

CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES ON WAR AND PEACE

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Abstract

War is the gravest danger that has always faced the survival of humanity as a species. For instance, in the past three years, over two million people have been killed in the two global high intensity wars between Russia and Ukraine and Israel and Palestine. If these numbers are added to the numbers that have died in other low intensity conflicts around the world, it will likely exceed half the total number of people that have died in the world within the same period making war the greatest cause of human death. Importantly, most wars are inspired by religious beliefs. Even, when the cause of a particular war is not directly religious, people's willingness to fight or support the war effort is to a large extent determined by religious beliefs on rightness and wrongness of killing. Therefore, Christianity being the most populous religion in the world has had and will continue to have serious impacts on wars. What this means is that Christian teachings have the capacity to encourage or discourage war around the world. Consequently, using the documentary method, historical and conceptual analysis, this study investigates how Christian teachings have influenced Christian attitudes to war down the ages and the consequences these has had on peace and stability in the world. The paper discovered that Christian tradition has espoused three attitudes on war and peace, namely, pacifism, crusade and just war approaches. Focusing specifically on the just war (the latest approach), the study highlights that current Christian attitude to war is informed by the false belief that war can be used to fight evil and achieve peace and justice. Contesting this espousal, the study argues that war exacerbates injustice, increases evil and makes the situations worse. It therefore calls for a return to pragmatic pacifism as the only responsible, reasonable and defensible position for a Christian.

Introduction

The intentional taking of human life is forbidden by all moral laws, nevertheless, human beings engage in many activities that do result in the death of others. Vehicular accidents, for example, result in many deaths but drivers do not typically intend to kill anyone. In the case of war, however combatants directly intend to kill their enemies. This raises a troubling moral question which according to Regan (1996, p. 4) involves "the needs to determine whether the deliberate killing of human beings in war can ever be justified." Aquinas (1998, p. 18) gave the question a Christian perspective when he asked: "Is fighting in war always a sin?" The aim of this study is to interrogate the answers offered to this question by Christian tradition down the ages. In order words, the study investigates how Christianity has approached this moral challenge and whether these approaches contribute to global peace or not. The study is descriptive rather than prescriptive. It is

divided into the following sections:

- The Scripture on War and Peace
- Christian–Pacifist Approach to War and Peace
- Christian–Crusade Approach to War and Peace
- Christian–Just War Approach to War and Peace
- Evaluation and Conclusion

The Scripture on War and Peace

The Bible does not speak with clarity on the issue of war and peace as it does on, say, the issue of adultery. Thus, at the root of the problem of war for Christians is the complexity of the Bible on the issue. R. Bainton (1960, p. 53) has rightly said that “every one of the subsequent Christian attitudes to war and peace (pacifism, just war theory and crusade) relied on the New Testament texts.” We just compare two passages for an illustration:

(1) *Joel* 4: 10, says: ‘Hammer your ploughshares into swords, your sickles into spears.’

(2) *Isaiah* 2:4, states: ‘These will hammer their swords into ploughshares, their spears into sickles.’

Such Biblical ambivalence indicates only a small part of the dilemma one encounters all over the Old Testament and New Testament on the issue of war and peace. Libraries are filled up in the efforts to resolve the issue but the polemic is likely to continue; perhaps forever.

Christian–Pacifist Approach to War and Peace

Pacifism is, essentially, the refusal to participate in or support war. [J. Teichman](#) (1986, p. 16) sees the main form of pacifism as “anti-warism”, the rejection of all forms of warfare. Teichman's beliefs have been summarized by [B. Orend](#) (2000, pp. 145-146.) as: “A pacifist rejects war and believes there are no moral grounds which can justify resorting to war. War; for the pacifist is always wrong. The philosophy is based on the idea that the ends do not justify the means.”

