

## THE CHRISTIAN REVOLUTION:

### *What about the Crusades?*

#### Part 1: Can War be Just?

The story we've been examining together of the Christian influence on human society has been set against the background of the *status quo* of human relationships; a background of rebellion against God's law, corruption, brutality and manipulation -- largely the story of a privileged few benefitting at the expense of the voiceless many. The status quo story contains a prominent religious element, thoroughly idolatrous. The political power of the elites has harnessed the religious impulse in mankind as a means of ratifying, intensifying and extending its power. In doing so, it has utilized a captive priesthood to create a "mystery cult" of godhood for the central ruler or clique.

The "divine right of kings," simply another term for elite privilege, is a premise as old as humanity, and among the most powerful animating principles of politics. As Abraham Lincoln put it, there are

"two principles that have stood face to face from the beginning of time; and will ever continue to struggle. The one is the common right of humanity, and the other the divine right of kings. It is the same principle in whatever shape it develops itself. It is the same spirit that says, 'You toil and work and earn bread, and I'll eat it.' No matter in what shape it comes, whether from the mouth of a king who seeks to bestride the people of his own nation and live by the fruit of their labor, or from one race of men as an apology for enslaving another race, it is the same tyrannical principle." (Abraham Lincoln in his seventh debate with Stephen Douglas at Alton, Illinois on October 15th, 1858).

As the eminent scholar David Landes has pointed out, Israel's polity, *as intended by God*, was the first equal rights, opportunity culture in recorded history -- a non-hierarchical culture whose only governmental structure was a "chief justice" appointed by God the King to judge indiscretions under the Law and adjudicate the property and rights of persons inherent to it. And Christianity, as we have seen, was *the* major influence eroding the notion, of elite privilege in the broader world, with its universal application of the unique Judaic ethic of personal rights and duties and its message of individual hope and salvation. Where the cult of the tribe, clan or divine-right state was one of *collective salvation* through maintenance of a superstition-drenched narrative of the blessings of continuity, the Christian message contained the idea of *sanctification*, which in turn implied the possibility of progress.

This idea of sanctification should resonate with us as we engage in this study; we have linked the uneven advance of what has, by any fair measure, been an *unprecedented* change for the better in standards of justice, human rights, general welfare and health with the uneven nature of our personal sanctification. If the redeemed, who have been given access to the very Spirit of God in support of their development falter, why would we expect more from societies containing believers and non-believers in varying proportion, facing the inertia of millennia of entrenched perversion? To repeat the observation of David Bentley Hart,

"The ethical presuppositions intrinsic to modernity, for instance, are palliated fragments and haunting echoes of Christian moral theology. Even the most ardent secularists among us generally cling to notions of human rights, economic and social justice, providence for the indigent, legal equality, or basic human dignity that pre-Christian culture would have found not so much foolish as unintelligible."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> David Bentley Hart, *The Atheist Delusions: the Christian Revolution and its Fashionable Enemies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), pp 32-33.

One of the reasons for examining the Christian Revolution is to deal with a pervasive narrative of modern secular culture, which has seduced many Christians: that Christianity, *like other religions* (as opposed, of course, to sophisticated modern humanism), has had such a checkered past, with its intra and extramural doctrinal conflicts escalating to warfare, its dalliance with corrupting political power, its supposed opposition to science and material progress, *as to disqualify any moral standing that might be ascribed to it*. The Crusades, which we examine in overview, are the lynchpin of this argument. As one of the foremost scholars of the crusades has remarked,

“despite the many differences between the East and West, most people in both cultures are in agreement about the Crusades. It is commonly accepted that the Crusades are a black mark on the history of Western civilization generally and the Catholic Church in particular... The Crusades are often used as a classic example of the evil that organized religion can do. Your average man on the street in both New York and Cairo would agree that the Crusades were an insidious, cynical, and unprovoked attack by religious zealots against a peaceful, prosperous, and sophisticated Muslim world.”<sup>2</sup>

The same scholar, Thomas Madden, is critical of the common view of the Crusades popularized in the recent big-budget Crusades movie, *The Kingdom of Heaven*:

Crusaders underwent extreme hardship, risking their lives and expending enormous amounts of money because of their devotion to Christ, his Church, and his people... *The Kingdom of Heaven*, however, performs the delicate operation of stripping religious piety completely out of the Crusades. Balian (the central character, played by Orlando Bloom) and his father appear to be agnostics. Other Crusaders, like the Hospitaller, are openly critical of religion. Indeed, all of the *good* guys in this movie seem to have no devotion to God at all, only a devotion to tolerance. The bad guys, on the other hand, are all religiously devout, which causes them to be either evil (like Guy and Reynald) or mad (like the glassy-eyed preacher who chants, “To kill a Muslim is not murder, it is the path to heaven”). In other words, the medieval world is portrayed in much the same way that Hollywood views America: Smart people either have no religion or do not take it very seriously. The rest are right-wing Christian fanatics.<sup>3</sup>

Cambridge historian Jonathan Riley-Smith has pointed out that “modern Western public opinion, Arab nationalism, and Pan-Islamism all share perceptions of crusading that have more to do with nineteenth-century European imperialism than with actuality.”

Madden and Riley-Smith, along with the majority of modern medieval and Crusades scholars, dispute this characterization, while openly acknowledging the episodic outrages that did occur. The majority of modern scholarship has “redeemed” the justifications for the Crusades and the motivations of Crusaders in general. Why would the scholars challenge the conventional wisdom? Chief among their reasons is the context in which they occurred. We will examine the background facts about the Crusades and descriptions of the crusaders themselves.

But to understand the Crusades, we must also deal with a latent dispute within Christianity that gained new traction during the Cold War and amplified in the “War against Terror” – **is war ever justified?**

## WARFARE IN GOD’S ECONOMY

It can certainly be argued that, in a very real sense, the entire bible is an unfolding story of “warfare in the heavenlies”, as depicted in Ephesians 6. God, whose essence is Love, manifested in a just order, is

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Madden, “Crusade Myths”,

[http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/features2005/tmadden\\_crusademyths\\_feb05.asp](http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/features2005/tmadden_crusademyths_feb05.asp)

<sup>3</sup> Madden, “Onward P.C. Soldiers – Ridley Scott’s *Kingdom of Heaven*,

<http://old.nationalreview.com/comment/madden200505270751.asp>

rebelled against by His heavenly creatures, who enlist mankind in their insurrection. As a result, the warfare of God upon the “principalities and powers” breaks out on earth, as well, in the biblical narrative. The biblical narrative of the Exodus and the march to the Promised Land provides an illustration: on the initial march to Canaan, the Amalekites attacked Israel without provocation. Deuteronomy 25:18 describes their evil tactics – they struck those who were weary and trailed behind the main body of Israelites. These would have included the infirm, the elderly and families with young children. Without hesitation, Moses ordered Israel to strike back. Joshua led their army. Thus, the future commander of the army that would invade Canaan gained valuable battle experience.

