apostles regarding the prohibition of evangelism, or the refusal of the midwives to the Egyptian king, allowing the life of the Hebrew boys, among others, that is, it can be concluded from the sacred scriptures that the government should not always be obeyed (Bíblia, 1969). "*The morally unjustifiable commandment was not ordained by God*" (Geisler, 2006, p. 125). The Bible, then, makes clear the fact that one should not always obey the government.

Secondly, some wars are just, they must be fought. The Bible portrays several moments when acts of violence are ordered by God: Sometimes God delegates the authority to take a human life to other human beings. This was clearly the case with the power of capital punishment given to Noah after the flood (Gn 9:6), which was reiterated by Moses in the law for Israel (Ex 21:26), and which was reaffirmed by Paul as being the power residing in the emperor of Rome (Rm 13:4), and was even implied by Jesus before Pilate (Jo 19:11). It is clear from these passages that every government, even apart from the theocratic government of Israel, was given divine authority to take the life of one of its citizens guilty of a capital crime (Geisler, 2006, p. 125).

Thus, pacifism, in which it is claimed that no human life should ever be taken, is opposed. Note that the prohibition is against murder, not against taking lives. War in defense of the innocent is not murder, and neither is war against an unjust aggressor. The total pacifist seems to adapt the biblical texts in favor of his point of view because he disregards the passages in which God demands that the lives of evil men be taken in order to defend the innocent, assuming that any act of taking a life would be murder (Geisler, 2006).

On the other hand, there are also moral arguments that support selectivism, which Geisler (2006) divides into two topics. Firstly, both pacifism and activism are moral escapes, i.e. complete pacifism or total activism is an easy way out of a difficult ethical position. Secondly, evil must be resisted: pacifism is based on the premise that evil must not be resisted by force, but in reality, it would be morally unjustifiable not to resist evil, for example, allowing murder when one could have prevented it is an evil. Still on the second topic, not only is pacifism deconstructed in this argument, but so is activism, because blind obedience, without resistance, can contribute to an evil cause: "*Many who followed Hitler in his attempt at genocide came to realize the evil of blind activism*" (Geisler, 2006, p. 129).

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Thus, it is possible to conclude the synthesis of selectivism. This strand avoids the dilemma of not getting involved of pacifism, as well as the idolatrous patriotism of activism. Selective thinking commits itself to resisting evil whenever it encounters it, using whatever appropriate means are available. If that means taking up arms to confront an evil aggressor, this current is willing to do so. Moreover, since selectivism is committed to actively defending what is morally right, it is a more challenging position than that of non-selectivists. It is more challenging because it is actively dedicated to fighting evil with whatever force is appropriate to do so, resisting spiritual evil with spiritual force, political evil with political force and even military evil with military force. Moreover, selectivism is more complex because the individual must discern, in the light of the moral law, which wars are just and which are not. This is certainly not an easy task (Geisler, 2006).

### **1.4 INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW (IHL)**

The International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is a set of international rules intended to be applied in armed conflicts, which aim to limit the methods and means employed for humanitarian reasons. With this in mind, the IACD promotes these principles to guide the application of this branch of law: that of distinction which deals with the distinction between combatants and non-combatants, that of limitation which limits the choice of means to cause harm, that of proportionality which seeks to prevent the damage and suffering from being greater than the gains, that of military necessity in which military needs do not justify inhumane conduct and that of humanity which prohibits causing suffering to people and destruction of property if such acts are not necessary to force the enemy to surrender (Brasil, 2011).

The sources used to draw up the IHL are generally international conventions. The first convention, the Geneva Convention, focuses on the protection of victims of armed conflicts. The second, the Hague Convention, establishes the rights and duties of belligerents during military operations. Finally, the third, the New York Convention, aims to complement the two previous ones by covering aspects of both The Hague and Geneva and inserts a new actor, the UN (Brasil, 2011).

Finally, when it comes to the right to take part in hostilities, states have responsibilities and must pay attention to an issue of great relevance in the field of conflicts. The norms of the IHL (*Jus in bello*) must be respected, regardless of the legality of the war (*Jus ad bellum*). The *Jus in bello* brings up reflections on the law applicable in war, being a branch of Public International Law, composed of rules that seek to limit the use of violence in armed conflicts, while the *Jus ad bellum* seeks a reflection on the circumstances in which States can use military force against others, that is, it regulates the circumstances in which States can initiate a conflict (Souza, 2017).