Christian pacifists ground their position primarily in the life and message of Jesus. Jesus taught his members to love their enemies and to give no violent resistance to evil. How can his followers then kill or support killing? At a deeper theological level, Christian pacifists such as J. H. Yoder (1965, p. 28) argue that the Christian narrative of the Cross/Resurrection reveals that the real power in the universe is found in redemptive suffering rather than redemptive violence. We resort to force because we yearn to make history come out right but it is argued, Jesus already demonstrated that the way you make history come out right is through laying down your life rather than taking the lives of others. A new kind of power is visible in the universe, revealing that all other kinds of power are ultimately illusory.

Two variations within pacifism are worth noting. Some pacifists have interpreted Jesus as requiring non-resistance to evil. Others, looking at Jesus' whole life, including the Cross itself, view him as offering nonviolent resistance to evil. He did battle, he waged war against evil, one might say, but he did not resort to evil to wage war against evil. "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (*Rom.* 12:21).

A practical variation under wartime conditions has been the distinction between not

participating in any war-related activities versus refusing to participate only in frontline soldiering and killing. Distinction is also made between Conscientious Objectors and Selective Conscientious Objectors. A conscientious objector refuses to fight or serve in all wars. A selective conscientious objector on the other hand, wishes to be exempted for military service not because he objects to war in general but because he considers the specific war in question unjust.

It is common for non-pacifists to express a grudging respect for pacifists but then to ignore and reject their views. Pacifists ask for more than that. They say, show us, from Scripture, how you can claim that Jesus is Lord and yet not follow his teachings or the example of the early church, which was convinced that participation in war is incompatible with fidelity to Jesus Christ.

Christian–Crusade Approach to War and Peace

In 1095, at the [Council of Clermont](#), [Pope Urban II](#) declared that some wars could be deemed not only a [bellum iustum](#) (just war), but could, in certain cases, rise to the level of a *bellum sacrum* (holy war). (Gushee, 2010, p. 14) J. Claster (2009, pp. xvii–xviii) characterizes this as a "remarkable transformation in Christian ideology of war", shifting the justification of war from being not only "just" but "spiritually beneficial. T. Murphy (2010) examined the Christian concept of [Holy War](#), asking "how a culture formally dedicated to fulfilling the injunction to 'love thy neighbor as thyself' could move to a point where it sanctioned the use of violence against the alien both outside and inside society." "Urban made the Holy War possible by drastically altering the attitude of the church towards war... Hitherto a knight could obtain remission of sins only by giving up arms, but [Urban](#) invited him to gain forgiveness 'in and through the exercise of his martial skills.'" In the 12th century, Bernard (In Praise of The New Knighthood, ca. 1135, as quoted in Gushee, 2010, p. 14) of Clairvaux wrote: "The knight of Christ may strike with confidence and die yet more confidently; for he serves Christ when he strikes, and saves himself when he falls.... When he inflicts death, it is to Christ's profit, and when he suffers death, it is his own gain."

Grounded in a peculiar convergence of tendencies in Joshua and Revelation, the crusade ethic slips the constraints against violence offered by both pacifism and just war. In the crusade ethic, the cause is literally holy; it has a transcendent validation. This transcendent validation is known not by reason but by revelation, often mediated through a prophet or religious leader. The adversary has no rights, and restraint is no virtue because the enemy is not just our enemy, but God's enemy. The criterion of last resort does not apply and the war need not be winnable—to fall in a holy cause is a moral victory, the surest path to heaven and blessedness.

Going through this list we come face to face with the very jihad-mentality that appears to be the motivation of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. For the Muslim, like the Christian, has the holy war in its tradition. The tragedy is that some in the Muslim world have pulled jihad out of the pantry and are now teaching and practicing it. But we need to be aware that crusade tendency is not entirely absent from Christianity today. Perhaps it is hard to gear up to kill people without investing our cause with holiness and theirs with evil. Crusade thinking must be viewed as a perennial and dangerous temptation rather than an ancient vestige of the Christian past.

