



A PHILOSOPHER'S REFLECTIONS ON PEACEMAKING
AND THE JUST WAR THEORY

Clifford Williams
Trinity College

Introduction

Christians have taken a variety of stances toward the just war theory. Some have used it to justify participation in war, while others have used it to restrict participation in war. Some have regarded it as violating the strict Christian prohibition against killing, while others have regarded it as a morally sensitive way to think about a tangled and complex reality.

The urgency of looking at the just war theory can be demonstrated by the number of deaths in the two current wars in which the United States is engaged. In the Afghan war, the number of Afghan civilians who have been killed between its start in October 2001 and November 2009 (when this article is being written) is estimated to be between 12,460 and 32,057.¹ The number of deaths of coalition forces in the same time period is about 1450.² In the Iraq war, it is estimated that between 94,000 and 103,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed between March 2003, when the Iraq war started, and November 2009.³ Up to September 20, 2009, 4,345 U.S. armed forces have been killed.⁴ In addition to these deaths, numerous others have been injured and still more have suffered other kinds of trauma, including that suffered by family members of those who have been killed.

From the perspective of those who interpret the just war theory in a loose way, these deaths and other sufferings may not be too high a price to pay for achieving the aims of the wars, whereas these deaths and other sufferings would be too high a price to pay from the perspective of those who interpret the just war theory in a strict way. It matters a great deal, therefore, how the just war theory is interpreted. I will argue that just war theory should be interpreted in a strict manner and therefore it should be used to restrict participation in war. To set the stage for my argument, I

shall describe several highlights from the history of Christian thinking about war.

Some Highlights of Christian Thinking about War

Christians during the first few centuries were largely pacifists.⁵ Though there was little evidence either way up until 180 AD about Christian attitudes toward war, the church fathers between 180 AD to the time of Constantine in the fourth century explicitly condemned participation in war. This antipathy to serving as soldiers may have been motivated to some degree by the unwillingness of early Christians to pledge loyalty to the Roman emperor, which they regarded as idolatry. But it was probably motivated more by their conviction that war was incompatible with love.⁶ Tertullian wrote, "If we are enjoined, then, to love our enemies, as I have remarked above, whom have we to hate? If injured, we are forbidden to retaliate, lest we become as bad ourselves: who can suffer injury at our hands?"⁷ Other church fathers took the prohibition to kill to be absolute: Origen declared that "He [Jesus] did not deem it in keeping with such laws as His, which were derived from a divine source, to allow the killing of any individual whatever."⁸

This pacifism was largely dropped once Constantine made Christianity a legal religion in 325 AD. Then the question of what wars Christians could legitimately be part of arose. Both Augustine and Aquinas addressed this issue in some detail, and both became part of the just war tradition. Augustine wrote, "War should be waged only as a necessity, and waged only that God may by it deliver men from the necessity and preserve them in peace."⁹

Priests in the medieval church also addressed the issue of war, not so much theoretically as Augustine and Aquinas did, but practically in the confessional. They asked those who came to the confessional whether they had killed anyone, and if the answer was affirmative, they then asked whether it had been done justly. In order for it to have been done justly, it had to have been in a war that itself was just. This meant that both the penitent and the priest had to have agreed upon criteria of what would count as a just war. And it meant that the question whether Christians could engage in violence became intensely personal and spiritual, for it involved how much penance a fighter would receive from the priest, and "how long the disciplinary process should be until those who had fought would again be in a state of grace and could be restored to the sacraments."¹⁰

The medieval crusades introduced what John Howard Yoder called a "holy war."¹¹ In a holy war, the only consideration is the rightness of the goal or aim of the war. If it is judged right and of overriding significance, then it doesn't matter whether there is little chance of success or that no peaceful means of achieving the goal have been tried. In a holy war, the enemy has no rights and noncombatants may be killed if needed to advance the goal of the war. Being a martyr in such a war is the highest honor—all that counts is that one be passionate about the aim. In the



case of some of the medieval crusades, the goal was to rescue Jerusalem from the Turks, who were viewed as infidels whose presence in Jerusalem polluted that holiest of places. Yoder also pointed out that the goal of a holy war need not be religious. It could be the preservation of freedom or the annexation of a neighboring country. So long as the goal of the war is the only yardstick by which the legitimacy of the war is measured, and so long as the goal is held with great earnestness, the war can be called *ōholyō* in a broad sense.

