



CHRISTIAN PACIFISM AND JUST WAR THEORY

Discipleship and the Ethics of War,
Violence and the Use of Force

Harold Palmer

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ISBN (13) (Paperback): 978-1-68109-031-3
ISBN (10) (Paperback): 1-68109-031-7
ISBN (13) (Kindle): 978-1-68109-032-0
ISBN (10) (Kindle): 1-68109-032-5
ISBN (13) (ePub): 978-1-68109-033-7
ISBN (10) (ePub): 1-68109-033-3



LogosLight™
an imprint of TellerBooks™
TellerBooks.com/LogosLight



www.TellerBooks.com

Manufactured in the U.S.A.

Cover: Jacques-Louis David, The Intervention of the Sabine Women
(1799, Public Domain image)

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ABOUT THE IMPRINT

The LogosLight™ imprint first started with the collection *The Church Fathers Speak*, a compilation of the voices of the early Church fathers and their teachings on sanctity and Christ-like living. This ancient wisdom guides the reader on the path to cultivating holiness that yields self-dominion, patience, and virtue.

LogosLight has since grown to encompass Christian poetry and inspirational books, translations of the Bible and Hebrew Scriptures, and various Christian records and Liturgies.

LogosLight books also examine the role of Judeo-Christian thought on the formation of Western civic institutions, the moral foundations of just societies, and the role of faith in civil governance.



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ABBREVIATIONS

English Translations of the Bible:

ASV	American Standard Version
BBE	Bible in Basic English
Darby.....	Darby Bible
ESV	English Standard Version
ISV	International Standard Version
KJV	King James Version
MKJV.....	Modern King James Version
NIV.....	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
RSV	Revised Standard Version

Books of the Bible:

1Ch	1 Chronicles
1Co	1 Corinthians
1Jn	1 John
1Ki.....	1 Kings
1Pe.....	1 Peter
1Sa.....	1 Samuel
1Th	1 Thessalonians
1Ti	1 Timothy
2Ch	2 Chronicles
2Co	2 Corinthians
2Jn	2 John
2Ki.....	2 Kings
2Pe.....	2 Peter
2Sa.....	2 Samuel
2Th	2 Thessalonians
2Ti	2 Timothy
3Jo	3 John
Acts	Book of Acts
Amos	Book of Amos
Col	Colossians
Dan	Daniel

Deu	Deuteronomy
Ecc.....	Ecclesiastes
Eph	Ephesians
Est.....	Esther
Exo	Exodus
Eze.....	Ezekiel
Ezr	Book of Ezra
Gal	Galatians
Gen	Genesis
Hab	Habakkuk
Hag	Haggai
Heb	Hebrews
Hos	Hosea
Isa	Isaiah
Jas.....	James
Jer	Jeremiah
Job	Book of Job
Joel	Book of Joel
John	Gospel of John
Jon	Jonah
Jos.....	Joshua
Jude	Book of Jude
Jdg	Judges
Lam	Lamentations
Lev.....	Leviticus
Luke.....	Gospel of Luke
Mal	Malachi
Mark	Gospel of Mark
Mat	Gospel of Matthew
Mic	Micah
Nah	Nahum
Neh	Nehemiah
Num.....	Numbers
Oba	Obadiah
Phm	Philemon
Php	Philippians
Pro	Proverbs
Psa	Psalms
Rev	Revelation
Rom.....	Romans

Ruth	Book of Ruth
Son	Song of Solomon
Tit	Titus
Zec	Zechariah
Zep	Zephaniah

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

What did Jesus mean when he said to “love your enemies” and “pray for those who persecute you” (Mat 5:38-44)? Do these commandments leave room for Christians to serve in militaries or police forces that implement the use of force? Or is the Christian to steadfastly reject violence and embrace pacifism? Are certain wars justified on the basis of just war theory, or are all wars, in their brutality and destruction, inherently evil?

In this study, we examine the case that has traditionally been made to justify Christian participation in war. We begin with a historical background of the roots of just war theory as promulgated by Thomas Aquinas. We then examine the passages on which just war theorists rely, including God’s commandments to the Israelites to go to war against their enemies, Jesus’ praise of the Roman Army centurion for his faith and God’s use of the centurion Cornelius to graft Gentiles into the Kingdom of God. Arguing that these passages have been misunderstood, we conclude that Christianity only permits a single response to evil—self-sacrificial love.

We make the case for Christian pacifism by examining the life of Jesus and arguing that His crucifixion was more than a salvific act; it also exemplified the ideal of Christian living. Being a disciple of Jesus means emulating Him in every way, including responding to violence through self-sacrificial love, as Jesus did, and obeying Jesus’ commands to be as “harmless as doves” (Mat 10:16), to “turn

the other cheek” and “pray for those who persecute you” (Mat 5:38-44).

Finally, we tackle the difficult question of Old Testament violence and argue that it falls within a specific context and is not normative for members of the New Covenant of Grace. Rather than embrace violence, we are to follow the examples set by the early church and its martyrs, including the Apostle Stephen, who prayed that his persecutors not be charged with their sins (Acts 7:60), and the apostle Paul, who taught us to “live peaceably with all men” (Rom 12:18). Our war is not a physical struggle (2Co 10:3), but a spiritual war to be waged with prayer, faith and the gospel of peace (Eph 6:12-18).