

THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO WAR AND THE STATE

Christian Pacifism to 170 A.D.

It is a singular fact that there is no evidence whatsoever for Christian involvement in the military from the beginning of the common era until the year 170 A.D.¹ None of the Patristic Fathers made a single direct statement regarding Christian in military service during that period.² Neither is there any archeological evidence suggesting that Christians participated in military service during that period.³ The meaning of this deafening silence is uncertain. The mere absence of evidence does not indicate whether military service was either allowed or proscribed, though it is more likely that it was disallowed for any of a number of reasons.

Christian converts came largely from civilians in urban centers; few of them came from the ranks of the military.⁴ Adolphus Harnack noted that the early Christians could not have been unaware of the basic conflict between the teachings of Jesus and participation of the Church in armed conflict: "Had Jesus not forbidden revenge and retaliation for evil? Did he not teach and command gentleness and patience? And was not the military profession contemptible because of its extortions, brutalities, and its execution of tyrants' commands? Certainly, and because of this it follows without doubt that a Christian was not permitted to become a soldier voluntarily."⁵ There are

several reasons that may explain the absence of any mention of Christians in military service during this period.

Many scholars believe that the early Christian eschatology (the view that the end of the world was imminent) motivated not antimilitarism, but indifference toward the military.⁶ Even at the beginning of the second century Christians queried: "Where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were."⁷ The view of a generation of scholars, however, that the earliest Christians were motivated by an enthusiastic imminent expectation that led to a crisis in the second century now appears to distort the Christian expectation.⁸ The hope of the heavenly kingdom of God was spiritualized by the Alexandrian theologians Origen and Clement.⁹ The failure of the parousia is noted with disappointment only rarely in the post-Pauline literature.¹⁰ The expectation of an imminent end of earthly kingdoms was not pervasive in second century Christianity and was not a significant political or social though shaping Christian attitudes at that time.¹¹

It is possible that, given the Christians' totally consuming struggle for survival during this period, the earliest leaders simply did not find it necessary to address the problem of Christian involvement in the military.¹² There is very little exegesis of any Christian concerns from the end of the apostolic ear to the latter half of the second century. The later epistles of Paul and the earliest Patristic Fathers such as Clement, Ignatius and Polycarp are all directed, in one way or

another, toward solving conflict among Christians and heresy from without. They apparently faced more pressing problems than whether to oppose the primarily voluntary military service of their day.¹³ Further, there were probably many like Ignatius (circa 110 A.D.) who preferred martyrdom to defending any earthly kingdom.¹⁴ Such circumstances would explain, in part, Christian reticence on the subject of military service in the first two centuries.

It is commonly suggested that the early Christians avoided military service because they could hardly feel obligated to defend an empire that threw them to the lions. This explanation receives support from early works demonstrating antipathy among Christians toward Rome such as the Pastor of Hermas and the Ascension of Isaiah.¹⁵ Tertullian emphasized that the fratricide of Romulus had infected a virus of corruption into the Roman bloodstream and Rome grew great only by wars that injure religion.¹⁶ Further, Lactantius rejected the Roman doctrine of "just war" because Rome could subjugate the entire world even when obeying such a doctrine.¹⁷ This explanation overlooks, however, the fact that early Christians also looked to Rome as a work of God maintaining order and peace.¹⁸ The early Fathers, especially Irenaeus and Origen, looked to Rome for the stability from which Christianity could usher forth and establish its base.¹⁹ While some Christians felt hostility toward the empire, such opposition is inadequate to explain the absence of Christians in the military.