As long as someone held up Moses' arms, the tide of battle would favor Israel. When his arms dropped, the Amalekites would surge. The battle lasted until sunset, with Israel victorious (Exodus 17:10-13). After the battle, God spoke. He promised that He would be at war with the Amalekites from “generation to generation” (verses 14–17). Yahweh had once again established His power. He was the great warrior that delivered the Israelites.

God's warfare is aimed at a return to justice. God had released Israel by *violence* (God's judgement moving against Egypt's 'gods' – the manifestation of the 'god of this world' – 2 Cor 4:4<sup>4</sup>) from their 400-year enslavement in Egypt and sent them to cleanse the land He was giving them by warfare. We 'moderns' often find the first act, God acting directly by His own power, more palatable than the second, His actions *through* 'the redeemed' (though we may struggle with the attack on 'innocents' in both accounts). But the drama illustrates *both* the 'kindness and the severity of God' (Romans 11:22). Righteous severity is inextricably bound up with Love. In the unfolding story of the ultimate redemption of mankind, God tells Abraham, *from whom He would create the nation that would be His means of transmission of His promises*, that the people so created would spend their 400 years in Egypt while the people they were to eliminate were completing the evolution of their perversions *over that same period* (Genesis 15:16).

The passage clearly implies that God was revealing an alternative to the Canaanites' path to *incorrigible* wickedness. The sins of “the nations” are always termed *transgressions* – a violation of a *known law* or *command*, which would echo the apostle Paul's argument in Romans 1 that all mankind has knowledge of the moral law of God, and is therefore culpable. In fact, the Canaanites, according to Rahab's testimony in Joshua 2:8-11, had *40 years of explicit warning* of the coming of God's instrument of justice! This is a key point in the examination of warfare in the economy of God – *it is for the purpose of establishing or enforcing His justice*. The Hebrews writer speaks approvingly of those “warrior judges” who have brought in God's justice, even by the sword:

“And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, *who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.*” (Hebrews 11:32-34)

Canaanitish religion, central to its society, was a brutal, sex-drenched abomination, involving ritual prostitution, worship orgies, incest, homosexuality, and bestiality.<sup>5</sup> We can understand Canaanite sin as an episodic manifestation of the level of perversion that led God to directly act against Sodom and Gomorrah, or that which precipitated His world-wide cleansing flood. God was the prime-mover in Canaan's cleansing, a fact brought into greater relief when we remember the fear-based hesitance to carry out God's edict that doomed a generation of Israelites to wander and die homeless. (Joshua 5:6)

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<sup>4</sup> Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, New American Commentary 2 (Nashville: b & H Publishing, 2008), 395-97.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 159. See also Clay Jones, “We Don't Hate Sin So We Don't Understand What Happened to the Canaanites: An Addendum to 'Divine Genocide' Arguments,” *Philosophia Christi* 11 (2009) 53-72.

Xenophobes (those who aggressively hate the “other” – a term used by atheist Richard Dawkins in his scathing reflection on this biblical episode), the Israelites were decidedly not. Princeton theologian Michael Walker puts Israel’s role into its proper context (a point to which we shall return later):

Israel has been brought onto God’s side and has been given a special role to play in God’s fight against sin and evil; *God has not come to take up arms for Israel.*

It is important to note that ***Jesus Himself*** was involved in the conquest of Canaan; at the outset of the first battle, against Jericho, He confronts Joshua. When Joshua asks whether He fights for Israel or its enemies, Christ declares that He fights for the Lord (Joshua 5:13-15). A heavenly battle would accompany the earthly.

The conquest of Canaan was to have been, to put it bluntly, “capital punishment” – the culmination of His justice.<sup>6</sup> But God’s Justice is always coupled with mercy (Psalms 85:10). Within the redemptive plan of God, the clearing of Canaan was for the purpose of preparing a “demonstration project” *for the benefit* of the pagan world (and ultimately, all mankind), wherein a purified Canaan would allow God’s glory to be declared through the blessings generated by the truly just society that would replace the utterly corrupt (Deuteronomy 4:5-9). Because there could be no possible credit given to idol ‘gods’ for the physical and social blessings seen in Israel, ‘the nations’ would be inspired to praise the one, true God. In this way, as God had declared to Abraham, He would begin the process of blessing all people through the people of his own making. But we know that Israel did not fulfill their divine mandate, and would suffer the long-term consequences of that failure. The cleansing of Canaan is an incomplete anticipation the final purging of evil as depicted in Revelation 18 and 19, as Michael Walker observes:

In the New Testament, the picture of God as a Warrior is by no means left behind. In many ways God’s judgment on the Canaanites as Israel enters the Promised Land foreshadows the Final Judgment, where the “King of kings” comes “to strike down the nations” prior to establishing the New Heaven and Earth in which the saints will reign with Christ forever (Rev. 19-22). Indeed, in his first advent, Jesus the King came to earth to battle against God’s enemies, and the victory of

