

## Christians & War

During the American Civil War, General Sherman allegedly said, “War is hell.” It is difficult to imagine a serious Christian who would not agree, and who would advocate war for war’s sake. Most Christians acknowledge that the call of Christ is a call to love, grace, mercy, and peace. In contrast, wars have brought appalling death and devastation to humankind. The wars prosecuted during the twentieth century are particularly distinguished for their barbarism and destruction. The escalation of violence is shown in the following comparison.<sup>1</sup>

<u>War</u>	<u>Percent of casualties that were civilian</u>
American Civil War	5%
World War I	30%
World War II	60%
Iraq II	90% (unofficial report)

In the twentieth century, the pain and tragedy of warfare extended far beyond the battlefield; entire nations and their populations suffered as well. We should not dismiss this simply as “collateral damage.” It is hard to argue with Ben Franklin who wrote in 1783, “There never was a good war or a bad peace,”

Throughout history, people fought for selfish purposes; a country, nation, or society desires another’s land, money, and/or possessions. Judges 18 records that scouts of the tribe of Dan discovered the community of Laish where the people were living securely, quietly and unsuspectingly, lacking nothing and possessing wealth. The Dannites also observed no other cities that could come to the aid of Laish. The scouts

came back with six hundred men, destroyed the city, killed all the inhabitants and took the valley for themselves. So it has been forever.

The apostle James identifies that the problem of war is the reality of human sin.

Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures. (James 4:1-3)

War is not only a consequence of sin, but also an expression of sin. Humans have a unique ability to trust their own pride and arrogance and confuse it with prudence and justice. Even when it believed to be necessary, war does violence to all with whom it comes in contact.

This leads to debates among Christians, not concerning the benefits of war, but if there are *ever* any justifiable reasons for armed conflict. These debates take the form of a very difficult binary: One pole is our responsibility to the State (“render unto Caesar”); the other is our obligation to lay down our lives (“love your enemies”). Because of the frequency of armed conflict, the question of war has troubled the church from its very beginning. Can one be a genuine follower of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, and serve in a country’s armed services?”<sup>2</sup> Bible-believing Christians throughout church history have struggled with the Bible’s approaches to war and have come to widely divergent opinions.

## Five Views of War

There are five views regarding Christian participation in armed conflict. These are Christian pacifism, non-retaliation, just peacemaking, just war, and crusade. We will begin with a brief description of each view and then expand more fully on each perspective.

*Christian pacifism* believes that the ethical teachings and moral example of Jesus forbids participation by Christians in war.<sup>3</sup> Many Christians hold this view, especially those from the Anabaptist, Quaker, and Brethren traditions who embrace this position with great conviction.

The *non-retaliation* perspective would agree in principle with pacifism, but allow for Christian participation as non-combatants such as medics, nurses, and relief workers.<sup>4</sup> They assume that individuals and governments must frequently behave in different and conflicting directions.

The *peacemaking* perspective is a recent development, which calls for all believers to take “nonviolent direct action” to establish peace in order to reduce, eliminate, or even abolish the threat of war.<sup>5</sup>

The *just war* theory is a way of dealing with the situation where war appears to be unavoidable. The just war theorist believes that by rightfully defending one’s country one is acting responsibly as a citizen of that country.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the crusade view affirms, “The cause of true religion is the most worthy reason for fighting a war.”<sup>7</sup> This view identifies the cause of God with the cause of the state.

## Christian Pacifism

“I am a soldier of Christ; I cannot fight.” These words of St. Martin of Tours rightly describe the Christian pacifist position.<sup>8</sup> Karl Barth put it this way: “All affirmative answers to the question [of war] are wrong if they do not start with the assumption that . . . pacifism has almost infinite arguments in its favor and is almost overpoweringly strong.”<sup>9</sup> He goes on to say that, even if the message of the church cannot be this uncomplicated it should serve as a light to remind us of the enormity of war and restrain our actions.