I jump now to the pacifism of the early Anabaptists, which differed from the pacifism of Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi. The early Anabaptists read the New Testament as enjoining Christians to make living peacefully a high priority. *ōLove your enemiesō* was interpreted as prohibiting all violence, or at least all lethal violence. Menno Simons, perhaps the best known of the early Anabaptists, declared, *ōAll Christians are commanded to love their enemies.ō* Then he asked rhetorically, *ōTell me, how can a Christian defend scripturally retaliation, rebellion, war, striking, slaying, torturing, stealing, robbing and plundering and burning cities, and conquering countries? . . . Our weapons are not swords and spears, but patience, silence, and hope, and the Word of God.ō*¹² Because governments use *ōthe sword,ō* that is, engage in violence, the early Anabaptists disengaged themselves from governments. Even to be employed in a regional government that worked for the good of a local community was to taint oneself. It was to be part of *ōthe world:ō* *ōthe governance of the world is according to the flesh; the governance of Christians is according to the spirit. . . . The warfare and weapons of the one are of the flesh and fight only with the flesh; the weapons of the other are spiritual against the rampart of the devil.ō*¹³

I shall call this stance of the early Anabaptists *ōpassive pacifism,ō* because its advocates did not actively resist evil with any kind of force, lethal or nonlethal. Instead, they gave witness to peace by their own lives of harmonious community living. A number of later Anabaptists, including the Amish, the Hutterites, and some Mennonites, adopted the same outlook, but other Anabaptists, including many Mennonites, adopted the stance of King and Gandhi, which I shall call *ōactive pacifism.ō* In active pacifism, nonviolent resistance to evil is enjoined, and so is the use of nonlethal force. King wrote,

Nonviolent resistance is not a method of cowardice. It does resist. It is not a method of stagnant passivity and deadening complacency. The nonviolent resister is just as opposed to the evil that he is standing against as the violent resister but he resists without violence. This method is nonaggressive physically but strongly aggressive spiritually.¹⁴

Similarly, Gandhi wrote, "True non-violence does not ignore or blind itself to causes of hatred, but in spite of the knowledge of their existence, operates upon the person setting those causes in motion."¹⁵

Christian pacifists appeal to the life of Jesus, along with his declarations about being peacemakers and loving our enemies (Matt. 5:9; Matt. 5:43). Non-Christian pacifists appeal to universal moral principles, the universal desire for peace, or the dictum that violence always causes more violence. Yet another kind of pacifism springs from the just war theory. It states that, as a matter of fact, no war has ever satisfied all of the criteria in the just war theory. I shall call this pacifism "historical pacifism," because it allows for the legitimacy of war if wars could satisfy the just war criteria, but states that, as a matter of history, no war has ever done so, including the American involvement in World War II. I shall say more about historical pacifism later.

In the early part of the twentieth century, Reinhold Niebuhr was at first a pacifist, but later adopted the position for which he is most known— "Christian realism." This view says that though Christians are called to be peacemakers, it is naive to suppose that peace can be achieved simply by living peacefully or by opposing evil nonviolently, as the passive and active pacifists supposed. Pacifism, Niebuhr declared, "gives itself to illusions about the stuff with which it is dealing in human nature. . . . These illusions express themselves in the failure to understand the stubbornness and persistence of the tyrannical will, once it is fully conceived."¹⁶ Some evil is just too vicious and persistent, Niebuhr is saying, so that sometimes the only way to secure a just peace is to resist it with lethal force. Still, he said, we need to hear what pacifists say, "lest we accept the warfare of the world as normative, lest we become callous to the horror of war."¹⁷

Different Interpretations of the Just War Theory

Many advocates of the just war theory concur with Niebuhr's view. For them, the theory is a way of justifying the use of lethal force. Other advocates of the just war theory, however, regard the theory as a way of prohibiting the use of lethal force. These two stances toward the just war theory correspond roughly with a looser interpretation of the criteria in the theory, on the one hand, and a stricter interpretation of those criteria, on the other. People who interpret the criteria more loosely are likely to say that the point of the just war theory is to justify wars. Those who interpret the criteria more strictly are likely to say that the point of the theory is to rule out warfare. For them, the criteria in the just war theory are more like mandates to follow in order to reduce the amount of violence in the world. I want now to show how the just war theory can have a looser and a stricter interpretation by looking at several of the criteria in the theory.



Down through history the just war theory has been stated in different ways by different theorists. Some theorists include more criteria than others, and some theorists state the criteria differently. Nearly all theorists, however, divide the criteria into those dealing with the question of whether it is justified to go to war (*jus ad bellum*) and those dealing with how a war is to be conducted (*jus in bello*). And almost all theorists agree on some of the criteria, including the reasons for going to war, the last resort criterion, the criterion of noncombatant immunity, and the criterion of proportionate harm. I shall start with the last resort criterion.¹⁸

The last resort criterion says that in order for war to be justified, it must be entered into only as a last resort. That is, nonviolent means of resolving a difference or securing peace must be tried first. Clearly, though, this criterion is pretty slippery. The amount of money, time, and effort that are thought to be required in order for this criterion to be met varies wildly from government to government. One group of administration officials may think that a relatively small amount of money, time, and effort constitutes a last resort, whereas another group of administration officials may think that a much larger amount of money, time, and effort are needed to count as a last resort.

The second group would be interpreting the last resort criterion more strictly than the first group. They would say that the first group is too ready to go to war and not willing enough to try peaceful means of settling conflicts. If the second group were very strict, they would say that as much money, time, and effort should be used in trying peaceful means of settling conflicts as are used in waging wars. That, of course, would be very large amounts and would prolong almost indefinitely the time during which peaceful means are being tried. So following the strictest interpretation of the last resort criterion would reduce the number of justifiable wars considerably, if not eliminate them altogether. But following a looser interpretation of the last resort criterion, that is, after trying only a little diplomacy or going through only a short period of negotiation, would result in many more justified wars.