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<sup>6</sup> Clay Jones, “Killing the Canaanites: A Response to the New Atheism’s “Divine Genocide” Claims,” *Christian Research Journal*, vol 33, number 4 (2010), see also Michael Walker, “The Drama of Redemption in the Conquest of Canaan: Considering Biblical Genocide,” <http://www.regulafidei.com/reflections/78-the-drama-of-redemption-in-the-conquest-of-canaan-considering-biblical-genocide> (2007), William Lane Craig, “On the Slaughter of the Canaanites”, <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5767> and Copan’s discussion in *Is God a Moral Monster*, pp. 159-168. Copan’s interesting and nuanced argument in the following chapter illustrates that the accounts of the cleansing of Canaan follows the form of ANE (Ancient Near East) literature (what is referred to as “exaggeration rhetoric) and, coupled with prior and later biblical references warning against intermarriage *with the people of the land*, probably meant that the cleansing was to be accomplished primarily against the political and religious aspect of Canaanite culture. (see pp. 169-185). Tim Keller adds an interesting counterpoint in his article “Sinned in a literal Adam, Raised in a literal Christ” at <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2011/06/06/sinned-in-a-literal-adam-raised-in-a-literal-christ/>. In that article he explains the ANE “idea of being in ‘federation’ with someone, in a legal and historical solidarity with a father, or an ancestor, or another family member or a member of your tribe. You are held responsible (or you get credit) for what that other person does. Another way to put it is that you are in a covenant relationship with the person. An example is Achan, whose entire family is punished when he sins (Josh 7.) The ancient and biblical understanding is that a person is not “what he is” simply through his personal choices. He becomes “what he is” through his communal and family environment. So if he does a terrible crime—or does a great and noble deed—others who are in federation (or in solidarity, or in *covenant* with him) are treated as if they had done what he had done.” In the case of Canaanite ‘innocents’, we can certainly recognize that death at the point of innocence would be far preferable to “marinating” in a culture of such absolute decadence.

God was achieved through the cross, which mysteriously defeats the powers of darkness (Col. 2:15), and through the Resurrection, which triumphs over death and destruction once and for all.<sup>7</sup>

The apocalyptic visions of Daniel, Ezekiel and John depict an invincible God of justice who will put the world to rights and establish an everlasting Kingdom of Peace, as evil is banished forever through cosmic and temporal warfare. In the well-known Bible story, young faith-intoxicated David shouts his defiance to the Philistine champion, Goliath; “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.” (1 Samuel 17:45). This phrase, “in the name of the LORD Almighty” is essential to justification for warfare. Israel’s aggression was only to be against those against whom God directed them or *those oppressing them* (Numbers 10:9<sup>8</sup>). In those situations, and only those, God would actually be fighting with His people (since, as we have seen there was a duality – against God’s enemies on earth and their spiritual allies).

In regard to defensive warfare, in Leviticus 26 we read of the blessings God would have bestowed on Israel for their obedience to His laws. They were told that if they obeyed, God would “grant peace in the land.” They would “lie down and no one would make them afraid.” The “sword would not pass through their land.” *Yet this promise did not mean that Israel would be free from warfare, after the initial conquest of Canaan.* Quite the contrary. God said:

You will pursue your enemies, and they will fall by the sword before you. Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall by the sword before you. (verses 7–8)

A similar blessing is found in Deuteronomy 28. There too, victory in war, not freedom from war, was the blessing. Israel's enemies would flee from them:

The Lord will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven. (verse 7)

So obedience and faith did not mean an end to war. It meant that Israel would have victory in war and that their land would not see war's ravages. God even created conditions that would prepare and hone warriors available for defense within what would be otherwise a peace-seeking culture:

These are the nations the LORD left to test all those Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars in Canaan (*He did this only to teach warfare to the descendants of the Israelites who had not had previous battle experience*): the five rulers of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites living in the Lebanon mountains from Mount Baal Hermon to Lebo Hamath. They were left to test the Israelites to see whether they would obey the LORD’s commands, which he had given their ancestors through Moses. (Judges 3:1-4)

*Conquest was not to expand beyond the boundaries God had set.* War in God’s *oikonomos* was never about aggressive conquest for glory and booty but about the bringing of justice and peace, as opposed to

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Walker, <http://www.regulafidei.com/reflections/78-the-drama-of-redemption-in-the-conquest-of-canaan-considering-biblical-genocide>

<sup>8</sup> This thought is also expressed in Psalm 44: “You are my King and my God, who decrees victories for Jacob. *Through you we push back our enemies*; through your name we trample our foes. I do not trust in my bow, my sword does not bring me victory; but you give us victory over our enemies, you put our adversaries to shame. (verses 4–7, emphasis added)”

the *status quo* of human history. We can see the impulse to aggressive, acquisitive war in the desire of Israel for a king:

“all the elders of Israel got together and confronted Samuel at Ramah. They presented their case: “Look, you're an old man, and your sons aren't following in your footsteps. Here's what we want you to do: *Appoint a king to rule us, just like everybody else has.*”

When Samuel heard their demand—“Give us a king to rule us!”— he was crushed. How awful! Samuel prayed to GOD.

GOD answered Samuel, “Go ahead and do what they're asking. They are not rejecting you. They've rejected *me as their King*. From the day I brought them out of Egypt until this very day they've been behaving like this, leaving me for other gods. And now they're doing it to you. So let them have their own way. But warn them of what they're in for. Tell them the way kings operate, just what they're likely to get from a king.”

So Samuel told them, delivered GOD's warning to the people who were asking him to give them a king. He said, “This is the way the kind of king you're talking about operates. He'll take your sons and make soldiers of them—chariotry, cavalry, infantry, regimented in battalions and squadrons. He'll put some to forced labor on his farms, plowing and harvesting, and others to making either weapons of war or chariots in which he can ride in luxury. He'll put your daughters to work as beauticians and waitresses and cooks. He'll conscript your best fields, vineyards, and orchards and hand them over to his special friends. He'll tax your harvests and vintage to support his extensive bureaucracy. Your prize workers and best animals he'll take for his own use. He'll lay a tax on your flocks and you'll end up no better than slaves. The day will come when you will cry in desperation because of this king you so much want for yourselves. But don't expect GOD to answer.”

But the people wouldn't listen to Samuel. “No!” they said. “We will have a king to rule us! Then we'll be *just like all the other nations*. Our king will rule us and lead us and fight our battles.” (1 Sam 8:4-20 -my emphasis)

Wars are certainly “good” for kings, and the share of booty relieves his troops of investment in menial work. We see the process at work in the account of Saul's son Jonathan's unprovoked aggressive attack in 1 Samuel 13, which led to their defeat at the hands of an enraged Philistine hoard, resulting in the removal of any pretensions of dynasty through the line of Saul. His rebellion would be repeated in his successors, who would, in time, re-embrace the very gods that Israel was to have cleansed.

**To summarize: in the war-intensive historical and prophetic narrative of the Old Testament, war is justified *only* to bring forth justice, *which will produce peace*. Wars of aggression are to occur only at God's instigation; defensive wars are self-justifying.**

### **HAS GOD CHANGED HIS MIND?**

The conditions and means by which war was waged by God's people in the Old Testament record seem clear. **The question which challenges those living in the Christian era is whether that ethic continues.** Many Christians sincerely believe it does not, while others as adamantly say “yes”. I must add here that I believe that such tensions, while they may sometimes be upsetting in the extreme, are healthy, if managed in charity by their adherents, because they act as a break upon thoughtless extensions of firmly-held conclusions onto “slippery slopes” that won't support them. We are to hold one another to account, as an act of love (Leviticus 19:17-18, Matthew 22:39) *and* to “disagree without being disagreeable” (Romans 12:16, 13:18, 14:13, 15:7).