Christian–Just War Approach to War and Peace

The just war theory is the attempt to distinguish between justifiable and unjustifiable use of armed forces. The theory conceives of how the use of arms might be restrained, made

more humane and directed towards the aim of establishing peace and justice. In broad terms, Christian Just War approach holds that Christians must not love violence. They must promote peace whenever possible and be slow to resort to war. But they must not be afraid to do so when it is called for. Evil must not be allowed to roam unchecked (Gushee, 2010, p. 23)

Over the centuries just war theory is the most dominant Christian approach to war. Until recently, it is the only position officially espoused by the Catholic Church. As late as WW II, most people regarded “Catholic pacifism” a contradiction in terms. G. Zhan, for example, testified that when he applied for conscientious objector’s classification during WW II, he was told by the local Catholic pastor, that it was impossible for a Catholic to be a conscientious objector (Finnis, 1980, p. 4). All this has changed. J. Finn notes that on the issue of peace and war there are today two positions that are legitimized within the Church as accepted applications of the Gospel message—pacifism and justifiable war. He argues that beginning with the 1960s and 1970s Catholic pacifists developed more clout than they ever had previously. This new wave of pacifism in modern Catholicism was initiated by *Pacem in terris* and was followed by other Church documents especially *Gaudium et spes (GS)*. We shall now turn to these official documents.

Developments of the Just War Theory

The just war theory originated in Greco-Roman antiquity with the trio of Plato, Aristotle and Cicero. Aristotle actually coined the term “just war.” For reason of space, the opinions of these canonical thinkers will not be pursued here. We shall limit ourselves to the influence of Christianity on the subsequent development of the theory.

Christian Participation in the Military

“From the end of the New Testament period to A.D. 170-180 there is no evidence whatever of Christians in the army” (Bainton, 1960, p. 67). This statement by R. Bainton is fairly well accepted. The problem is in trying to explain why this was the case. A. Mark and A. Mark (2008, p. 78), offered two explanations: “the use of force was seen as antithetical to Jesus' teachings and service in the Roman military required worship of the emperor as a god which was a form of idolatry.” Some theologians, such as W. Addis *et al* (1959, p. 40) however, reject that pacifism has anything do with why the early Christians stayed away from the military. They argued:

There have been sects, notably the Quakers, which have denied altogether the lawfulness of war, partly because they believe it to be prohibited by Christ (Mt. v. 39, etc), partly on humanitarian grounds. On the Scriptural ground they are easily refuted; the case of the soldiers instructed in their duties by St. John the Baptist, and that of the military men whom Christ and His Apostles loved and familiarly conversed with (Lk 3:14, Acts 10, Mt 8:5), without a word to imply that their calling was unlawful, sufficiently prove the point.

Whatever point this submission makes, the fact remains that there was a general recognition by early Christians that killing was incompatible with Christianity.

The year 173 AD marks a turning point for participation of Christians in the military. Christians were in one of Marcus Aurelius’ legions (Bainton, 1960, p. 67). Reasons for this sudden change have also been debated. For Shannon (1983, p. 12) the change “came from two external forces.” The first was the unification of the Roman Empire under

Constantine, making Christianity the official religion of the Empire. For "Beginning with Constantine, Christianity triumphed at the level of the state and soon began to cloak with its authority persecutions similar to those in which the early Christians were victims" (Rene, 1986, p. 194).

The second and most important factor responsible for the change in orientation of Christianity towards war came as a result of the growing invasion of the barbarians. The issue here simply stated is that "when the fate of the empire was in jeopardy, it was appropriate to defend the empire so that Christianity might survive" (Shannon (1983, p. 12) In [Ulrich Luz](#)'s (1994, pp. 26-27) formulation; "After Constantine, the Christians too had a responsibility for war and peace. Already [Celsius](#) had asked bitterly whether Christians, by aloofness from society, wanted to increase the political power of wild barbarians." His question constituted a new actuality; from now on, Christians and churches had to choose between the testimony of the gospel, which included renunciation of violence, and responsible participation in political power, which was understood as an act of love toward the world.