## **2 METHOD**

In order to achieve what is intended in this work, a bibliographical review will be carried out by means of a systematic analysis of the literature of authors who deal with the subject of Fourth Generation warfare, Christian ethics, Christian ethics in warfare and the International Humanitarian Law.

The research carried out in this scientific paper was exploratory. According to Gil (2008), this research aims to make the problem to be researched more familiar, as well as to clarify or substantiate hypotheses, which is very much in line with the objective of the work.

In the first part, the aim is to identify the characteristics of fourth-generation warfare so that the context in which Christian ethics will be applied is clear. In the second part, the issue of Christian ethics will be addressed, above all by conceptualizing and grounding it. This will make it clear what underpins Christian ethics and what it refers to. Finally, after discussing Christian ethics and fourth-generation warfare, the work will focus on verifying the application of Christian ethics in this modern style of combat. Then, the third part of the paper will show the three strands of Christian ethical thinking applied to war (activism, pacifism and selectivism) and after that, through bibliographical analysis, with a qualitative approach, the degree of applicability of Christian ethics in irregular warfare will be verified.

As far as the design is concerned, the research was bibliographical, which according to Gil (2008), this model is characterized by the use of ordered material, mainly books and scientific articles, which allows the researcher greater access to broader phenomena, thus adopting this practice for the development of the scientific article.

## **3 DISCUSSION**

### **3.4 CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND FOURTH GENERATION WARFARE**

Given Lind's (2005) definition of Fourth Generation warfare, one can see how crucial the morality of actions is for preserving legitimacy. In this type of conflict, non-state actors promote a series of actions so that the parties involved are not clearly defined, i.e. identifying who the legitimate combatants are and who the non-combatants are can be an almost impossible task (Thornton, 2007).

In order to affect the legitimacy of the state, various strategies are employed. Keeping troops in civilian areas and widely

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publicizing the suffering of non-combatants caused by the state in the media are some of the techniques used to affect legitimacy. Therefore, according to Hammes, Fourth Generation wars are similar to insurgencies that *"use all available networks - political, economic, social and military - to convince enemy policymakers that their strategic objectives are unattainable or too costly compared to the perceived benefits"* (Hammes, 2005, p. 190).

When we consider the rapid dissemination in the media, the ethical issue becomes even more complicated. Social media and traditional media have the power to shape public perception of conflicts and actions taken. Shocking images, videos and instant reports can create a narrative that often does not reflect the complexity of the ethical dilemmas faced on the ground (Jacques, 2012). The pressure of public opinion, based on often partial and decontextualized information, can force those involved to take measures that may not be the most ethical, but are perceived as politically necessary. The search for public approval and the fear of reprisals can influence the decisions made by military and political leaders in conflict situations (Mukherjee; Koren, 2019).

Therefore, in the face of such difficulty in adopting ethical stances, Geisler's (2006) strands of activism, pacifism and selectivism will be used to verify the degree to which Christian ethics is applicable in Fourth Generation conflicts.

### **3.4.1 The application of Christian activist ethics**

As we have seen, activist thinking affirms that all wars are just, and obedience to authority takes precedence over any ethical judgments, i.e. it would be ethical to obey what has been determined by the ruler (Geisler, 2006). Despite a brief dialogue with Thomas Aquinas, when he states that one of the conditions for war to be morally Christian is that it is determined by a governmental authority and not by some private man, it is noted, immediately afterwards, that the other conditions imposed completely contradict the activist logic, since the second condition states that the people attacked must deserve it for some just cause and the third is that the objective of war must necessarily be peace (Oliveira, 2020). In other words, when Aquino (2001) imposes two other conditions, it is logically clear that it is not enough for the act to be determined by the ruler, the state authority.

Geisler (2006) will also counter activism, stating that the rejection of activism is supported by the Holy Bible. As mentioned above, there are several biblical examples of Christians disobeying authority, which would be unethical in the light of activist thinking:

The three Hebrew youths disobeyed the king's command to worship an idol (Dn 3), Daniel broke the law forbidding him to pray to God (Dan 6), the apostles disobeyed orders not to preach the gospel of Christ (At 4:5), the Hebrew midwives refused to commit the murders demanded by the Egyptian king (Ex 1).

It can therefore be concluded that this strand of Christian ethics is not the most plausible in terms of Christian logic. Furthermore, since it is recommended that attitudes in war should be in dialog with society's beliefs (Pereira; Garrido, 2022), the activist position does not seem to be well suited to decision-making in armed conflicts.

On the other hand, another point that shows that the activist ethic is not well accepted is the following examples in which similar thoughts were applied and were not received by the international community. The Nuremberg tribunal that tried the crimes of genocide committed by the Nazis and the My Lay incident in Vietnam show that obedience to authority cannot be a justification for committing war crimes.