The basis for a blanket anti-war view in Christianity is the interpretation of the revealed nature of Jesus Himself, and specific statements of His regarding aggression, response to aggression by others, and the general character of the ethic He established. Further, his statements in his most famous discourse, the Sermon on the Mount, seem to many to directly advocate the overthrow of Old Testament convention – “You have heard it said ..., but I say to you...”. Among those statements, “turn the other cheek” “do

not resist the evildoer” and “Love your enemies” (all found in Matthew 5:39-44) are often employed as the trump cards in any debate about the legitimacy of war. That these statements are contextually located in a sermon on *personal* ethics; that being struck on the *right* cheek would logically infer a “back-hand” slap of personal insult are casually dismissed as unworthy limitations of a universally applicable ethic. Christian ethics scholar Lee Camp puts it bluntly: “The New Testament does not teach a normative distinction between a “personal” ethic and a “governmental” ethic.”<sup>9</sup>

Such expansive interpretations have appeal; who would not wish to live in a world of “forgive and forget” in international relations.? At the same time, it is equally difficult to imagine true justice obtaining when the magistrate chooses to leave the sword sheathed (Romans 13:3-4); where all crimes are forgiven in the name of grace. Further, while it is true that Jesus meekly acquiesced to death on the cross, meekness is defined as “power under control”. Jesus’ suffering must also be seen as the ultimate defiant assertion of sovereignty – the Victory of God, on His terms. There would be no “cheap grace” – the demands of loving justice were met at the cross. Satan was unable to short-circuit the Divine plan (Matt 4:1-11). The *captain of the Lord’s armies* assaulted Hades and led many captives captive (Ephesians 4:7-9). In that context, Jesus’ prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane were those prayed by many soldiers since, “Lord, as I enter this battle, may I do my duty.”

A key doctrinal question central to this discussion is whether Jesus was putting aside the ‘old’ ethics of the Law of Moses, which seem strange and harsh to many. It is difficult to derive that interpretation from the passage which is most often employed to do so; the “You have heard it said . . . , but I say to you . . .” passages uniformly *intensify*, rather than abrogate, the common interpretations of the commandments. When Jesus says to do kindness rather than applying the “letter of the Law”, as construed by teachers that have allowed the Law to be ignored and corrupted, He is not overturning the basis for obtaining proportional justice in a legal dispute (*eye* for an eye, rather than a *life* for an eye), but pointing Israel back to the very basis of the law – love of God and love of neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40). Insult and trespass often escalate; it is possible to obtain more peace and justice by *foregoing* my legal prerogatives or appeasing my wounded pride. That the same can be true in international relations is unarguable; however, as in the personal example Jesus used, there is a reason for the objective standard of law, and a time when it is necessary to apply it.

As we have explored in previous discussions, Christianity extended and universalized the implications of Jewish ethics. Because many Christians misconstrue Paul’s statements about the Law, they may be surprised that the Jewish ethical system, properly understood, is God’s ethical prescription for all mankind, for *all time* (Deut 4:5-8, Psalm 19,119). Though the Law could not save from sin (indeed the law served to *highlight* sin), it remained the standard for ethics. As Paul himself put it, “Do we then make the Law void through faith [in Christ]? Certainly not! On the contrary, we *establish* the law” (Rom 3:31). **Jesus’ absolute fidelity to the Law qualified Him as the Paschal Lamb; the ethics He taught were “Old Testament” ethics. This being true, our presumption should be that the Old Testament rules for just warfare to continue into the New Covenant.**

And as Christ himself put it in Matthew 5:17-18 – “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. “ Jesus may have been referring to His death, resurrection and ascension as the fulfillment, or He may have had in mind His triumphal return; as we’re aware, Christians differ on this point. But if He meant the former, it must at least be admitted that He *doesn’t* say, “when all is fulfilled, the entirety of the Law will pass away.” Ceremonial elements in the law are universally agreed to have been “made whole” in the Eucharist, for example. In Jeremiah 3 and Hebrews 10, scripture tells us

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<sup>9</sup> Lee Camp, “Lee Camp’s Response to Rubel Shelly re: ‘Just War: Quandry of Christian Conscience’, available at: [http://www.wineskins.org/filter.asp?SID=2&co\\_key=278](http://www.wineskins.org/filter.asp?SID=2&co_key=278).

that the New Covenant would not dispense with the ethics of the Law; *it would relocate the writing of the Law from stones to individual human hearts through the work of the Spirit*. As Ernest Reisinger puts it: the Christian is not under the law as a covenant of works, nor as a ministration of condemnation, but he is under it as a *rule of life and an objective standard of righteousness for all people for all times.*<sup>10</sup>

A dispensational view of the Bible; ie: that the Old Testament serves merely as a context for the coming of Christ, and that, the law of Israel having “passed away” as inferred from statements by Paul, indicates that a “rule-keeping” ethic has been replaced by an “ethic of love”. **That the severity of rules and judgment has been supplanted by graceful love forms the philosophical foundation of modern Christian pacifism** (and to remind us of the topic at hand, the fundamental basis for condemnation of the Crusades). **In other words, there is an element of ethical *discontinuity* between the Testaments. The severe “God of wrath” has been replaced by the mild and graceful “God of Love”.**

Yet throughout the Old Testament, God is declared to be a “compassionate and *gracious* God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,” (Exodus 34:6; Numbers 14:18; Deuteronomy 4:31; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalms 86:5, 15; 108:4; 145:8; Joel 2:13 – author’s emphasis). Were those writers missing something? Was their worldview so backward and skewed that they just couldn’t see the harshness of their God? Why did John the Baptizer did not tell the soldiers to leave the military when they asked him what it meant to repent: "And some soldiers were questioning him (as he preached repentance), saying, 'And what about us, what shall we do?' And he said to them, 'Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages'" (Luke 3:14). As Darrel Cole has noted, “Can you imagine John giving advice to a prostitute about how to prostitute more justly? Yet he *did* advise soldiers on how to soldier more justly. What’s going on here?” **Since it is possible to repent, yet stay in the military, might it be because engaging in war is not always sinful?** Why does Paul refer to the existence and threat of lethal force as something Christians should respect – “rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God’s servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.”? (Romans 13:4b) Paul Copan adds this thought:

Contrary to what many believe, Jesus’ words about “turning the other cheek” after someone hits you on the right cheek are dealing with personal insults, not with acts of violence or force. Rather, Jesus said, “When insulted, be willing to take another insult.” Assuming that persons in Jesus’ time were generally right-handed, a hit on the right cheek is a *back-handed slap*, which even today in the Middle East expresses a *gross insult*. This idea of a slap as an insult is seen in Lamentations 3:30: “Let him give his cheek to the smiter and be filled with insults.” This slap would be roughly equivalent to spitting in someone’s face in our society.