There is also a good deal of slipperiness in the criterion requiring that noncombatants not be harmed. There is, first, the amount of harm that must be considered. In a looser interpretation of this criterion, many noncombatants could be harmed before a war would be declared unjustified, and in a stricter interpretation, only a few noncombatants could be harmed before a war would be declared unjustified. In the strictest interpretation of all, no noncombatants could be harmed in a justified war. To do so, an advocate of this interpretation would say, would be deliberately to harm innocent people, which is always wrong. There is, second, the kind of harm done to noncombatants that must be considered. Kill-

ing is one kind of harm, economic disruption is another, dislocation is a third, and emotional trauma is a fourth. A looser interpretation of the criterion not to harm noncombatants considers only killing in deciding whether a war is justifiable, but a stricter interpretation considers the other kinds of harm as well. Advocates of a stricter interpretation say that normally only killing is considered in applying the criterion of non-combatant immunity, but that the quality of life of noncombatants should also be considered, as it is often severely harmed by war.

There is, third, the question of how to draw the line between combatants and noncombatants. In a looser interpretation, anyone who contributes indirectly to a war is to be considered a combatant, which means that there are many more people in an enemy nation who could legitimately be harmed. In a stricter interpretation, combatants are only those who contribute directly to a war—the soldiers, military officers, and administration officials—which means that fewer people in an enemy nation can legitimately be harmed. A stricter interpretation of the principle of noncombatant immunity would, consequently, rule out more wars than a looser interpretation, because many wars harm people other than soldiers, military officers, and administration officials.

The criterion that says that a war must not do more harm than good is also slippery. Even if the aim of the war is achieved and peace restored, it must not cost more than it is worth. The harm inflicted by the war must not outweigh the good achieved by it—the number of enemy killed, the economic disruption, the emotional trauma of constant anxiety and of living in refugee camps, all must not outweigh the peace that the war restores. If one interprets this criterion more strictly, one would say that it would be better for a nation not to engage in war if it had to cause significant amounts of such harm, even if a good resulted from the harm. A number of people are nuclear pacifists because of this criterion together with the previous criterion prohibiting harm to non-combatants. They also regard the criterion that prohibits more harm than good as ruling out the use of biological and chemical warfare. These people do not think that the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki or the obliteration bombing of Dresden and Hamburg in World War II were acceptable.¹⁹ Other people, however, do not regard these bombings as too high a price to have paid for world peace. They have a greater tolerance of harm than the former people have. For them, large amounts of harm are acceptable if they are needed to achieve the goal of a war. For those engaged in a crusade, or holy war, no amount of harm is too much. The only thing that counts for them is the rightness of the war. This, in effect, is to adopt only one of the criteria of the just war theory—the one which states that the goal of war must be just—and to set aside all the other criteria.

Giving more weight to one of the criteria in the just war theory is an example of another kind of slipperiness in the theory. If the criterion which states that the aim of a war should be just is given more weight than the other criteria, then it would not matter as much that noncombatants are harmed or that there is a great deal of other kinds of harm. Con-



trastingly, if noncombatant immunity and the requirement of proportional harm are given as much weight as having the right aim, then it would matter a good deal that noncombatants are harmed and that a disproportionate amount of harm is done. World War II is, again, a good example of this kind of slipperiness. If you mention to someone that you are a pacifist or that you think that the just war theory rules out most wars, they will almost always respond with a rhetorical question, "What about World War II?" What they have in mind, it seems, is only the aim of World War II, namely, the containment of Hitler. They do not seem to have in mind the number of noncombatants killed during the war or the other kinds of harm.²⁰ A stricter interpretation of the just war theory would say that these kinds of harm have to be weighed against the justness of the aim. An advocate of a stricter interpretation would say that it is sometimes better to give up the aim of a war, no matter how just it is, because the cost of pursuing it is too high. An advocate of a looser interpretation would rarely say this.

There are two other kinds of harm that contribute to the slipperiness of the harm criterion in the just war theory. The first is harm to the soldiers in a war. The suicide rate for former soldiers is sometimes higher than for nonsoldiers, and so is the incidence of post traumatic stress disorder.²¹ Furthermore, post traumatic stress disorder tends to affect people most intensely when they are closely linked to extreme violence, which is what soldiers in combat regularly experience.²² There are other emotional stresses returning soldiers undergo as well, including the emotional and economic stresses of interacting with their families. And, it should be pointed out, there is the harm done to enemy soldiers. Too often, one gets the impression that it is harm done only to a nation's own soldiers that matters in calculating the harm done in a war. This comes out in American newspaper reports of the deaths of soldiers in a war the United States is engaged in—the number of American soldiers who are killed is duly reported, but rarely is the number of enemy soldiers killed reported. One easily acquires the sentiment that the harm done to enemy soldiers is of no concern to us. A stricter interpretation of the harm criterion would say that harm done both to one's own soldiers and enemy soldiers should be of concern to us, whereas a looser interpretation would not count these harms so heavily.