It is likely that Christians avoided military service based

in part on avoidance of idolatry and pagan pageantry which were an unavoidable part of the soldiers' experience as Tertullian's writings suggest.²⁰ Both Jean-Michel Hornus, a French scholar, and C. John Cadoux, an English scholar, agree that opposition to idolatry was not the primary reason for the apparent Christian aversion to military service, however, but was instead based upon a desire to avoid bloodshed and violence.²¹ Finally, Eppstein suggests that the presence of military imagery in the writings of Paul, Clement, Ignatius and Polycarp may evidence a less than strenuous opposition to military service despite the lack of evidence for Christian participation in the military during this period.²² Such imagery could also be interpreted to mean that Christians would serve only the kingdom of God. As Harnack pointed out, the imagery often suggests that Christians were soldiers for Christ, not for Caesar.²³ Christians during this period considered Satan as ruler of this world and earthly rulers as emissaries of Satan; there could be no compromise with the world.²⁴

Christian Pacifism and Military Service 170 A.D. to 340 A.D.

From 170 A.D. until the fourth century and the reign of Constantine there is some evidence of Christian participation in the military. At the same time, many prominent Church Fathers denounced war and military service.²⁵ Dom Leclercq compiled a list of 176 inscriptions (epitaphs) which mention Christians serving in the military during this period.²⁶ Of those pointed out by Leclercq, however, only six can be indisputably assigned to the first three centuries.²⁷ John Cadoux adds two

names to that list.²⁸ The most telling fact regarding those epitaphs that can be assigned to the first three centuries is that the Christian communities where these men were buried allowed mention of military service on the tombs of these men.²⁹

One of the most famous of these epitaphs, that of Marcus Julius Eugenius, bishop of Laodicea Combusta in East Phrygia about 340 A.D. reads: "I caused the above to be engraved / For the distinction of the Church / and of my family....When a command came from Maximus / That Christians should offer sacrifices and not quit the army / ...maintaining the faith of the Christians."³⁰

If these communities abhorred military service, or were it totally disallowed, it is unlikely that the fact of military service would be noted in epitaphs which were intended to represent honorable deeds accomplished while in this life. On the other hand, the small percentage of inscriptions mentioning military service is evidence that military service was not widespread among Christians during this period and that they may have felt repulsion for the military profession.

In addition to these epitaphs, many contemporaneous writers speak of Christians in military service. In a letter addressed to the Senate in the 174 A.D., the Emperor Marcus Aurelius credited a storm which saved his army to the prayers of the Christian soldiers under his command.³¹

It may also be noted that Origen stated that it was the special avocation of the Christians to pray for armies, but not to participate in military violence.³² Cyprian and Clement of Alexandria also mentioned

Christians serving in the military.³³ Tertullian refuted

charges of Christian misanthropy in his Apologia by point to the presence of Christians in the army.³⁴

Despite the participation of some Christians in the military during the second and third centuries, the majority of Christian writers during this period condemned both warfare and military service.³⁵ Justin Martyr, writing circa 165 A.D. explained that "[w]e who are filled with war and mutual slaughter and every wickedness have each of us in the all the world changed our weapons of war ... swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks."³⁶ Municius Felix remarked that Christians cannot bear to see another man killed.³⁷ Irenaeus also wrote that Christians had fulfilled the prophecy of beating swords into plowshares, for when struck they would rather offer the other cheek.³⁸ Clement of Alexandria spoke of Christ as the soldier of peace who "with His word and with His Blood gathers the army that sheds no more blood," though he also bids Christians who have joined the army merely to obey their officers and avoid robbery and oppression of their enemies.³⁹

A first century critic of Christianity, Celsus, attacked early Christians for not accepting the military obligations of the Empire. Though Celsus often misconstrues Christianity, he appears to have been quite familiar with both its doctrines and practices. It is significant that Origen, writing at the end of the second century, did not defend Christians by pointing to their participation in military service. Rather, the Christian is much more valuable than the soldier because Christians pray for the kings. "[N]one fight better for the king than we do.