Jesus is not saying, “Don’t defend yourself when you are attacked” or “Don’t help a woman who is being raped” or “Don’t defend your country when it is being attacked.” He is not negating the *judicial* principle of an “eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” (proportional restitution); he speaks against the abuse of that judicial principle to justify personal retaliation or vengeance.<sup>11</sup>

In the prophecy of Malachi, chapter 3 foretells the ministry of John the Baptizer and of the Messiah’s severe testing of the “sons of Jacob” according to the ethics He has prescribed, but which they had rejected. “I, the LORD, do not change”, He declares. James 1:17 states that God is consistent, with “no variation or shadow due to change (ESV). So, while we might see one aspect of His nature revealed in certain passages of Scripture more than other aspects, God’s ethical nature does not change. John Calvin noted, as we saw earlier, that Christ Himself appeared to Joshua as a divine warrior, encouraging him

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<sup>10</sup> Ernest Reisinger, *The Law and the Gospel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P and R Publishing, 1997) xvii.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Copan, quoted in “Jesus, Religions and Just War: CDC Panel Discussion, available at <http://www.rzim.org/usa/usfv/tabid/436/articleid/93/cbmoduleid/1045/default.aspx?id=6>.

before an impending battle. Joshua was warned to remove his shoes in the presence of this visitor, just as Moses had been at the burning bush.<sup>12</sup>

None of the above is meant in any way to indicate that Jesus was not the “prince of peace” or that he did not advocate the foregoing of personal rights under the Law for the greater good of reconciliation. His “You have heard it said...” statements were uniformly *intensifications* of the law’s demands, never relaxations. This indicates that his admonitions not to press our rights under the law (and revenge is never the goal of the Law, but restitution for loss), for the purpose of fostering grace-filled dealings with our brothers and sisters, were the standard under the Law, as well. It was *always* the intent of God for us to love others as ourselves, and as individuals we all appreciate grace. But with a more rounded understanding of the context of Jesus’ statements to his Jewish listeners, Jewish Christian David Brin reminds us that “our response to evil *does* have to be resistance — it is morally wrong to tolerate evil. However, we also must continue to show love for the evildoer. It should be noted that loving and praying for one’s enemies in no way precludes defending oneself when one’s life is in danger. One is morally obligated to preserve life, including one’s own. Jesus never taught that it is wrong to defend oneself against life-threatening attack. However, he consistently taught his disciples to forgive and not to seek revenge against those who had attacked them. As Proverbs 20:22 counsels, “Do not say, ‘I will repay the evil deed in kind.’ Trust in the LORD. He will take care of it.”<sup>13</sup> To reason, as many Christian pacifists do, that this personal option can legitimately be extended to the state is ill-considered. Inconsistency in application of legal standards by the magistrate is called *perversion* in scripture. (Leviticus 19:15).

**The foregoing further highlight the continuity of scripture in regards to ethics, including the ethics of human conflict.** Under the law, violence can be just, and non-violence unjust. In the law for example, a person who kills a housebreaker at night is not guilty of murder: “If a thief is seized while tunneling [to break into a house], and he is beaten to death, the person who killed him is not guilty of bloodshed” (Exod. 22:2). The rationale is that the thief is ready to murder anyone who surprises him, thus one may preempt the thief.

It must be noted that Jesus himself mentioned war only in two contexts; (1) that his disciples would not engage in a coercive war to “bring in the kingdom” (John 18:36) – that might have looked back to the conquest of Canaan – there would be no distinct “nation of God” but rather a people “salting” and “lighting” (Matt 5:13-16) whatever culture they found themselves in, and (2) the fact that “wars and rumors of war” would persist until the second coming (Matt 24:6-7).

## **THE WAY THE EARLY CHRISTIANS SAW IT**

The question, “How can the use of force serve just purposes?” arose early on in the Christian era. There are valid reasons for such a question to arise. Didn’t the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, in describing the coming kingdom of God declare that “they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!” (Isaiah 2:4b-5) Jesus’ maxim not to resist evildoers (Matt 5:39) would seem to indicate a pacifistic mandate. Jesus’ rebuke of Peter’s violent defense against His arrest, along with the statements referenced earlier form the basis for the inference that because He advocated detachment from the world-system, His disciples would not involve themselves in the most corrupt manifestation of that system, political war. N. T. Wright, in examining apocalyptic passages concerning momentous changes in heaven and earth, argues that, rather than speaking of the end

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<sup>12</sup> Darrell Cole, *When God Says War is Right*, (Colorado Springs, Waterbrook Press, 2002), 44.

<sup>13</sup> David Brin, “Jesus’ View of Pacifism”, *Jerusalem Perspective* (2009), available at [jerusalemerspective.com](http://jerusalemerspective.com).

of the world, the Spirit is referring to events that would shake up the socio-political world -- "Early Christianity was a counter-empire movement. When Paul said 'Jesus is Lord,' it is clear that he meant that Caesar was not."<sup>14</sup> Wright's view would correspond to nearly all of the early church theologians who address war and military service, as we shall see. Nevertheless, these theologians rarely propose pacifism, *per se*. Rather, their thinking would line up with the ethic of just punishment, coupled with non-aggression that we have previously examined.

A number of other New Testament passages are cited in favor of the pacifist position, including Matthew 5:9 ("Blessed are the peacemakers"), Romans 12:18-19 ("Vengeance is Mine, says the Lord"), 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 ("we do not wage war according to the flesh"), and 1 Peter 2:21-23, 3:8-11,13-17

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." - "Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened." But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil."