A second kind of harm that contributes to the slipperiness of the harm criterion is the cost of restoring an enemy nation to its original condition, including rebuilding bombed buildings, roads, and bridges, and restoring economic conditions to their former level. Someone has to pay for this restoration. A stricter interpretation of the just war theory

would include this cost in the calculation of the cost of the war, and a looser interpretation would probably neglect it altogether.

The remaining criteria in the just war theory are also slippery, though in different ways. The criterion that states that a war should have a good chance of succeeding in achieving its goal is slippery because there are varying levels of certainty about whether the goal can be achieved and also varying levels of achieving the goal. The criterion that states that a war should be declared by a duly constituted government is slippery because what counts as being declared by a government can vary and because in some situations, such as revolutions, what constitutes being a duly constituted government varies. The criterion that states that a government's motives should not be greed, economic gain, or world conquest is slippery because a government can exhibit these to varying degrees and because they are sometimes, perhaps often, mixed in with other aims.

Those who adopt a stricter interpretation of the just war theory say that fewer wars are justified than those who adopt a looser interpretation. If the interpretation is very strict, the just war theory melds into what I have called historical pacifism. And if the interpretation is very loose, the just war theory becomes pretty nearly abandoned.

Moreover, since there is a continuum of interpretations of the just war theory, and since there are a number of criteria, there is no clean-cut way of evaluating wars. We cannot always say that a particular war, as a whole, is just or unjust. The most we can say in many cases is that elements of a war are just and that elements are unjust. This is true, that is, for interpretations that are neither very strict nor very loose. If you are somewhere in the middle, you will simply have to say that judging whether or not a particular war is justifiable is a very complex matter.

A Stricter Interpretation of the Just War Theory

I come now to the question of which interpretation is right. I shall argue that a stricter interpretation is right, for three reasons: (1) There are a number of practical means of reducing wars, means that have been shown to have a good success rate; (2) A high value should be placed on human living; (3) Certain Christian virtues should be taken seriously.

My aim is to show that on the continuum of interpretations Christians should lean heavily toward the stricter end. It is not to show that the strictest possible interpretation is correct and that no wars are justifiable. Still, if I am right, there is a great deal of moral force to my conclusion. This force is, first, that many, if not most, wars are unjustified, and, second, that Christians should make every effort to avoid war. In view of the tendency of some Christians to support wars, the moral force of my conclusion has considerable weight. It is, I believe, a strong conclusion which should affect the priorities of both individuals and nations.



Practical Ways in Which Peace Can Be Pursued

My first point is that there are a number of practical ways in which peace can be pursued, ways that have a good track record of bringing about peace. This point addresses the last resort criterion of the just war theory. It says that until at least some of these practical ways have been tried, a war is not justified. This point also addresses one of problems that critics of the just war theory level against itô that it is vague because it does not specify what you have to do before you can say that the last resort criterion has been satisfied. My first point responds to this problem by explaining how the last resort criterion is less vague than the critics allege. There are definite ways of pursuing peace among nations. The last resort criterion can, therefore, be taken seriously, which means that it must be given a stricter interpretation. A war must truly be a last resort.

The 23 contributors to a book called *Just Peacemaking*, edited by Glen Stassen and published in 1994, again in 2004, and still again in 2008, describe ten nonviolent ways in which nations can pursue peace.²³ They give instances in which these ways have actually been used. Some of these ways are general and some are specific. That is, some of the ways reduce the likelihood of any war, and some reduce the likelihood of an impending war against a particular nation. One of the general ways is for nations to reduce or eliminate the sale of weapons to other nations.²⁴ Part of the reason for such sales is to ensure a balance of power among neighboring countries. Though such a balance may be thought to be needed in order to prevent stronger nations from going to war against weaker nations, there is the counterpoint that once a nation becomes stronger, it is more likely to go to war, because it is now more able to do so. There is also the counterpoint that when nations have more weapons, they are more likely to use violent means to settle conflicts, and those violent means will be more intense than they otherwise might have been. In addition, some weapons that have been sold to other countries have been used against the seller's own troops. This happened with weapons sold by the United States to Somalia, Afghanistan, and Iraq.²⁵ American weapons were used to kill American soldiers. Moreover, two of the authors in *Just Peacemaking* say, "poor nations whose governments spend large amounts on military weapons are being deprived of much needed money for the necessities of life and are likely to have their human rights breached by a government that relies on military weapons to dominate its people."²⁶ The practice of selling and buying weapons affects not only international relationships but the quality of life in poor countries.