We do not indeed fight under him, although he requires it; but we fight on his behalf, forming a special army - any army of piety - by offering our prayers to God."⁴⁰ The very identity of the Christian required pacifism in Origen's view. Origen interpreted Isaiah as mandating a proclamation of peace fulfilled in Christ:

And to those who inquire of us whence we come, or who is our founder, we reply that we are come, agreeably to the counsels of Jesus, to "cut down our hostile and insolent 'wordy' swords into plowshares, and to convert into pruning hooks the spears formerly employed in war." For we no longer take up "sword against nation," nor do we "learn war any more," having become children of peace, for the sake of Jesus, who is our leader.⁴²

The example of the Old Testament wars commanded by Jehovah perplexed Christians of the early second century. The magnitude of this problem is reflected on the one hand by the Gnostic rejection of the God of the Old Testament as the evil god responsible for the human predicament and sin and on the other hand by the success of Gnosticism against normative Christianity.⁴³ This Gnostic threat demanded lengthy defenses written by Ireneaus and Origen. Origen's reply to such charges was that Old Testament wars had been necessary for Jewish kingdoms, but wars were no longer permitted after the coming of the Christ. The wars of the Old Testament should be considered by Christians as allegorical of the Christian war against the devil.⁴⁴ Hence, the Old Testament wars were types for spiritual understanding rather than statements about the will of Jehovah. Significantly, Marcion, the foremost Gnostic in early Christianity, also opposed Christian participation in war. It

is noteworthy that even though Gnostics were opposed on almost every issue by the Church, the normative tradition did not oppose this facet of Gnostic thought. All forms of early Christianity were pacifistic in the first two centuries.⁴⁵

Origen's pacifism was pragmatic, taking cognizance of the responsibility of Christians for social welfare. Origen was opposed to war because he saw the choice between participation in war and support of an ordered society to be a false dichotomy. Christians could support an ordered peace through service to kings and subjects. Origen noted that sometimes war was fought for hunger, perhaps implying that social justice might justify revolution.⁴⁶ More often, he noted, wars are fought out of greed, avarice and a lust for power. Ironically, the Church eventually followed not Origen, but Celsus. The Church took Celsus's suggestion literally that Christians should either shoulder the burden of military service in defense of society or withdraw from society and cease to have children. Once pacifism was relegated to the clergy, the Church did just that.

The clearest formulation of the Christian position was given by Tertullian, a second century Christian and lawyer from North Africa. Tertullian believed that "in disarming Peter, [the Lord] unbelted every soldier."⁴⁷ For Tertullian, the teachings of Jesus were unequivocally clear in condemning war and military service. Tertullian reminded his readers of the idolatry of military service: "Do we believe it lawful for a human oath to be super added to one divine, and for a man to come under promise to another master after Christ, and to abjure

father and mother and all nearest kinsfolk, whom even the law has commanded us to honour and love next to God Himself, to whom the gospel, too, holding them only of less account than Christ, has in like manner rendered honour?"⁴⁸ Tertullian insisted that "occupation of the sword" cannot be justified because Christ said that all who live by the sword shall die by the sword.⁴⁹ Tertullian noted that it makes no sense for Christians to discuss how a soldier should conduct himself when the only relevant question was logically prior: "we must first inquire whether military service is proper at all for Christians."⁵⁰ His rhetorical questions state the dilemma facing Christians in the military poignantly: "For what wars should we not be fit, eager, even with unequalled forces, we who willingly yield ourselves to the sword, if in our religion it were not counted better to be slain than to slay?"⁵¹

The Canons of Hippolytus are another example of early Christian opposition to military service. The Canons apparently distinguish between military service (*militare*) and actual fighting (*bellare*). Unless the Canons are contradictory, even at this early date there were modes of military service that did not require actual fighting, but were service oriented as already hinted at in the writings of Origen.⁵² Some of these Canons said:

Canon 13: Soldiers may not kill, even if ordered to do so.

Canon 14: No Christian ought to volunteer for military service nor become a soldier unless he is forced to by his ruler. Let him who bears the sword beware lest he shed blood. If he has shed blood

let him be excluded from the mysteries (i.e., communion) until he be purified by making amends with tears and grief.⁵³

This opposition to involvement in the military can be explained only by the Christians' abhorrence of violence and bloodshed for two major reasons. As Roland Bainton notes, the early Christians simply saw an irreconcilable conflict between Jesus's teachings of love and the violence and killing necessitated by war.⁵⁴ This view is more fully demonstrated by the fact that Christians would participate in the military (militare) if allowed to serve in branches devoted to police work or domestic service.⁵⁵ Further, the Christian was enjoined from laying down his arms in peace, or in times of peace, but was free to lay them aside in bello, or in times of war.⁵⁶ Such circumstances make it clear that the Christian opposition to the military was not for any of the secondary reasons often emphasized by scholars such as involvement in pagan rites, eschatological expectations or hatred of Rome; rather, such opposition is explainable only in terms of commitment to love.