Though undoubtedly there were Christians who took these passages as rationale to avoid military or police duty, because they advocate the selfless, peaceful nature to which Christians are called, it seems clear, as we shall see, that others, including prominent theologians, did not make the *a priori* assumption that violence in the cause of justice was "doing evil".

On the other hand, employing Jesus admonition to His disciples to "buy two swords" has often been used to argue that Jesus anticipated that his disciples would need to defend themselves. It is as readily argued that He was ironically noting that, whether one sword, two or a hundred, the disciples would need to depend on God for their defense, rather than themselves. The "missed opportunities" of John the Baptist (Luke 3:7-14), Christ himself (Matt 8:5-13) and the apostle Peter (Acts 10) in their encounters with soldiers to point out the incompatibility of their belief with their profession are a more convincing argument in favor of the justice possible within the military.

In seeking to extrapolate from the admittedly limited New Testament testimony on warfare, the logical next step is to determine what early disciples might have thought about it based on their conversion to Christ. In an article titled "The Early Christian View of War and Military Service", the author summarizes a school of scholarly opinion:

"The rise of Christianity led to a rapid growth of conscientious objection. Accordingly to A. Harnack, C.J. Cadoux, and G.J. Herring, the most eminent students of the problem, few if any Christians served in the Roman Army during the first century and a half A.D.; and even in the

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<sup>14</sup> N T Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus* (Downer's Grove, IL, InterVarsity, 1999) 131.

third century there were Christian conscientious objectors."<sup>15</sup>

"The many early Christians accepted the injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount quite literally is certain and their attitude brought them into much the same kind of conflict with the Roman authorities which conscientious objectors of our own time face in dealing with the military authority. G.C. Macgregor (The New Testament Basis of Pacifism) points out that 'until about the close of the third quarter of the second century the attitude of the church was quite consistently pacifist.' Harnack's conclusion is that no Christian would become a soldier after baptism at least up to the time of Marcus Aurelius, say about A.D. 170 (Militia Christi, p.4). After that time signs of compromise became increasingly evident, but the pacifist trend continues strong right up into the fourth century."<sup>16</sup>

"During its first three centuries of existence, the Christian church was opposed to war and others forms of violence. Christian opposition to war early expanded into a denial of rightness of all coercive action on the part of the civil power. Thus arose that form of conscientious objection which has been designated as political non-participation."<sup>17</sup>

"For many years many Christian regarded services in the army as inconsistent with their profession. Some held that for them all bloodshed, whether as soldiers or executioners, was unlawful."<sup>18</sup>

"During a considerable period after the death of Christ, it is certain...that his followers believed He had forbidden war, and that, in consequence of this belief many of them refused to engage in it, whatever were the consequences, whether reproach, or imprisonment, or death. These facts are indisputable: 'It is easy,' says a learned writer of the 17th century, 'to obscure the sun at midday, as to deny that the primitive Christian renounced all revenge and war.' Of all Christian writers of the second century, there is not one who notices the subject, who does not hold it to be unlawful for a Christian to bear arms."<sup>19</sup>

"Christ and his apostles delivered general precepts for the regulation of our conduct. It was necessary for their successors to apply them to their practice in life. And to what did they apply the pacific precepts which had been delivered? They applied them to war; they were assured that the precepts absolutely forbade it. This belief they derived from those very precepts on which we have insisted: They referred, expressly, to the same passages in the New Testament, and from the authority and obligation of those passages, they refused to bear arms. A few examples from their history will show with what undoubting confidence they believed in the unlawfulness of war, and how much they were

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<sup>15</sup> *Collier's Encyclopedia*, Volume 5, page 612, quoted in "The Early Christian View of War and Military Service, available at <http://www.heraldmag.org/olb/contents/doctrine/ecvowams.htm>.

<sup>16</sup> *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Volume 17, page 20B, quoted in "The Early Christian View of War and Military Service, available at <http://www.heraldmag.org/olb/contents/doctrine/ecvowams.htm>.

<sup>17</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Volume 4, page 210, quoted in "The Early Christian View of War and Military Service, available at <http://www.heraldmag.org/olb/contents/doctrine/ecvowams.htm>.

<sup>18</sup> *Latourette History of the Expansion of Christianity in the First Five Centuries*, Volume 1, page 268, quoted in "The Early Christian View of War and Military Service, available at <http://www.heraldmag.org/olb/contents/doctrine/ecvowams.htm>.

<sup>19</sup> Dymond, *An Inquiry Into the Accordancy of War with the Principal of Christianity*, page 80, quoted in "The Early Christian View of War and Military Service, available at <http://www.heraldmag.org/olb/contents/doctrine/ecvowams.htm>.

willing to suffer in the cause of peace."<sup>20</sup>

In the essay "Early Christian Views of War: A Bibliographic Essay" we find the following statement:

Twentieth century understandings of early Christian views on war and peace have been primarily shaped by scholars in the fields of philosophy, ethics, and theology. Theologian Adolf von Harnack (1905) and ethicist James Moffatt (1918) argued the basis of early Christian pacifism without questioning the premise. In 1934 ethicist Robert Stevenson claimed that it was "among the early Christians that absolute and unqualified condemnation of war first appeared in the Western World." In the decades that followed, a significant number of scholars echoed Stevenson's claims with few qualifications. More recently Calvin College Philosophy Professor David Hoekema claimed the early Christian community "understood Jesus' commands to prohibit the bearing of arms" and, consequently, "...refused to join the military." The respected Mennonite scholar John Howard Yoder, Professor of Theology at Notre Dame until his death in 1997, claimed that Christians today cannot be faithful to the teachings of the early Church without being pacifists. The views of Hoekema, still active as a philosopher at Calvin College, and Yoder, whose works on pacifism have been made available through an online memorial at Notre Dame University, are by all appearances held by many academics today.<sup>21</sup>

Cadoux and Yoder embrace the "decline theory" of Christian History, which believes the historical record shows that "after the close of the great persecution in 311, the subsequent "Christian centuries" have not been able to match the spiritual and moral integrity of the first three."<sup>22</sup> Essentially, in the minds of these scholars, the development of doctrines of Just War are indication that the Church "sold out" pure doctrine, of which pacifism was the highest reflection, in the interest of procuring political power, or at least political favor. This view has become the conventional wisdom of most, outside and inside the church.