St Augustine

The major development of a Christian ethics of war came from St. Augustine. Augustine's context is important in understanding his orientation to war. Augustine lived in Africa, and Africa was in danger of being overrun by the Vandals. Only the Roman army stood between them and the destruction of the Empire. Hence as Shannon (p. 12) agrees, Augustine was "persuaded that order and the empire were preferable to chaos and that the survival of Christianity was tied up with the fate of the empire." Since the empire is Christian, the empire should be defended and Christians should participate in that defense.

But Augustine (As quoted in Draper, 1976, p. 370) was aware of the dilemma involved. In *Contra Faustum*, he described the dilemma: "[I]s it necessarily sinful for a Christian to wage war?" The Christian theologian answers "no." A Christian could wage war when he did so not out of hatred, but out of love of his enemy (Augustine, 1980, p. 75). Augustine contends that love prohibits Christians from killing or wounding others in their own defense "but the law of love obliges them to come to the aid of others and so justifies the use of force that inflicts harm on the malefactors." This duty to use force to aid others is incumbent on authorities as well as private persons, since "the injustice of the opposing side... lays on the wise man the duty of waging war." (Russel, 1975, pp. 17-18).

In carrying out such a duty, however, Christian's statesmen and warriors should love the enemy they forcibly oppose. Such disposition according to Augustine is not incompatible with killing, because love and nonviolence are inward dispositions. Thus, for Augustine, love was an interior disposition compatible with various actions, including killing an enemy out of the motive of love.

Augustine's code of war was the code of Plato and Cicero, with Christian additions. Cicero's just war was either defensive or vindictive. Augustine expanded and infused it with the divine purpose of waging war to advance the will of God and Biblical principles (p. 19). "War punished the wrong and prevented them from sinning again," (Wheaton, 1845, p. 23). In order words, the just war theory in Augustine has a broader, punitive dimension that sought not only to make the state whole, but also to punish the wrongdoer for violating moral principle (Phillipson, 1911, pp. 32-33). In *City of God*, he compared both capital punishment and war to advance divine instructions as examples of killing that did not violate the Ten Commandments (Russell, 1975, pp. 22-23).

“The war” Augustine (Bainton, 1960, p. 96) agreed with Cicero “must be just as to intent—which is to restore peace.” To Boniface Augustine writes “...war is to be waged in order to obtain peace.... If injustice can be corrected without bloodshed, how much greater victory! Even those who fight seek peace through bloodshed.” An object of the just war according to Augustine is justice. His formula is: “Those wars may be defined as just which avenge injuries” (p. 96) What sort of injuries? Augustine answers: “recovering lost right, either that inflicted by another state or by its citizens” (Russell, 1975, p. 18) An attack on the existence of the state such as the barbarians were doing was also according to Augustine an injury to be repulsed by war. Augustine further observes that the war must be just as to its auspices. It must be waged only under the authority of the ruler. “The taking of the sword which the Lord condemned referred to the use of the sword by another than the constituted authority.... The common soldier should leave the decision to his lord and obey even an infidel emperor like Julian the Apostate” (Bainton, 1960, p. 97).

Augustine classified Christians as Ambrose had done. Only those in public authority may take life. The private citizen may not defend himself because he cannot do so without passion, self-assertion and a loss of love. “The law which permits killing to ordinary citizens to prevent robbery or rape is an unjust law” (p. 98). “As to killing to defend one’s own life, I do not approve of this unless one happens to be a soldier or a public functionary acting not for himself but in defense of others or of the city in which he resides” (p. 98).

For Augustine as summarized by R. Regan (1996, p. 17), the necessity of war was the lamentable consequence of sin. War is both the product of sin and the remedy for it; in a world marked by sin, the use of force by public authorities is a legitimate means of avenging evil. War punished the wrong and prevented them from sinning again, rather than serving any desire for glory or revenge. What is evident here is that, Augustine unlike early in his life was no longer looking for the possibility of Christian perfection on earth. He recognizes that injustice and war will be part of the reality of life in his age. He felt however that Christianity should try to humanize war as far as possible. Augustine hoped that through war “justice could be restored and love could continue to be the dominant relationship between individuals” (Shannon, 1988, p. 14). Do we need to go far in history to see how mistaken Augustine was on this? The error in Augustine’s assumption will occupy us in chapter four.