There are Christians who, in good faith, cannot accept the “almost” and believe that war is simply and always wrong. They take seriously the words of Christ to Peter: “Put away your sword,’ Jesus told him. ‘Those who use the sword will be killed by the sword.’” (Matt26:52) At another time, he said, “But I say, don’t resist an evil person! If you are slapped on the right cheek, turn the other, too.” (Matt 5:39) Scripture clearly calls for the disciple of Christ to love his or her enemies, to seek not vengeance, and to win the hearts of the wicked by showering them with good deeds. (Rom 12:14,19-21)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it this way:

Christian love draws no distinction between one enemy and another, except that the more bitter our enemy’s hatred, the greater his need of love. Be his enmity political or religious, he has nothing to expect from a follower of Jesus but unqualified love. In such love there is no inner discord between private person and official capacity. In both we are disciples of Christ, or we are not Christians at all.<sup>10</sup>

The pacifist position reminds us that a distinguishing mark of a child of God is the ability to love those who hate us. John Yoder stated this idea simply, “Christians love their enemies because God does so, and commands his followers to do so. That is the only reason, and that is enough.”<sup>11</sup>

Closely related is the pacifist commitment that Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, especially Matthew 5:38-48, teaches more than an attitude; it is the way people live once they have entered into the Kingdom of God. Pacifists feel that the Sermon on the Mount describes the conduct that all Christians will display when resisting evil at *all* times. These texts are to be personal, but not personalized. In other words, they are obligatory concerning my responsibilities to governing authorities as well as my interpersonal relationships.

Jesus taught that Kingdom of God, the Messianic community, is a distinct people and intentional in their way of life. This offers:

Forgiveness instead of vengeance (Matt 6:14-15; Luke 17:3-4; 23:34)

Readiness to suffer instead of promoting violence (Matt 5:38-39)

Sharing instead of greed (Luke 12:33-34; 18:22)

Service instead of domination (Luke 22:24-27)

Love instead of hatred (Matt. 5:43-45; Luke 6:27-31)

Even as Christ' followers realize that the Kingdom of God is only partially realized in this world, a believer's first allegiance is to that kingdom in its fullest, and that kingdom transcends nationalistic commitments. (John 18:36)

Because the body of Christ, the church, transcends national boundaries Christians should be working to overcome national, racial, and societal differences. Pacifists strongly believe that Christians should not place themselves in a position where they are killing other brothers and sisters in Christ.

Christian pacifists, who are also utilitarians, can point to the callous disregard for life, the pain and suffering of the wounded, the destroyed families, the destruction of

God's creation, and the hatred that lasts from generation to generation, triggering new wars. If the message of Christ is not powerful enough to make one opposed to war, consideration of the consequences should convince anyone.

Finally, Christians cannot ignore the greed for material possessions that is such a major motivation for war. Christian should be placing their treasures in heaven and thus above the pettiness of personal or notional gain. Therefore, pacifists conclude, Christians should not participate in war.

Pacifists read Christian history as beginning as a pacifist religion and remained so until after the time of Constantine. This was abandoned with the shift to just war in the fifth century and to crusade in the eleventh. But even then, it was required of clergy and was always present in lay persons looking for the reign of God on earth.

### **Critique of Pacifism**

As one can imagine, many Christians oppose pacifistic thinking. They argue that pacifists neglect the Old Testament with their focus on the Sermon on the Mount. They hold the hermeneutical principle that unless the New Testament explicitly or implicitly abrogates a law or principle of the Old Testament, the binding nature of that command still applies today. In the Old Testament, we have the Lord of Armies (*Sabaoth*) leading the nation of Israel to annihilate other nations by his direct command. At one time God directly participated in war.<sup>12</sup> While this argument ignores the difference between a theocracy and our present government, it enjoys great popularity.

Other critics charge that the pacifist position allows the individual to enjoy the benefits of living in a peaceful country without ever taking responsibility for defending it. (This was the charge leveled at the early church by the Roman authorities.) Biblical

literalists maintain that pacifists' neglect or ignore the explicit command of Romans 13:1-7 to submit to state authorities.

Critics of pacifism point out that history demonstrates that selfish motives are not always the impetus for becoming involved in wars. An example is World War II when the United States and its allies engaged in war against Germany, Italy, and Japan with the goal of maintaining the liberty of conquered or threatened nations.

Finally, the Bible explicitly commands governments to grant protection to the widow and orphan so that no one can take advantage of their vulnerability. "Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan. If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. My anger will be aroused, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives will become widows and your children fatherless." (Ex 22:22-24) It is possible to extend this command to all who may be weak and vulnerable and provided the rationale for entering war on the side of the invaded.