John Helgeland of St. John's University has done the most comprehensive review of both the Patristic literature and secular historical sources on Christians and the Roman military. His wider inquiry has led him to strongly challenge the conventional view:

Generally, the contemporary discussion of the early Christians' relationship to the Roman army has been bound to one confessional viewpoint or another. To a large extent all the authors display a position predictable once their background is known, and all have a tendency to find their doctrinal point of view reflected in the documents of the early church. Dependent on a theological approach is the assumption that the question can be answered adequately on the basis of a study of only the theological writings of the first three centuries. Hence, the relative neglect of military martyr acts and Christian soldiers' tombstones becomes apparent *as well as the almost total unfamiliarity with the Roman army itself*.<sup>23</sup> (my emphasis)

Helgeland first makes the astute historian's observation concerning how *infrequent* were the patristic references to military service at all: "Pacifist historians have tried to argue that, since the early church said so little about enlisting, it was a tacit understanding among the Christians that one did not even consider such an occupation. However, the lack of references to enlistment proves that there is a lack of references

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, page 81-2, quoted in "The Early Christian View of War and Military Service, available at <http://www.heraldmag.org/olb/contents/doctrine/ecvowams.htm>.

<sup>21</sup> Andrew Holt, "Early Christian Views of War: A Bibliographic Essay" in "Christian Pacifism" available at <http://www.crusades-encyclopedia.com/christianpacifism.html>

<sup>22</sup> John Helgeland, "Christians and the Roman Army A.D. 173-337" *Church History*, Vol 43:2 (June 1974) 149.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 150.

to enlistment— nothing more.” He proceeds to analyze their writings, noticing that many statements assumed to advocate conscientious objection must be qualified by other statements supporting the work of the armies. *In other words, the objections of conscience were not necessarily concerning war-fighting.* In the case of Tertullian, who wrote the only patristic work concerned solely with military service, *de Corona militis* (the military laurel) he provides numerous examples illustrating the main thrust of the work, such as these:

“The second section (7.3-11) shows how the crown had always been connected with pagan cults... There is no sense in discussing the military life in detail since everything connected with it is idolatrous and, therefore, condemned (11.1) Therefore, a Christian ought not enlist since it would involve deserting the camp of light for the camp of darkness (11.4)

Helgeland provides an exacting view of the idolatrous features of Roman military service, carefully elaborating the nature and pervasiveness of the rites. In light of such a “working environment,” it would be unsurprising if Christians avoided military service, if possible. As David Boyd discovered in his examination of the incredible impact of Christianity on the development of music, the early church avoided instrumental accompaniment due to its links to pagan cult ritual. And, as Christianity “captured the high ground” of musical development, it was natural to relax the previous stance. Such seems to have been the case with military service.

Helgeland concludes his review of Tertullian with this surprising observation, given the subject of the treatise:

Nowhere does Tertullian prohibit Christians from enlisting on the ground that they will be forced to take part in combat. He mentioned killing only in Chapter 11 where he argued that the army was idolatrous because it demanded the oath, the sword, inflicting torture and guarding pagan sanctuaries. Tertullian’s problem with Christian military service was idolatry, not bloodshed.<sup>24</sup>

In turn, he examines the works of most of the patristic theologians who wrote concerning the Christian’s relation to the state and the military: Origen, Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, Minnicus Felix, Arnobius, Lactinius and Eusebius. His conclusions resonate with those of N.T. Wright, mentioned earlier. The Christian father’s concerns were these – that a Christian must not bow down to other gods, and that just emperors would not require them to. His conclusion:

The evidence gathered from the church Fathers of the first three centuries proves that there was no such thing as an early church pacifism. Whatever objections to enlistment there were, and there were not many, were based on the nature of the observances of the official and unofficial religions in and surrounding the legions. Origen, though not objecting to army religion as such, did claim that Christians were exempt on the basis of their religious duty to pray and not to involve themselves actively in the daily affairs of the empire. These objections never claimed as their basis the likelihood that Christians would be forced to kill other people in combat... The church Fathers, to be sure, abhor war and murder; references supporting that stance are found frequently throughout their writings. An aversion to war on their part proves nothing since it is possible to hate war and yet admit that it is a necessary step to the solution of a conflict. Their references to murder are never in military contexts.<sup>25</sup>

Helgeland provides considerable documentation of enlistments of Christians well prior to both the great persecution and Constantine’s conversion, including the sad accounts of several soldiers that died because they refused to participate in the pagan religious rites. There is no scholarly dispute that

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 152.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 156.

Christians began to enlist in far larger numbers in the Constantinian empire; as stated above, most scholars have concluded that it was due to an unhealthy “permission” to lock arms with the corrupt state in the erroneous assumption that the cause of Christ would be advanced. Peter Leithart makes the case in his recent *Defending Constantine: The Twilight of an Empire and the Dawn of Christendom* that the cause of Christ *was* advanced, and substantially, as the result of Constantine’s conversion. Christian viewpoints regarding war had not changed; they were accommodated under the new political situation.

It is worth noting that the record of Christians serving in the Roman military is observed against the backdrop of a political system that was corrupt in a variety of ways, not least of which was its idolatry. Further, as the Empire matured, Roman military action was aimed at expansion of the government’s revenue base – conquest was followed by tribute. Yet there is near unanimity among the patristic writers that Roman polity, corrupt as it is, is to be preferred to the barbarian alternative. We must take Origen, for example, at his word when he says that Christians who were not serving in the military should pray for its success in battle.<sup>26</sup> In fact, the blessings of order are recognized as an advantage to the spread of the Gospel. Perfectionism and absolutism is not a characteristic of the patristic writings.

We began this exercise by examining the basis and conduct of war in Scripture. Several things became obvious: (1) God hates injustice, including the injustice of breaking His laws, (2) War is a valid part of God’s economy, at least in the Old Testament, (3) War in the Old Testament was about the restoration of justice, in order to bring about peace (4) War was not to be an act of unprovoked aggression—it was not for the purpose of aggrandizement of a nation. It follows that a Christian church with this outlook would, particularly when faced with secular governments that did not recognize those principles, seek to elaborate and urge such guidelines on the world in which it dwells, unless Jesus is to be interpreted as changing the Old Testament paradigm.