St Thomas Aquinas

Relying on the authority of Augustine, St. Thomas gave a systematic formulation to the just war theory. In the *Summa Theologiae* (cited in Hehir, 1980, p. 18) Aquinas gave his classic formulation of the question “Is it always a sin to wage war”? He notes the reasons why war would always seem to be sinful: because the Lord said that “All who live by the sword will die by the sword” and because Scripture warns against taking revenge: “Beloved never avenge evil but leave it to the wrought of God” (Aquinas, 1972, pp. 80-85). Aquinas went on to present the other side of the argument about war. He cites Augustine’s sermon on the healing of the centurion’s son in which Augustine writes:

If Christian teaching forbade war altogether, those looking for salutary advice on the gospel would have been told to get rid of their arms and give up soldiering. But instead, they were told, rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages (Luke 3: 14). If the Gospel ordered them to be satisfied with their pay, then it did not forbid a military career (pp. 80-85)

Aquinas (cited in Gilby, 1960, p. 348) then provides the JWT with systematic criteria:

.... Three things are required for a war to be just. The first is the authority of the sovereign on whose command the war is waged.... Secondly, a just cause is required, namely that those who are attacked are attacked because they deserve to be attacked because they deserve it on account of some wrong, they have done. So, Augustine wrote, "We usually describe a just war as one that avenges wrongs, that is, when a nation or a state has to be punished either for refusing to make amend for outrages done by its subjects, or to restore what has been seized injuriously" Thirdly, the right intension of those waging war is required, that is they must intend to promote the good and to avoid evil Now it can happen that even given a legitimate authority and a just cause for declaring war, it may yet be wrong because of a perverse intension. So again, Augustine says, "The craving to hurt people, the cruel thirst for revenge, the unappeased and unrelenting spirit, the savageness of fighting on, the lust to dominate, and such like - all these are rightly condemned in war.

The ambivalence of legitimizing a limited use of force also appears in Aquinas' discussion of self-defense. Augustine had prohibited the killing of another in self-defense. Aquinas (cited in Hehir, 1980, p. 16) accepted the measure, but only by using the principle of double effect: public authorities could directly will the taking of life, but private persons could intend only the deterring of aggression, not the death of the aggressor.

Important to note here is that Aquinas following Augustine also located the just war within the framework of charity and tied it directly to the common good. The taking of human life remained a major moral problem for those committed to the message and life of Jesus; it could be justified only by referring to the defense of the common good. Again, Aquinas (1972, pp. 80-85) quoting Augustine says "We do not seek peace in order to wage war, but we wage war to gain peace. Therefore, be peaceful even while you are at war, that you may overcome your enemy and bring him to the prosperity of peace."

The Just War Principles

***Ius Ad Bellum* (Before War)**

As seen above, Aquinas (cited in Regan, 1996, p. 17) endorsed Augustine's position on war and laid down three conditions: (1) just cause (2) legitimate authority and (3) right intension; peace and reconciliation is sought as the ultimate goal. The sixteenth and seventeenth century theologians-philosophers Francisco de Vitoria (1971) and Francesco Suarez (1944) added three further conditions: (4) Proportionality; the evil of war, especially the loss of human life, should be proportionate to the injustice to be prevented or remedied by war (5) Probability of success; just war should have reasonable hope of success (6) Last resort; all peaceful means to prevent or remedy injustice must be exhausted.