### **Non-Retaliatorist View**

A person with "non-retaliatorist" views imagines a greater role for Christians in society and international affairs than do the pacifists. They accept the authority of the state to engage in war and agree that they cannot choose the responsibilities they owe to the state. Despite acknowledging the right of the state to engage in war and to require its citizens to participate, they are uncomfortable with the usual conduct of war either in the personal requirement to kill others or the concept of mass destruction. There are two distinct groups of non-retaliatorists.

The first group desires to fulfill the Christian's responsibility to the state by serving with medical services and relief agencies, but not the armed forces. Thus, they

wish to trade service to people of the state for service in the war effort. During the Viet Nam war, these Christians did not flee to Canada or take to the streets in protest. Instead, they accepted voluntarily assignment to hospitals where they cheerfully performed the most menial jobs at military pay. They were able to witness to their beliefs of opposition to the war while not denying their duty to the country.

Another group of Christians accepts that governments will and frequently must wage war. As citizens, they owe a responsibility to their country but are unwilling to kill humans in support of the war. They believe that God's law prohibits taking life, even in wartime, it is performing works of mercy that is the fulfilling the law of Christ. Therefore, this group of non-retaliationists encourages believers to serve their country, but as non-combatants.

As noncombatants, believers can serve in the medical corps and as chaplains, to encourage the sick and dying and bear a personal witness to the saving grace of our blessed Lord. In this way, they serve their country and at the same time faithfully discharge their responsibilities as Christians in everything that pertains to life and godliness.<sup>13</sup>

Since the army does not want to suggest that this is a means of avoiding personal danger, the commanders assigned these men to front line medic positions. During World War II, several received Distinguished Service Medals for their lifesaving actions under direct fire. One such was Desmond T. Doss who decided that the Sixth Commandment prohibited him from carrying a gun. As a combat medic on Guam and the Philippines he received a Bronze Star for bravery. On Okinawa he was on a 400-foot-high ridge when most of the American troops were driven off, but there were wounded soldiers stranded atop it. Using a makeshift litter and using a tree stump as an anchor he lowered every wounded man to a safe spot below.

In a battle a week later, he was severely riddled by shrapnel, but kept working until he was hit and suffered a compound arm fracture. The citation for the Medal of Honor credited him with saving 75 soldier's lives. He spent more than five years in hospitals for treatment of his injuries. His obituary in the New York Times was twenty-four inches in length, much greater than many famous persons.<sup>14</sup>

The Congress has differentiated between conscientious objection to participation in any form in any war (Class 1-0) and those who sincerely object to participation as a combatant in war, but will serve in noncombatant status. (Class 1-A-0) Obtaining non-combatant status from the government was not always easy. Those young men born into a religion who read Scripture to forbid fighting usually had no difficulty being classified as conscientious objectors. In contrast, even a highly intelligent and sincere individual who justifies personal pacifism by deeply thought-out moral philosophic arguments would frequently be refused. If he belonged to a denomination that took an aggressive pro-war stance, the difficulties were only increased.

If a young man wishes to obtain a conscientious objection to the draft or to combatant status, he should begin reflecting on this ahead of time. Conscientious objector files that have been produced over time are much more significant to a draft board than one put together only shortly before facing the draft board.

Some persons did not declare themselves to non-combatant prior to being drafted or may have had a change of conviction after joining the military. The military expects that a person making a claim of conscientious objection to bear the burden of proof and present clear and convincing evidence that objection is a primary controlling force in the applicant's life. Objection must be to war in general, not to specific wars. It

is possible to obtain non-combatant status within the armed forces but it is very helpful if the beliefs crystallized before induction into the military service.<sup>15</sup>

Dale E. Noyd, a decorated Air Force captain and fighter pilot, illustrated this by deciding he could not participate in the Vietnam War that he considered to be immoral and illegal. He requested that he be allowed to resign or be classified as a conscientious objector. Both were denied. He was court-marshaled, sentenced to a year in prison, given a dishonorable discharge and stripped of his pension and benefits. He kept two certificates on the wall of his study. One was his commendation for heroism, the other his dishonorable discharge.<sup>16</sup> Conscientious objection can be painful.