*In other words: not all wars, nor all acts of war, are morally justifiable on the grounds that the person is acting in obedience to their government. This was the conclusion of the Nuremberg trials that followed the Second World War, and it was used again in the My Lay incident in Vietnam. The moral principle applied in both cases is that no individual member of the armed forces of any country should be excused for committing a war crime simply because he was ordered to do so by his superior officer* (Geisler, 2006, p. 125).

This brings us to another point that supports the non-application of activism in armed conflicts. Therefore, activism has little structure to help make war decisions. The activist stance is not very plausible in Christian logic, as shown by the arguments of philosophers and biblical passages, nor is it accepted in international judgments.

In other words, the degree of applicability of this strand of Christian ethics is very small, and when taking into account the Fourth Generation conflicts, it can be seen that such use is more restricted. In fact, given the characteristics of this generation, activism would be very damaging; after all, a complex attitude would not be well justified solely on the grounds that it was ordered by a higher authority. Such a stance would clearly undermine the legitimacy of the state, which reduces the applicability of activism.

### **3.4.2 The application of Christian pacifist ethics**

Pacifist thinking argues that Christians should never get involved in a war to the point of taking people's lives - after all, the Decalogue states that killing is wrong. The pacifist justifies that the wars ordered by God in the Old Testament were theocratic

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tools for God's will to be done (Geisler, 2006), so modern wars made by men have no justification and participating in them would be unethical.

However, both Thomas Aquinas' point, explored by Oliveira (2020), and Agostinho's (1990) point in *Cidade de Deus*, show themselves to be against such a stance. For Aquino (2001), some wars are lawful, given the three points that he says characterize a just war: the war must be promoted by the ruler, the attack must have just justification and the focus of the war is the greater good, peace. In other words, if there are points to be observed to justify acts of war, then not all wars are wrong. For his part, Agostinho (1990) affirms that the military profession is not a sin, so the act of killing, inherent in armed conflicts, cannot be qualified as always wrong. Agostinho's (1990) argument is found in the passage of Jesus giving instructions to the soldiers, which was expounded by Aquino:

But on the contrary, Augustine says: If Christian discipline were to hold all wars guilty, the Gospel would rather tell those who ask for advice on salvation to throw down their arms and abandon the militia altogether. The Gospel tells them: Do not treat anyone badly and be content with your pay. To those whom he commanded to be content with their wages, he did not forbid war (Aquino, 2001-2006, II-II, q. 40, a. 1).

In other words, since Jesus' advice to the soldiers was not to withdraw from their function, it is logical to see that Christ did not see such activity as sinful. Furthermore, Agostinho (1990) affirms that there are cases in which war should be proclaimed, as observed by Oliveira:

In St. Augustine, the concept of war takes on a new shape, and will be the first Christian doctrine to be taken up in its fundamental concepts by Aquino. The Bishop of Hippo maintains that the injustice of the enemy (*iniquitas partis adversae*) obliges a man trained in wisdom to declare a just war (Oliveira, 2020, p. 179).

Geisler (2006) also argues against pacifism. The author claims that some wars are just and his claim is supported by the scriptures themselves: *"The scriptures teach that not all wars are necessarily bad. In other words, contrary to pacifism, some wars are just"* (Geisler, 2006, p. 124). There is a biblical basis for this assertion, as taking a life is often commanded by God. This is the power of capital punishment given to Noah after the flood (Gen 9:6), Paul reaffirms such power resisted in the emperor of Rome (Rm 13:4), moreover, Paul's point still refutes the argument of war as a theocratic power, after all, the Roman government is apart from the theocratic government of Israel (Bíblia, 2006).

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian, is categorized by Geisler (2006) as a pacifist. Bonhoeffer was initially an advocate of non-violence, influenced by the Christian pacifist movement and the ethics of Jesus Christ. Bonhoeffer (2013) believed that pacifism was the ideal Christian response in many situations and that the church should work for peace and reconciliation.