Another general method is to ban the use of landmines.²⁷ Though banning their use may not prevent wars from starting, they will decrease the amount of harm done to noncombatants after a war is over. Right now in certain Southeast Asian countries, farmers, travelers, and peasants are maimed and killed by landmines that were planted years ago. Though 156 nations have signed an international treaty banning landmines, as of May 2009, 37 have not, including China, India, Russia, and the United States.²⁸

A specific method of preventing impending wars is cooperative conflict resolution. In cooperative conflict resolution, participants look for creative ways to solve conflicts instead of assuming a win-lose stance.²⁹ They agree in advance to a number of principles that will govern negotiations, including these two: 1. Those involved in cooperative conflict resolution (CCR) must seek to understand the perspectives and needs of adversaries, even when they may personally disagree. . . . 2. Participants in CCR listen carefully for content, feeling, and meaning, before judging or offering solutions.³⁰ Cooperative conflict resolution was used, the authors of "Use Cooperative Conflict Resolution" in *Just Peacemaking* say, in central Bosnia at the start of the Muslim-Croat fighting.

Two Franciscans and an imam succeeded in mediating an agreement that kept certain troops on each side out of the fighting. Braving initial threats from both armed forces, they met one another and convinced the two commanders to meet for negotiations. The subsequent agreement lasted throughout the Muslim-Croat fighting: these troops never fought each other.³¹

Part of what brings about war, it seems to me, is a failure of imagination—a failure to explore ways of avoiding conflict. What the authors of *Just Peacemaking* show is that human imagination, when applied to peacemaking, can be as fertile as it is when applied to war. The human propensity to fight and to rush into wars, though, makes it seem as if there are limited options for pursuing peace, when in reality there are almost always nonviolent options that have not been tried because they have not been thought of. And there are nonviolent options that others have thought of and actually tried with some success. These facts point, I believe, in the direction of a stricter interpretation of the just war theory. The principle here is that nonviolent ways of resolving conflicts should be tried first. This principle is equivalent to a serious use of the last resort mandate in the just war theory.³²

What governments should do, accordingly, is to establish think tanks for peace. In think tanks for peace, people would study ways in which nonviolent methods of avoiding international conflict have been used down through the centuries. They would study the psychology, sociology, and politics of peace. They would do "scenario imagining," in which they would imagine various nonviolent "what if" scenarios—how can our nation respond nonviolently if another nation acts in a certain belligerent way? And they would be in touch with the leaders of the



government that funds them. The money appropriated for these think tanks for peace would match the amount appropriated for military think tanks that governments regularly maintain.³³

The High Value of Human Living

A second consideration pointing toward a stricter interpretation of the just war theory is that a high value should be placed on everyday human living. This should be done for two reasons: because God values human living and because people value their own living.

The assertion that God values human living follows from two theological truths: that everything God created is good (Genesis 1:31) and that humans are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). To be made in the image of God is to be made like God in certain ways. One way in which humans are like God consists in having the ability to do things. Accordingly, for people to do things is good, though of course not everything people do is good. Another way in which humans are like God consists in having desires and emotions. Consequently, for people to have desires and emotions is good, though again not every human desire and emotion is good.

We humans also value doing things and having certain desires and emotions. We feel that our lives are less valuable without them. If we believe that God created us, then we also believe, or should believe, that what we do has value because it is valuable to God, and that having certain desires and emotions is valuable because it is valuable to God. Our doing things, and our having certain desires and emotions, is, of course, valuable to God whether or not we believe that it is.

Some of the activities that we humans value are working at jobs, inventing, cooking, drawing, talking, and figuring things out. Some of the physical pleasures we humans value are the pleasures of eating, feeling warm, walking, hearing birds sing, having someone touch us, and many more. Some of the emotions we humans value are the emotions of gratitude, awe, wonder, and feeling loved, the satisfaction of having done a job well, the delight in watching people fall in love, and the appreciation of beauty. God values all of these as well—our activities, our physical pleasures, and our emotions.

Wars eliminate all of these values in some people entirely and decrease them in others. Every time someone is killed, whether on one's own side or on the enemy's, these values cannot be enjoyed by them. And to the extent that war causes injury, emotional trauma, dislocation, and economic disruption, these values cannot be enjoyed to the fullest

degree by humans. Nor can God enjoy seeing them exemplified in humans.

This second reason for giving a stricter interpretation to the just war theory, that a high value should be placed on human living, means that in comparing the harm a war does with the good the war is aimed at, one should have a notion of harm that includes more than simply killing. The quality of life should be weighed in the balance as well. This is true for both combatants and noncombatants. It is true for both one's own nation and the enemy's nation. The quality of life of all who are affected by a war needs to be taken into account, both short-term and long-term. This last point means that the just war theory should be given a stricter interpretation. All of the kinds of harm a war can cause should be taken seriously, which, according to this second point, are quite extensive.