Both of these positions of modified pacifism are an anathema to the *pure* pacifist who objects to giving aid of any kind to a nation at war. To them, the individual who works alongside those who are conducting the war is directly supporting the war effort. Their more militant Christian brothers frequently oppress non-retaliators by accusing them of cowardice.

### **Just Peacemaking**

Recently some scholars are advocating a greater role for Christians in international affairs. They feel that the pacifist position equates itself with passivity and isolationism, and a retreat from engagement with the problems in the world. They are concerned that the just war perspective blinds many of its adherents to the possibilities for peace. Therefore, these Evangelicals are producing ideas of substance that will engage the world community in building viable alternatives to war.<sup>17</sup> This *peacemaking*

view advocates ten practices that it believes will create “zones of peace” and abolish war. These deserve more detail than the other sections because the ideas are foreign to many Christians.

The first of these practices are *non-violent direct action*. Non-violent direct action involves sit-ins, strikes, marches, protest, and conflict resolution. The direct action “lances the festering boil of violence” that results from passivity in the face of danger. This type of action builds on the teaching of Gandhi that ended the dictatorship in the Philippines, produced freedom in Poland, and in the civil rights work of Martin Luther King, Jr. These movements brought about political and economic change through peaceful means on the part of the protesters.

Second, peacemakers urge *independent initiatives* to reduce threats in order to lower the level of intimidation a country perceives from another nation. An example is the unilateral banning of atmospheric testing by Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy in order to lower the intensity of the perceived threat that the Soviet Union felt from the U.S. nuclear program. Gorbachev’s removal of tanks and river crossing equipment stationed in Central Europe had the same effect on NATO. These actions should be visible and verifiable to reassure the other side, but not leave the initiator weak. These moves are to be independent of the slow process of negotiation.

Another approach is *cooperative conflict resolution* among hostile parties in order to achieve and develop possible solutions. Theologian Jurgen Moltmann describes this as changing fighting enemies to quarreling partners. The Jimmy Carter Center in Atlanta, Georgia is an organization whose goal is to make peace by working as a neutral mediator between opposing regions. The Carter Center works with rival parties helping

them listen to one another, and gain insight from each other's perspectives. They seek long-term solutions that help prevent future conflagrations and seek justice, not appeasement, as a core element for sustainable peace.

Among individuals, peacemaking requires the parties to acknowledge *responsibility for injustices* committed and ask for forgiveness from those wounded. This idea is extended to assume that asking for forgiveness as a country or ethnic group toward another injured party would also lead to peace. The United States' admission of the discrimination and mistreatment of Japanese-Americans by forced incarceration during World War II is an example of attempted national reconciliation. Similarly, in 1985 the German president acknowledged the national crimes against Poland as step in restoring relations between the two countries. When a nation takes responsibility for wrongdoing, the healing of long-term bitterness can begin.

The advocates of just peacemaking understand history to teach that, during the entire twentieth century, no democratic countries fought against one another. This view stresses that Germany, Italy, and Japan were not democratic societies but ruled by forces of evil power. Liberal democracies, with representative governments, are less likely to instigate war than totalitarian states. As a result, Christian peacemakers promote and encourage *democracy, civil rights, and religious liberty*. Peacemakers uphold the dignity of every individual since God created each person his image and likeness.

The sixth proposal is that Christian peacemakers should be encouraging *economic development* in countries with insufficient or struggling economies. Since economic imbalance is the root cause of many wars, Christian peacemakers encourage

international financial assistance and business investment in economically beleaguered countries. This development should be sustainable and not dependant on one time exploitation of natural resources. Rich and poor countries are less likely to fight wars with one another if they are economically dependent on one another.

Quite similar to the above is the suggestion is that nations should work with emerging *cooperative forces* – market economies, trade organizations, and international networks – in an effort to build love, cooperation, and community. These provide the means to achieve the ends of economic interdependence. The more closely nations are bound by mutually satisfying economic issues; the less likely they are to fight.

Peacemaking requires the efforts of many people and countries. Therefore, it makes sense to work with international organizations such as the *United Nations* in “multilateral peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peace building.” The present war in Iraq is a negative example and may be an overwhelming blow to the UN and its international work. It has earned our country few admirers and antagonized many.