However, as Geisler (2006) informs us, Bonhoeffer (2023) leaves this position aside. This change of perspective is visible in his work *Ethics*, where he talks about the idea of "situational ethics" or "responsible ethics". He argues that in some extreme situations, where human lives are at risk due to injustice and tyranny, responsible action may require the use of violence to stop the evil. *"Even the previously pacifist Bonhoeffer finally concluded that Hitler should have been assassinated"* (Geisler, 2006, p. 124)

In other words, the pacifist stance has no support in philosophy as set out by Aquino (2001) and Agostinho (1990), it is not supported biblically, as noted in the passages cited, nor does it have validity in the combat scenario as analyzed by Geisler (2006) and Bonhoeffer (2023). Thus, the degree of application of such a position in a Fourth Generation war intuitively proves to be small, as does the activist stance. After all, just as quickly as the acts of modern war come to popular attention, some kind of stance is required, and the pacifist stance is far from being the most efficient, as the authors demonstrate.

Now, a number of factors in Fourth Generation warfare itself support this argument. One could cite the complex nature of the conflict, since it involves non-state groups and these groups often don't have the ethical concern that the state has, which makes it difficult to apply a purely pacifist approach. Another point would be the need for defense and protection and pacifism, by refusing to use military force, can leave those in need of protection vulnerable.

The uncertain nature of the Fourth Generation conflict does not allow for a pacifist approach. In this irregular scenario, there is often great use of the population by non-state forces. The use of tactics that put civilians at risk makes it impossible to respond to such tactics without using direct military force.

It should also be noted that terrorist practices, present in Fourth Generation warfare, make peaceful postures impossible. It is difficult to apply such a stance in the face of terrorist attacks, given the urgent need to protect innocent lives, respond to the immediate threat, guarantee public safety and prevent future damage. So while pacifism is a noble principle, its direct application in the face of conflict faces practical and moral limitations. In short, whether philosophically, religiously or tactically, pacifism also has a low degree of applicability in Fourth Generation warfare.

### **3.4.3 The application of the Christian ethic of selectivism**

Finally, selectivism believes that some wars are just and participation in them is an ethical stance. *"This is the point of view that seems to us to be the most satisfactory alternative for the Christian"* (Geisler, 2006, p. 124). In this statement by Geisler, it can

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be seen that the acceptance of a selective stance is more appropriate and accepted.

Not all men are happy with the blind patriotism of the patriot who would kill at the request of the government, shouting: "My homeland, right or wrong!" Not all men are satisfied with a naively passive attitude that would allow Hitler to attempt genocide, without raising a rifle in resistance [...] Out of dissatisfaction with the "easy" solutions of declaring all wars just, or no wars justifiable, a growing number of supporters of selectivism are emerging, who maintain that some wars are justifiable, and others are not (Geisler, 2006, p. 124).

With this selective stance, there is a dialog between the philosophers themselves. Firstly, Agostinho's (1990) position that the military profession and the act of killing are not unethical. Depending on the circumstances, they fit in with Thomas Aquinas' view that separates cases in which war is just and participation would not be wrong according to Christian ethics (Oliveira, 2020). Secondly, in more current philosophy, Geisler (2006) also agrees with this point, stating that some wars are just, in which participation is ethical, and others are unjust, in which participation is unethical.

Furthermore, the selective stance is supported biblically. The passages that refute both activism and pacifism are enough to support such a position through the scriptures. In other words, having refuted the point that all wars are unjust, since the act of killing is a sin, and having refuted the point that all wars are just, since it is a government order, all that remains is to affirm that some wars are just and others are unjust, the core of selectivism.

These passages have already been covered, but here are some others: "*Let him who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one*" (Lc 23:36), the fact is that Jesus forbade violence in the sense of preaching the gospel or to avoid persecution because of the gospel, but it can be assumed that they were included for civil reasons (Geisler, 2006). "*The story of Abraham against the kings in Genesis 14 lends support to the principle that unjust national aggressors should be resisted in the same way as unjust individual aggressors (cf. also 1 Sm 23:1-2)*" (Geisler, 2006, p. 127). "*In fact, in the course of the Old Testament and the New, God ordained war as an instrument of the cause of justice*" (Geisler, 2006).

On the other hand, on the moral side, selectivism emerges as an alternative to pacifism and activism, offering two distinct moral reasons in its favor. Firstly, both pacifism and activism are criticized as moral escapes from the difficult ethical position of discerning the justice of a specific war. The pacifist, by denying all wars as just, avoids direct confrontation with the question of the justice of a particular conflict. On the other hand, the activist, by blindly submitting to government orders, shirks moral responsibility by acting as an agent of the state. Selectivism, then, stands out as a more challenging position, as it commits to resisting evil with appropriate means, whether spiritual, political or military, demanding of the individual the difficult task of discerning which wars are just and which are not. In addition, pacifism is criticized for its potential moral escapism and political surrender, while selectivism positions itself as an approach that actively seeks what is morally right, using whatever force is necessary to confront evil (Geisler, 2006).