A critic might respond by saying that putting a high value on human living does not show that wars should never be fought, for in order to protect one's own ability to possess these values, one might have to engage in war. My reply is that I am not arguing that the criteria in the just war theory should be interpreted in the strictest way possible, but only that they should be interpreted toward the strict end on the continuum of interpretations. The criteria should be interpreted more strictly, first, because the kinds of harm caused by wars are extensive, and, second, because all of the criteria should be used to assess wars and not just the one dealing with the goal of the war. This means that there is no clear distinction between the two kinds of criteria, the *jus ad bellum* and the *jus in bello*. The criteria dealing with how a war should be fought, the *jus in bello*, are as important as the criteria dealing with whether a nation is justified in going to war, the *jus ad bellum*. Unfortunately, it is often just these latter criteria that are used to assess wars, which means that the supposed just war slips into something like a holy war, a crusade, even if the goal is not religious.

The idea involved in this second reason for giving a stricter interpretation to the just war theory is connected to the common sense notion that the end does not justify the means. Sometimes, of course, the end does justify the means. In order to have a nice looking lawn, one will have to keep it cut. In order to have peace, one may have to inflict harm to get it. The point behind the dictum that the end does not justify the means is that the end does not justify *any* means. One cannot steal someone's lawn mower in order to cut one's grass. One cannot inflict too much harm in trying to preserve peace. My second point lowers the level of harm that can be inflicted because it says that the quality of life should be valued very highly. The end does not justify inflicting excessive amounts of harm in order to achieve it. If one values the quality of life highly, one's estimate of what counts as an excessive amount of harm will be lower. And one will do all one can nonviolently in order to avoid having to inflict any harm to achieve the end.



Taking Seriously Certain Christian Virtues

My third reason for thinking that the criteria for waging a justifiable war should be interpreted more strictly is that certain Christian virtues should be taken seriously. The virtues I have in mind are the fruit of the Spirit that Paul lists in Galatians 5:22-23: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. I also have in mind other virtues that are mentioned in Scripture, such as gratitude, hope, mercy, humility, and kindness. It is hard to imagine those who practice these virtues giving a looser interpretation to the just war criteria. They will want to avoid war at all costs. They will not want to harm noncombatants in any of the ways I have described; they will not be quick to defend the rightness of their cause with lethal force. When calculating the amount of good a potential war would do compared with the harm it would do, they will consider all of the possible kinds of harm and not just a few.

People who exhibit these virtues to their friends and acquaintances will also want to exhibit them to their enemies. Such people will not deal harshly with those who mistreat them or try to take advantage of them. They will do good to them, not returning harm for harm, partly because that is the virtuous way to react and partly because by so doing the enemies may become gentler and less offensive. "A soft answer turns away wrath," declares Proverbs (Prov. 15:1). This is as true of nations as it is of individuals. If you are less threatening to them, often they will be less threatening to you.

We can call the virtues I have mentioned the "gentle virtues." They contrast with the "tough virtues" — courage, justice, persistence, defense of the innocent, standing up for what is right, and the like. Someone may respond to my third point by saying that these tough virtues are also Christian virtues, and that when we combine them with a realistic assessment of the persistence and strength of evil, war will sometimes be required. Some enemies will not respond gently to kindness and gentleness. They will take advantage of it. They will try to overpower those whom they regard as weak. They will not stop at anything short of domination. A soft answer does not always turn away wrath. This means that sometimes the tough virtues have to be practiced instead of the gentle virtues.

My response to this reaction is the same as my response in the last point. I am not trying to show that the gentle virtues should always have more moral weight than the tough ones and that the strictest possible interpretation of the just war theory is right. Demonstrating that one virtue has more moral weight than another is notoriously difficult. Still, one

important thing can be said about the gentle virtues, and this is that the identity of being Christian is so tied up with them that to ignore them or downplay them, as the looser interpretation of the just war theory does, is to give up what it means to be Christian. Those who are Christian will not want to harm anyone in any of the ways connected with the quality of human living, which means that they will take the principles of noncombatant immunity and proportionate harm seriously. They will have patience in dealing with government leaders of nations who are hard to get along with, which means that they will take the last resort criterion seriously. They will, in short, go for a stricter interpretation of the just war criteria. They will make it their priority to be reconcilers and peacemakers.

Conclusion

That the just war theory should be given a stricter interpretation means several things. It means, first, that government leaders should weigh seriously all of the criteria when deciding to go to war and not just the goal of the war. If the only matter that a government considers is the goal, then it is not taking seriously the question of how harmful the means must be to achieve the goal. If what I have said is right, governments should consider the long-term harm done to surviving soldiers and their families, both in their own country and in the enemy's, the long-term harm done to the noncombatants in the enemy country, as well as the number of soldiers who will have to be killed, plus the cost of restoring the enemy country to its original state. Taking the just war theory more strictly means that governments will sometimes say that achieving the goal of an impending war, good as it may be, does not justify the means that will have to be used to achieve it. It means that governments will exert large efforts to avoid war, much larger than any current government anywhere in the world seems to be exerting.

Giving the just war theory a stricter interpretation means, second, that fewer wars pass the criteria, perhaps not many. I have not argued that no wars pass the criteria. To do this, I would have had to show that the peacemaking methods are always successful, that the value put on human living is so high that it should never be abrogated, and that the gentle Christian virtues should always outweigh the tough Christian virtues when they cannot both be practiced. Each of these assertions is, however, much more difficult to show than the more modest, but still compelling, claims I have been making: that peacemaking methods have a good track record, that human living should be valued highly, and that the gentle Christian virtues should be pursued. These claims, mean, I believe, that one should be unwilling to go to war except as a very last resort, and that most wars fail to meet the just war criteria, because those criteria set high standards.