Ninth, *diminish offensive weapons* and the weapons trade by writing, encouraging, and promoting legislation and treaties for the reducing of arms traffic throughout the world. The destruction of long-range rockets and nuclear weapons by the United States and Russia reduced the tension between the countries. The immense market in weapons into the near east has only led to belligerency and conflict.

Finally, encourage *grassroots peacemaking* groups that will educate the public regarding international disputes and possible resolutions. The public is educated by vigorous debates in the public square, even to the point of holding their own governments accountable.

This peacemaking position is internationalist in scope, is a positive approach to addressing world problems, and gives theological and biblical reasons for a Christian to participate on the world stage. The detractors of the peacemaking position do not argue that a Christian should fulfill the heart of Christ by being a peacemaker; they simply ask what you do when you have exhausted all these options and a country insists on continuing to promote tyranny and injustice. This question leads us to the view most highly regarded and widely held by Evangelicals, the just war theory.

### **Just War Theory**

The just war theory has a long history; parts of the Bible hint at standards for ethical behavior in war. Many Christians look back to Augustine as the origin of just war ideas even though the words “just wars” appear only once in the entire Augustinian corpus. He stated, “Just wars are usually defined as those that avenge injuries;” however, war was justifiable “when a people or a city neglected either to punish wrongs done by its members or to restore what it has wrongly seized.”<sup>18</sup> Augustine’s chief contribution to a philosophy of war was bringing the discussion into a Christian context, consequently causing serious reflection concerning the morality of war.<sup>19</sup>

Although it is possible to claim that Augustine supported just war theory, he really did not contribute to its development. Operationally, the roots were in the efforts of the church to restrain violence in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. The “Peace of God” was a decree of 989 C.E. that declared an anathema against marauders who injured churches and robbed the poor. Later decrees (Truce of God, 1027 C.E.) limited warfare (actually more like gangs than armies) to specific times of the church year. The just war theory

developed over time with Thomas Aquinas articulating the argument that we understand today.

### **Presuppositions**

Fully developed just-war theory operates from four presuppositions. First, the fall changed forever all creation and humankind; as a result, some evil cannot be avoided. Second, the theory lays out the moral groundwork for decision making as an authoritative standard for both Christians and non-Christians. Third, this theory is not a means of justifying conflict. The just theory is a moral guide for administering appropriate justice. Last, the rightful authorities of the land should direct armed conflict: not just anyone has the right to use force. (Rom 13:4) In summary, the just war theory is effective for the whole world not just for the Christian. It recognizes the universal fallenness of humankind causing the problem of evil to be real and personal.<sup>20</sup>

### **Moral Guidelines**

The just war theory operates according three principles: the right to go to war (*jus ad bellum*), the just conduct of the war (*jus in bello*), and *jus post bellum*, which concerns the justice of peace agreements and the termination phase of war. . Not only is the war to be pursued for the right reasons, but also it is to be conducted in the right way, and afterward there must be every attempt to repair the damage. The “right to go to war” (*jus ad bellum*) and just conduct of the war (*jus in bello*) criterion involves several moral tests to govern the use of force that will harm or kill.

There must be *just cause* in pursuing conflict. Examples of just causes would include response to aggression, protection of the innocent, and punishment of wrongdoers. Revenge, imperialism, racial superiority, and economic advantage are not

appropriate motives. In the past, preemptive strikes have been ruled out as part of the just war theory. However, there are basic human rights and the state has the responsibility for protection of these from serious, standard threats, such as aggression. Therefore, theorists recognize that modern warfare may necessitate a first strike capability in order to prevent potential civilian casualties and collateral damage.

An example might be the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Even though the Israelis attacked first, most historians consider it to have been a just war. Israeli intelligence had substantial evidence that the Syria, Egypt, and Jordan planned a simultaneous assault on their nation. If the Israelis waited until the Arab nations struck first, annihilation would have been the result. Israel released a massive “first strike” assault on those countries destroying their air forces on the ground. This saved lives and the nation.