***Ius in Bello* (During War)**

Aquinas deals with the morality of war conduct only implicitly. For example, he condemned any direct killing of innocent human beings, and he permitted private individuals to use killing force against aggressors only if proportionate to the end of self-defense. Vitoria and Suarez, however explicitly considered the justice of conduct in war (IUS IN BELLO). Their positions have been summarized by J., Conley (2010, pp. 18-19) Conley says, that the Church also insists that the conduct of war, in the rare cases when it is justified, must meet the following conditions:

- (1) The Principle of Discrimination/Noncombatant Immunity—Noncombatants must be given immunity and protection

- (2) (2) The Principle of Proportionality—Military actions must do more good than harm (Shannon, 1983, pp. 95-96).

Ius Post Bellum (After War)

In recent years, some theorists as [B. Orend](#) have proposed a third category within just war theory. [Ius post bellum](#) concerns justice after a war, including [peace treaties](#), reconstruction, [war crimes](#) trials, and [war reparations](#). Orend (2008) proposes the following principles: just cause for termination, right intention, public declaration and authority, discrimination and proportionality.

As a principle the just war theory is difficult to refute; especially in its most recent formulation in Catholic theology where the only cause allowed for going to war is self-defense. But what is true in theory is not always so in practice. Next we will bring up cases why we think that the just war theory is not the best approach to global peace and security before advancing our opinion on how world peace can best be realized.

Evaluation and Conclusion

Since the just war theory is the current dominant Christian position on war, this last section examines how the theory has fared in concrete situations since its inception in classical antiquity. Then we shall look at the moral dilemma posed by nuclear weapons to diehard just war theorists. The concern is to see whether any of the “nuclear strategies” discussed above can bring the world lasting peace. Finally, tolerance and nonviolence will be proposed as better alternatives to peace than the just war.

The Just War Theory and History

The basic assumption of the just war theory without which the theory loses its meaning, is that war is rule-based and as such should conform to certain rules of morality. The verdict of history on this is quite astonishing. No single war in the whole history of man has ever had its outcome determined by morality. Rather, war is governed by the logic of military necessity and nations do whatever they can to subdue their adversary. As R. Delahunt and J. Yoo (2012, p. 4) put it, nations do not “allow justice to stand in the way of conquest.”

In the Melian dialogue of Thucydides, Athenian just war principles did not stop Athens from destroying the Island of Melos. When, the Melians complained that the Athenians only speak of interest and not of right, and that this “destroys our common protection,” namely, “the privilege of being allowed in danger to invoke what is fair and right” (Kegan, 2009, p. 90). The Athenian envoys plainly declare: “[Y]ou know as well as we do that right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must (Hanson, 1996, pp. xiv-xxxiii)” In the same vein, the just war did not stop Rome from destroying Carthage, her old time enemy (Harris, 1979, pp. 163-175). It neither stopped America from using nuclear weapons against Japan nor the British from raining bombs on German cities to “break the will of the population.” In Hamburg alone, the British efforts to “de-house” the German population resulted in the deaths of 30,000 to 40,000 civilians as the city reached temperatures in excess of 1000 degrees and winds blew at over 300 miles per hour (Doughty, et al, 1996, p. 720). This large number of civilian casualties paled in comparison to the 90,000 civilians killed in Hiroshima when the United States dropped the first nuclear device, and the 35,000 killed in Nagasaki when they dropped the second one (p. 733).

During the Nigeria-Biafra War, Biafrans thought that the just war principle would prevail upon Nigeria to do what was right. When this was not the case and when the comity of

nations stood idly in the face of unprecedented human disaster; Ojukwu (cited in Achebe, 2012, p. 219), the Biafran Leader and the Ikemba Ndi Igbo, voiced out his frustration in what has become his immortal lines. The Great Ikemba cried:

For eighteen men, Europe is aroused. What have they said about our millions? Eighteen white men assisting in the crime of genocide. What do they say about our murdered innocents? How many dead blacks make one missing white? Mathematicians, please answer me? Is it infinity?

The long and short of it is that war is not a game; even if it were to be, we have seen how chaotic some games, a football match for instance, can become. War is a matter of life and death. People go to war to kill and die not to moralize. The idea of war, no matter what the explanation, is to subdue and conquer; to force the enemy by inflicting damage and casualties to surrender to one's terms, measured by any standard this is in total opposition to morality.