Giving the just war theory a stricter interpretation means, third, and most importantly for the purpose of this article, that Christians should



regard peacemaking as a priority. If the ten peacemaking methods have a good track record, Christians should try to use them. If Christians value human living highly, they should do all they can to avoid damaging it. If the gentle Christian virtues are important, Christians should pursue them, both among individual acquaintances and internationally. Peacemaking should take its place alongside other highly valued Christian activities, such as doing works of compassion and evangelism. All Christian denominations should be known as peace churches, not just a select few. Individual Christians should engage in peacemaking for themselves and support others who engage in it. They do not have to be pacifists to be known as peacemakers. They do not have to decide cases in which it is difficult to tell whether a war is just before committing to work for peace. They may even believe that a particular war is tragically justifiable but still want their government to use nonviolent means to try to end it.

This third conclusion needs especially to be taken to heart by evangelical Christians, who for some decades have had a reputation for their willingness to support wars. Perhaps they have tuned in to the tough virtues more than the gentle ones. Perhaps they have not had as wide a notion of the value of human living as I have articulated. Perhaps their ethos of being at war with a secular culture has carried over to their thinking about international relationships. Whatever the reason, I believe it is time for them to become known as advocates for peace. This would be one way for them to live out the maxim, "They will know we are Christians by our love."³⁴

I want to end by noting that theorizing about war from a distance is enhanced considerably when one reads firsthand accounts of soldiers who have participated in a war. One learns about different kinds of harm done to soldiers and noncombatants. One thinks more realistically about weighing the goal of a war against the harm that will be done in achieving that goal. Theorizing about war is also enhanced by reading about postwar reconstruction in enemy nations. This, too, makes one think more realistically about war. Both kinds of information support my contention that a wide array of harm needs to be considered when assessing a war— not just killing and not just the goal of a war. And the information also makes one more sensitive to human suffering, and, therefore, more convinced of my second reason for adopting a stricter interpretation of the just war theory— that a high value should be placed on all aspects of human living. Adopting this high value means, I believe, that one should adopt peacemaking as a prime virtue.³⁵

¹This estimate comes from "Civilian casualties of the War in Afghanistan (2001-present)" at Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org). The number includes deaths resulting both from U.S.-led military actions and insurgent actions, and it includes direct and indirect deaths. There is no official figure for the number of civilians killed in the Afghanistan War, but estimates are made by a number of independent organizations, including the Associated Press, Human Rights Watch, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), *The Los Angeles Times*, the Afghanistan Rights Monitor, and *The Guardian*, all of which the Wikipedia article makes reference to.

²This number comes from "Coalition casualties in Afghanistan" at Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org).

³"Iraq Body Count" at <http://www.iraqbodycount.org/>. See "Iraq Body Count Project" on Wikipedia for a discussion of the Iraq Body Count project. See also "Casualties of the Iraq War" on Wikipedia where other estimates are given.

⁴"Casualties of the Iraq War" on Wikipedia. There were also 318 deaths from the coalition forces of other nations, as of February 24, 2009, and 1315 deaths of contractors in Iraq, as of January 2009.

⁵My sources for much of what is contained in this and the next three paragraphs are Roland Bainton, *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1960), Ch. 5, "The Pacifism of the Early Church," 66-84, and John Howard Yoder, *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution*, eds., Theodore J. Koontz and Andy Alexis-Baker (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009).

⁶This is Bainton's conclusion in *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace*, 77.

⁷Quoted in Arthur Holmes, ed., *War and Christian Ethics: Classic Readings on the Morality of War* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 42, from Tertullian, *Apology*, 30-38, trans. S. Thelwall, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, Vol. 3, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950-1957). Also quoted in Bainton, *op. cit.*, 77.

⁸Quoted in Holmes, *War and Christian Ethics*, 48, from Origen, *Against Celsus*, 3.7, trans. F. Crombie, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 4. Also quoted in Bainton, *op. cit.*, 78, as "God did not deem it becoming to his own divine legislation to allow the killing of any man whatever."

⁹Quoted in Holmes, *War and Christian Ethics*, 62-63, from Augustine, *Letter*, 189, 6, trans. J. G. Cunningham, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (1st series), Vol. 1, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994; originally published by Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1886-1890). Also quoted in Bainton, *op. cit.*, 95-96. See the selections from Aquinas in Holmes, *op. cit.*, 102-117, in which Aquinas discusses laws regarding foreigners, the criteria for a just war, strife, and sedition. These selections are drawn from Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* 2-2, QQ 40-42.

¹⁰Yoder, *Christian Attitudes*, 84.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 29, 32.

¹²Quoted in Holmes, *War and Christian Ethics*, 186, from Menno Simons, "A Reply to False Accusations," in *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*,



trans. Leonard Verduin and ed. J. C. Wenger (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956).