Only rightful authorities can pursue conflict, they must not use war as a pretext for their own selfishness, and they are legally responsible for their actions. Warlords, armed gangs, and vigilante groups do not count as legitimate authorities. Dukes and princes must not engage in conflict that would drag the entire country into war. Today, this *formal declaration* stipulation attempts to prohibit wars by individuals, terrorist organizations, private armies, and /or local militias. (Think about Africa)

The United States Constitution states that it is the responsibility of Congress to declare war.<sup>21</sup> The president, as the commander-in-chief, must obtain a formal declaration from Congress in order to proceed with armed conflict. This check and balance in American government prevents a war from being the personal vendetta of the president. In recent American history, the executive branch of government did not

obtain formal declarations of war from Congress for the Korean or Vietnam conflicts and there was not a formal declaration of war against Afghanistan or Iraq. This leads to impassioned discussions as to whether or not this lack makes those conflicts automatically unjust.

The nation must go to war for the right intentions. It is not enough to be able to give a good justification for war, the actual motivation must be correct. Power, land acquisition, control, or revenge cannot be reasons for war. The country should analyze its intentions carefully so that the country does not fall into moral corruption.

The principle of just intention includes the idea that noncombatants are to be immune from the conflict, and not be targets of war or subject to retaliation. Prisoners of war must be treated with dignity, and reprisals are not permitted on the civilian population.<sup>22</sup> A just war is not total war. The reported treatment of prisoners in Iraq is a terrible violation of *jus in bello*, the conduct of the war.

The fourth requirement is the country should exhaust all attempts at diplomacy and negotiation. War must be the *last resort*, and the warring nation must use up all possibilities for peaceful compromise before prosecuting conflict. This is not a simple matter; how does a government decide if a hostile country is insincere in its negotiations? How does a governing authority determine that an unfriendly country is simply using diplomacy as a stall tactic? A country is required to make every attempt at mediation, conciliation, and compromise.

The fifth criterion is that there must be some *proportionality* between the cost of the war and the objectives desired. "The types of weapons and amount of force used must be limited to only what is needed to repel aggression, deter future attacks, and

secure a just peace.”<sup>23</sup> The goal of warfare is to secure peace, not to bring about the absolute destruction of a society. In the first war against Iraq, the American forces stopped once the Iraqis were driven out of Kuwait, which could be seen as an understanding of proportionality. (Whether or not it was the right action can certainly be questioned in light of later developments, but the action was consistent with just war principles.)

Another condition of proportionality is that the victory must be achievable, but not necessarily certain. This simply means that in the midst of the conflict there is confidence that victory is attainable. A government must not waste the lives of those engaged in a war that is not winnable. This may speak to both the war in Vietnam and the present war in Iraq.

The sixth criterion is that the objective of the conflict must be pursuing an enduring peace. There must be the conviction that greater good than hurt will be the measure of the conflict. In other words, freedom, peace, and democracy will result even though destruction and death will occur. The nation pursuing the war must have a *just intention* of pursuing a long-term peace, not the goal of complete destruction. “If the purpose is peace, the unconditional surrender or the destruction of a nation’s economic or political institutions is an unwarranted objective.”<sup>24</sup>

### **Moral Framework**

“*Jus ad bellum* is the use of armed force for the public ends by public authorities who have an obligation to defend the security of those for whom they have assumed responsibility.”<sup>25</sup> *Jus in bello* protects a country from allowing the end to justify the means. It keeps that country from exacting revenge and retribution upon the innocent

and vulnerable. It protects a civilian population who may have had little or nothing to do with the injustices its government is propagating. The just war theory limits the devastation, creates a moral framework, and gives moral guidance to those in conflict.<sup>26</sup>

The just war theory recognizes the sinfulness of humanity that desires to disrupt the peace and order of society. The humankind's sinfulness wants to harm, subjugate, and control other human beings. In a fallen world, love is the power to transform lives, but authority and power for maintaining justice is required as well. In Reinhold Niebuhr's seminal essay, "Why the Christian Church is not Pacifist," he states

Christianity is a religion which measures the total dimension of human existence not only in terms of the final norm of human conduct, which is expressed in the law of love, but also in terms of the fact of sin. It recognizes that the same man who can become his true self by striving infinitely for self-realization beyond himself is also inevitably involved in the sin of infinitely making his partial and narrow self the true existence. It believes, in other words, that though Christ is the true norm (the second "Adam") for every man is also in some sense a crucifier of Christ.<sup>27</sup>