Based on this understanding, Christians developed a careful set of criteria that has come to be called “Just War Doctrine”. In his book, *Between Pacifism and Jihad: Just War and Christian Tradition*, J Daryl Charles details various pre-Christian ‘just war’ doctrines. For Lao Tzu, the founder of Taoism, it is inadvisable to rely on force of arms, since “such things are likely to rebound”. Aristotle said that the goal of going to war is to be able afterward to live in peace. Stoic philosopher Cicero articulated a set of standards in language that appropriated by Augustine, the framer of the original Christian just-war doctrine. But an examination of each of these pre-Christian shows that they were *utilitarian*, not moral. They were meant to “hedge the bets” of aggressors against a time they might be themselves aggressed against. Augustine his spiritual mentor Ambrose and later the great Christian thinker Thomas Aquinas, put forward *moral* restrictions on war. The only moral cases for war were these: defense against aggression, the righting of wrongs and the restoration of peace. It is important to mention that Ambrose and Augustine both lived in times of barbarian aggression and the disintegration of the Roman Empire. Lest we think that would taint their thinking as self-preservation, “both Ambrose and Augustine rejected personal self-defense, but both believed it was an obligation of Christian love to defend and protect the innocent third party.” Augustine styles the appropriate response “benevolent harshness” and says to restrain oneself in turning away the evildoer “is as much an evil as to cause it...For Augustine, justice and charity are not at odds”<sup>27</sup> George Weigel puts it this way, “In the just-war tradition, as rightly interpreted, the justified use of proportionate and discriminate armed force was *always* understood to be in pursuit of peace, which was the fruit of justice, security and freedom...the classic just-war tradition began...with a passion for peace.”<sup>28</sup> Rather

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 153.

<sup>27</sup> J Daryl Charles, *Between Pacifism and Jihad: Just War and Christian Tradition* (Downer’s Grove, IL, InterVarsity, 2005) 37-47.

<sup>28</sup> George Weigel, “The Just War Tradition”, *National Review*, December 2009, available at <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/228786/just-war-tradition/george-weigel>.

than to rashly forbid force where God has not done so, just-war doctrine constrains violence by limiting its legitimate application.

Thomas Aquinas reasoned, following Augustine and Aristotle, that just war had three moral guidelines: sovereign authority, just cause, and right intention. As did Augustine, he responds to the objection that warfare is unjust because Jesus taught not to resist evil by stating “a man avenges the wrong done to God and neighbor because of charity”.<sup>29</sup>

Below are the tenets of Just War Theory or Doctrine:

**Just cause**--*All aggression is condemned in just war theory.* Participation in the war in question must be prompted by a just cause or defensive cause. No war of unprovoked aggression can ever be justified. Only defensive war is legitimate.

**Just intention** (right intention)--The war in question must have a just intention, that is, its intent must be to secure a fair peace for all parties involved. Therefore, revenge, conquest, economic gain, and ideological supremacy are not legitimate motives for going to war. *There must be a belief that ultimately greater good than harm will result from the war.*

**Last resort**--The war in question must be engaged in only as a last resort. Other means of resolution such as diplomacy and economic pressure must have been exhausted.

**Formal declaration**--The war in question must be initiated with a formal declaration by properly constituted authorities. Only governments can declare war, not individuals, terrorist organizations, mercenaries, or militias.

**Limited objectives**--The war in question must be characterized by limited objectives. *This means that securing peace is the goal and purpose of going to war.* The war must be waged in such a way that once peace is attainable, hostilities cease. Complete destruction of a nation's political institutions or economic institutions is an improper objective.

**Proportionate means**--Combatant forces of the opposition forces may not be subjected to greater harm than is necessary to secure victory and peace. *The types of weapons and amount of force used must be limited to only what is needed to repel the aggression, deter future attacks, and secure a just peace.* Therefore, total or unlimited warfare is inappropriate.

**Noncombatant immunity**--Military forces must respect individuals and groups not participating in the conflict and must abstain from attacking them. Since only governments can declare war, only governmental forces or agents are legitimate targets. *This means that prisoners of war, civilians, and casualties are immune from intentional attacks.*<sup>30</sup>

As we scan the list, we see the reflection of God's standards from scripture. If we accept Paul Copan's arguments discussed in footnote 6, even the cleansing of Canaan conforms to this template. In his well-nuanced article, U.S. Navy Chaplain Commander Timothy Demy makes a number of important observations that ultimately bear on our discussion of the Crusades. He makes the following sober point:

Throughout its two-thousand-year history, Christians have justified, rationalized, restrained, and informed the act of war and the conduct of warfare. They have, in various times and by various means, both upheld and departed from biblical standards, and both ecclesiastical and secular leaders have appealed to Christianity's teachings for personal and national guidance and support... The apostle Paul wrote, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men" (Rom. 12:18). Yet, history and headlines provide ample proof that "peace" cannot always be the Christian response to the evil that people and nations perpetrate. Before we can think theologically about the *conduct* of war and in war, we must think theologically about the *cause* of war. In short, we must consider war and the

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<sup>29</sup> Charles, p 45.

<sup>30</sup> Timothy J. Demy, "Onward Christian Soldiers? Christian Perspectives on War" available at <http://www.leaderu.com/humanities/demy.html>.

problem of evil. At the foundation of the Christian understanding of war is a belief in the fallen and broken nature of humanity--a belief that all of humanity and every aspect of personal and corporate life are marred by sin and original sin. Our sin nature corrupts international relations as well as interpersonal relations. War is ultimately a reflection of and consequence of sin. The Russian author Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who was both a soldier and a political prisoner under the Stalin regime, said of the widespread effects of sin that "gradually it was discerned to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either--but right through every human heart."

Wars are fought on the battlefields of the globe, but they are waged first in human heart. It is in this light that Christian philosopher Arthur Holmes writes, "To call war anything less than evil would be self-deception. The Christian conscience has throughout history recognized the tragic character of war. The issue that tears the Christian conscience is not whether war is good, but whether it is in all cases avoidable.

The just war theory has three important functions. First, it seeks to limit the devastation and outbreak of war. Second, the just war theory offers a common moral framework and language with which to discuss issues of war in the public arena. As Christians and as citizens it gives us a starting point for discussion and cultural engagement. Third, just war theory gives moral guidance to individuals in developing their conscience, responsibilities, and response. When the war drums sound, they are often loud and there is frequently confusion, competition, and chaos rather than clear thinking about the moral and biblical consequences of what is occurring. Just war theory is a tool for responsible Christian living and citizenship. "<sup>31</sup>

The apostle Paul encouraged us to pray "for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a quiet life in all godliness and dignity" (1 Tim. 2:2). His words speak directly to the issues of warfare, spirituality, and evangelism. Christians must have a presumption *against* war, coupled with a presumption *for* justice.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.