¹³Quoted in Bainton, *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace*, 155, from A. J. F. Zieglschmid, ed., *Die älteste Chronik der Hutterischen Brüder* (Ithaca, 1943), 199, n. 3.

¹⁴Martin Luther King Jr., "The Power of Nonviolence," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed., James M. Washington (New York: HarperSanFrancisco: 1986), 12.

¹⁵Mahatma Gandhi, *The Essential Gandhi: An Anthology of His Writings on His Life, Work and Ideas*, ed., Louis Fischer (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), 198.

¹⁶Quoted in Holmes, *War and Christian Ethics*, 309-312, from Reinhold Niebuhr, *Christianity and Power Politics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), Ch. 1.

¹⁷Quoted in Holmes, *War and Christian Ethics*, 313.

¹⁸For a survey of the different versions of the just war theory, see Yoder, Chapter 6, "Criteria of the Just War Theory," 88-94. For a discussion of how these criteria can be interpreted differently, see Yoder, Chapter 7, "Interpreting the Just War Criteria," 95-104.

One short though fairly standard list of criteria is as follows:

1. A war should be declared by a duly constituted authority.
2. A war should have a just goal.
3. A war should be fought only as a last resort.
4. A war should not cause more harm than the good it brings about.
5. A war should not harm noncombatants.
6. A war should have a reasonable chance of succeeding in achieving its goal.

¹⁹See note 16 for figures of deaths resulting from these bombings.

²⁰According to Martin Gilbert, *The Second World War: A Complete History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1989), between September 1939 and August 1945 "more than forty-six million soldiers and civilians perished [in World War II], many in circumstances of prolonged and horrifying cruelty" (1). According to "Noncombatant Deaths in WW II" (<http://www.holocaust-history.org/~rjg/deaths.shtml>), which cites Gilbert's book, pages 746, 715, 696, 448, 641, and 649, the Western Allies killed two million Japanese civilians and 800,000 German civilians. The number of civilians killed at the Hiroshima bombing in Japan was 138,890; the number of civilians killed at the Nagasaki bombing was 48,857; the number killed at Hamburg in July 1943 was 42,000; and the number killed at Dresden in February 1945 was 39,773 "officially identified dead," most of them burned, and "at least 20,000 more bodies were buried beneath ruins, or incinerated beyond recognition, even as bodies."

²¹For the suicide rate, see "Officials: Army Suicides at 3-Decade High," by Pauline Jelenek, Associated Press, January 29, 2009. For post traumatic stress

disorder (PTSD) among returning soldiers, see <http://ptsdcombat.blogspot.com/2006/04/ptsd-statistics-wwii-to-iraq.html>.

²²I owe this point and the reference in the last note to Matthew Heller, Department of Psychology, Trinity College.

²³Glen H. Stassen, ed., *Just Peacemaking: The New Paradigm for the Ethics of Peace and War* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2008).

²⁴Barbara Green and Glen Stassen, Chapter 9, "Reduce Offensive Weapons and Weapons Trade," in Stassen, ed., *Just Peacemaking*, 186-90.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 187.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷*Ibid.*, 190-91.

²⁸Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottawa_Treaty "The Ottawa Treaty or the Mine Ban Treaty, formally the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, bans completely all anti-personnel landmines (AP-mines). As of May 2009 [update], there were 156 States Parties to the treaty. Two states have signed but not yet ratified it. Thirty-seven states, including the People's Republic of China, India, Russia and the United States, are not party to the Convention."

²⁹Steven Brion-Meisels, Meenakshi Chhabra, David Cortright, David Steele, Gary Gunderson, and Edward LeRoy Long, Jr., Chapter 3, "Use Cooperative Conflict Resolution," in Stassen, ed., *Just Peacemaking*, 71-74.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 72.

³¹*Ibid.*, 79.

³²In addition to the methods described by the authors of *Just Peacemaking*, Roland Bainton describes others in Chapter 15, "What Then?" in his *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace*, 252-68.

³³For a list of American military think tanks, see <http://militaryreporters.org/?p=282>, and for further information enter "<federal military think tanks>" into a search engine. No doubt some of what military think tanks do is envision scenarios of peace.

³⁴For information on the militaristic tendencies of evangelicals, see James K. Wellman, Jr., "Is War Normal for Evangelical Christians?" in James K. Wellman, Jr., ed., *Belief and Bloodshed: Religion and Violence Across Time and Tradition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 195-210. For a discussion of what role religion plays in war, see Meic Pearse, *The Gods of War: Is Religion the Primary Cause of Violent Conflict?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007).

³⁵One can find accounts of war experiences by putting "<personal war experiences>" into Google or Amazon. One can find accounts of postwar reconstruction by putting "<postwar>" plus the name of a particular war into Google or Amazon. I want to thank Michael Cooper, Matt Heller, Laurie Matthias, and Sylvie Raquel, all of Trinity International University, for their helpful comments on this paper.