### **Critiques of Just War Theory**

Pacifists object to the just war theory on a number of grounds. They contend that the law of love overrides the law of justice. They feel that Jesus' ethical teaching supersedes any Christian responsibility to the state. Second, many criticize the just war theory for its heavy reliance on human reason. They contend that a wounded nation cannot objectively evaluate its own motives and reasons for conducting war. When emotions and passions are at a fever pitch, a nation can easily deceive itself. Rowan Williams makes this point in his book, "Writing in the Dust" arguing that the United

States is such an overpowering force in the world it could have taken more time and thought more clearly before invading Afghanistan.<sup>28</sup>

Other critics contend that a just war cannot occur in an age of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. World War II bombing began trying to pinpoint military targets, but soon both side adopted saturation or obliteration bombing without concern for the rights of the innocent civilians. It appears that it is impossible to protect innocent life from harm because modern weapons necessitate total war.

Fourth, it is asserted that the just war theory is highly subjective and open to interpretation. In such a complex and complicated society, it is impossible for a government and its population to agree on whether they are acting with just cause. It is easy to contort just war theory in order to justify almost any action.

During the Persian Gulf War, Evangelical Christians disagreed on whether the United States and Great Britain had exhausted all means for diplomacy, were acting with right intentions, and had reasonable cause for attacking Iraq. A group led by Charles Colson, Bill Bright, Richard Land and D. James Kennedy stated:

We believe that your policies (i.e., President Bush) concerning the ongoing international terrorist campaign against America are both right and just. Specifically, we believe that your stated policies concerning Saddam Hussein and his headlong pursuit and development of biochemical and nuclear weapons of mass destruction are prudent and fall well within the time-honored criteria of just war theory as developed by Christian theologians in the late fourth and early fifth centuries A.D.<sup>29</sup>

However, a group lead by Linda Fuller of Habitat for Humanity, Jim Wallis of *Sojourners* Magazine, and Tony Campolo disagreed:

We represent a diversity of Christian communities - from the just war traditions to the pacifist tradition. As leaders of these communities in the United States and the United Kingdom, it is our considered judgment that

a preemptive war against Iraq, particularly in the current situation would not be justified. Yet we believe Iraq must be disarmed of weapons of mass destruction; and that alternative courses to war should be diligently pursued.<sup>30</sup>

It certainly is clear that Evangelicals branch of Christianity could not agree on what were the intentions of the government in the present war and whether or not it is just.

### **Crusade**

A crusade connects the cause of a nation with the cause of God. A country can easily deceive itself into believing that God is as offended and upset as they are and is ready to go to war. During the Middle Ages, crusades were wars taken against infidels usually after a vow of each crusader to God. The underlying assumption was that the state was operating under the leadership of God and was required to accomplish the mission of the church. Thus, heretics in the south of France, northern Lithuania, and Prussia were exterminated by crusades as much as the Moors in Spain and the campaigns to capture Jerusalem.

In modern times, the word has come to mean any war that takes on a religious character. This definition allowed both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line during the American Civil War to consider the war as a crusade. Thus, both sides could attack the other believing that God was on their side fighting against the devil. The famous "Battle Hymn of the Republic" is an example of this marriage of the nation's cause with God's purposes. This hymn equated the abolitionist cause with God's cause that was the Northern cause. The South was equally guilty of evoking God for the Cause. Abraham Lincoln felt that "The War Between the States" was God's judgment on both

sides for participating in the sin of slavery. The issue at hand is not whether God is on our side, but whether we are on God's side. (Joshua 5:13-15)

### **Conclusion**

The issue of how the believer should participate in war has existed since the early Christian church. The early church taught all believers that they must not engage in war. Since then there has been no unanimity. It is not correct to say that any one approach is the "Christian" view and that others are sinful. Any single Christian must engage in deliberate discernment to arrive at a private conclusion.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.80ideas.net](http://www.80ideas.net)

<sup>2</sup> John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993), 345.

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<sup>7</sup> Alan Johnson, "The Bible and War in America: An Historical Survey," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* [CD-ROM] (June 1985).

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- <sup>19</sup> Frederick H. Russell, "War," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, Allan D. Fitzgerald, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 875.
- <sup>20</sup> Feinberg, 361.
- <sup>21</sup> *United States Constitution*, Article 1, Section 8, Clause 11.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 120. Feinberg, 361. Demy, 4. George Weigel, "Moral Clarity in a Time of War," *First Things* 128 (December 2002): 20.
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