So, having explained the religious and philosophical points that support selectivism as the best Christian ethical path in warfare, it remains to verify the arguments that support its application in Fourth Generation warfare. In this context, it is possible to consider the dynamic nature that requires a flexible approach and selectivism allows each situation to be assessed individually, unlike pacifism and activism, taking into account ethical and moral principles, as well as the specific circumstances of the conflict. Also, selectivism is rooted in the tradition of just war ethics (*Jus in bello*) (Geisler, 2006), which seeks to balance the need for self-defense with human protection.

However, when we look at the issue of just war and selectivism, we realize that similar attitudes have been addressed long before Geisler (2006). In fact, ever since the beginnings of human rights, issues relating to whether or not to engage in war, as well as accepted or unaccepted attitudes in conflicts, have been studied, and these studies are currently converging in the International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Therefore, it is not inappropriate to say that selectivism is, in a way, a religious analysis of what is already employed in international circles.

This brings us to a point that further validates the application of selectivism. After all, such a stance has a strong dialogue with the IHL, the result of international conventions on the law of war.

So, Christian selectivism, as discussed by Geisler (2006), emphasizes the importance of having a just cause for war, a fact discussed in international tribunals. This is especially relevant in Fourth Generation conflicts, where the lines between aggressor and victim are less clear. Careful assessment of the causes and principles involved can help determine whether a military intervention is morally justifiable.

Geisler (2006) highlights the importance of having the right intentions when considering war. This means that the motives behind military action must be examined carefully. In Fourth Generation conflicts, where the question of the legitimacy of state actions plays a significant role, the evaluation of each attitude is crucial.

In summary, the selectivism of Christian ethics can be considered suitable for dealing with the ethical dilemmas of Fourth Generation conflicts because it offers a set of ethical principles and criteria suitable for general thinking and allows for flexibility in decision-



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making, unlike the other currents.

In other words, the selectivist stance is the one that has the greatest degree of applicability when it comes to the acceptance of war and its acts in the Brazilian context, because although it is a philosophically well-accepted stance, it also dialogues with an international discussion about what is morally acceptable in war, the IHL. Therefore, the state would be, in a way, protecting its legitimacy by promoting warlike actions that fit in with selectivism, which is very suitable for Fourth Generation conflicts.

### **4 CONCLUSIONS**

Throughout this work, we have reflected on the main currents of Christian ethics from the perspective of Fourth Generation conflicts in order to answer the research problem, which asked to what extent Christian ethics can be present in the solution of ethical dilemmas in Fourth Generation wars. The hypothesis developed for this question was that Christian ethics can be applied to solve ethical dilemmas in Fourth Generation warfare and, in order to verify this proposition, the general objective was to verify the degree of applicability of Christian ethics in dealing with the ethical dilemmas of Fourth Generation warfare.

To this end, the characteristics of this type of conflict were initially shown, and the style of conflict was characterized by the presence of non-state actors with a strong focus on affecting the legitimacy of the state. Next, the conceptualization of ethics according to Christianity was explored in order to address the three strands of Christian ethics in war according to Geisler (2006): activism, pacifism and selectivism. A brief characterization of the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) was also given. Finally, the discussion followed with an analysis of the applicability of each of these currents.

As a theoretical reference, Lind was used to characterize Fourth Generation warfare, as well as philosophers who dealt with the theme of Christian ethics used in armed conflicts, such as Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas and Norman L. Geisler. Thus, through a literary analysis, we checked whether the ideas of the philosophers of Christian ethics had any degree of applicability to the moral dilemmas of Fourth Generation warfare, given the characteristics of this type of conflict.

Therefore, it can be concluded that given the inflexibility of the activist and pacifist currents, i.e. we must always obey or we must never go to war, respectively, the first two strands had a low degree of applicability, since Fourth Generation warfare requires a certain flexibility, given the characteristics already discussed. Selectivism, on the other hand, has great value in terms of application because, in addition to its philosophical acceptance, its very definition is in dialogue with the concepts of the IHL. Thus, if such a conflict is accepted by the international community, the current of selectivism also sees it that way and, therefore, taking part in this conflict or carrying out such acts of war is also morally in line with Christian ethics.

Finally, for future work on this subject, it is interesting to verify the applicability of Christian ethics in specific actions in Fourth Generation wars. In this way, it can be shown how selectivism can contribute to solving the dilemmas of armed conflicts, engaging studies in the training schools of the Brazilian Air Force and other institutions of the Armed Forces, especially contributing to the area of ethics and the formation of military character.

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