The aim of the just war according to Augustine and Aquinas is peace. In a remarkable passage in the *Summa*, Aquinas (2003, p. 97) insists: "We do not seek peace in order to be at war, but we go to war that we may have peace. Be peaceful then in warring." The historical flaw in this argument speaks for itself; for if we could make war to be at peace, peace would have been achieved centuries ago. Unfortunately, it was not only Augustine and Aquinas that believed this contradiction. Down the ages fanatics have zealously pursued the same logic. Alfred Nobel (Partos, cited in Partos, 1993, pp. 96-98), the Swedish Industrialist, actually believed he has ended war forever when he discovered the dynamite. On one occasion during an interview with a group of American journalists, Nobel reportedly told them: "perhaps my factories will put an end to war even sooner than your Congress, for on the day two armies mutually annihilate each other in a second, all civilized nations will probably recoil with horror and disband their troops." After Nobel came WW I, The US' argument for entering that war was that it was "a war to end all wars". It simply did not work. In only a few short years, the world was at war again—and how many wars have we seen thereafter?

Edward Teller, one of the men involved in the Manhattan project that developed the US's A-bombs used against Japan had a similar notion. After the detonation of the bombs, the very next day the emperor of Japan announced to the world his intention to surrender. Seated on the hill overlooking the Manhattan plant, Teller told his visiting father: "we have succeeded in making war so terrible that it will never occur again." It was not long before the Korean and the Vietnam wars started. Teller had to retract his earlier statement: "I really believed it. I was only 23 years and I did not know that this has been said several times before" (p. 97). The question to ask just war theorists at this stage is; if the strongest ground for going to war is to gain peace, is war still rational when it is obvious that it does not bring peace? Augustine hastily formulated the theory to save Rome from destruction; Rome was nevertheless destroyed. Had Augustine insisted on charity and justice towards the barbarians who after all had a just cause for attacking Rome (Bainton 1960, p.99) may be, Rome would have lived.

If Augustine and Aquinas were to live to see the harm they caused humanity; if they were alive to see how far Christian nations would go to exert victory in war; if they had lived to see the forces of evil, they unleashed on humanity by incorporating the idea of war within the framework of Christian ethics, there is no doubt they would admit their ignorance and recant their positions. But what about us who have lived through two world wars and saw the tragedy war entails? We ransack and tear scriptures out of their pages in order to

justify war that not only threatens the annihilation of humanity but maims, kills and leaves many including women and children in untold suffering. One cannot but lament with [Dostoyevsky](#) (2011, p. 284) “We have taken up the sword of Caesar, and in taking it, of course, have rejected Thee and followed him (the devil).”

Therefore, while it may be difficult, to find a specific passage of the scripture where war is prohibited, it is even more difficult to reconcile Jesus’ teaching of love with the terrible consequences war has visited on humanity, especially the innocent. And if people go to war to achieve peace and restore justice and as history has shown, war by its nature doesn’t have the capacity to actualize these, pragmatism and moral courage would demand that Christians become conscientious objectors to war, at least on the individual level. This is the only position reconcilable with Jesus’ teaching of love

Conclusion

War generally and Christian just war approach particularly, is a product of the false idea that peace could be achieved through violence Unfortunately, the fact that war that begins with the throwing of stones has snowballed into the use of missiles that could wipe out all life on earth should warn those still thinking that peace and justice can be achieved through war that they are highly mistaken. War does not fight evil or injustice. It exacerbates the situation and creates more injustice than it tries to resolve. WW II, Biafra and Iraq are the ultimate rebuke to those who would still wish to convince us that any good can come from war. Therefore, if contrary to the formulators of Christian war doctrines, especially the just war theorists, nothing good can come from war, the only responsible, reasonable and justifiable stance a Christian can take in war, is the position of a conscientious objector.

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