Hence, despite conflicting interpretations of the available evidence, at least four solid conclusions can be reached. First, up to 170 A.D. there is no evidence of Christian involvement in the military. Second, the Fathers' failure to address the propriety of military service is almost certainly due to the absence of Christians in the military or any pressure from Christians to be allowed by Church leaders to participate in the military. Third, from 170 A.D. until the time of Constantine, some Christians participated in the military, but such

participation was neither widespread nor encouraged in Christian communities. Fourth, almost without exception, the Early Church Fathers denounced war and military service on the basis of the teachings of Jesus.

Emergence of the Christian Doctrine of Just War 340 to 444 A.D.

The Classical Legacy. The Christian doctrine and civilization of the fourth century were the products of powerful contradictions and influences. The union of Hebrew religion and Greek philosophy had challenged Christian theologians to surpass the Jewish civilization in which Christianity grew up. But Christian doctrine was not simply a restatement of Greek philosophy; rather, it partook of both the Hebrew experience with God and the Greek genius. What emerged in this confluence of cultures was neither Greek nor Hebrew, but both in a new synthesis that was uniquely Christian. The influence of Greek and Roman philosophy on the Christian doctrine of just war was substantial.

The ideas of Plato were first introduced into Jewish culture by Philo Judeaus. Plato had envisioned a State characterized by perfect order and tranquility. The soldier was a necessary aspect of this society, however, for the soldier was both the courage and obedient guardian necessary for ordered civilization.⁵⁷ Plato had stated that civilized nations allowed war not to conquer, but for "friendly correction" whose purpose is peace and maintenance of civilization. The writings of Plato concluded that only war waged with the intent of

restoring peace was just:

[W]ar, whether external or civil, is not the best, and the need of either is to be deprecated; but peace with one another, and good will, are best. Nor is the victory of the state over itself to be regarded as really a good thing, but as a necessity; a man might as well say that medicine, forgetting that there is also a state of the body which needs no purge. And in like manner no one can be a true statesman, whether he aims at the happiness of the individual or state, who looks only, or first of all, to external welfare; nor will he ever be a sound legislator who orders peace for the sake of war, and nor war of the sake of peace.⁵⁸

The influence of the Roman jurist and philosopher Cicero on Western political philosophy can hardly be overestimated. His writings influenced Ambrose, Lactantius and Augustine to see Christian concepts of sin and love in the view of just war. Through Augustine and Justinian to Aquinas and Grotius, and from them to Locke, the Roman and Greek philosophers forged our own concepts of just war. Cicero gave the first clear exposition of limiting war on the basis of natural law. In addition, Cicero elucidated such concepts in embryo as just intent and lawful declaration of war. Cicero stated that "a war is never undertaken by the ideal state, except in defense of its honour or safety."⁵⁹ Further, Cicero established a doctrine of lawful declaration as a last resort after negotiation: "No war is considered just unless it has been proclaimed and declared, or unless reparation has first been demanded."⁶⁰ Cicero also developed an idea of just cause (*causa belli*), for no war was just unless declared and waged to recover property or incorporeal rights. Such concepts became a catalyst for the Christian

doctrine of just war.

Christian War. The shift from pacifism to the doctrine of just war involves complex social and religious forces. The major change that occurred to explain a shift in Christian attitudes toward war is that instead of running from the empire, Christians were now running the empire. Such a change in social position is undoubtedly the primary explanation of the development of the Christian doctrine of just war. The union of Christianity with the empire has its own, somewhat paradoxical, justification.

In 312 A.D. the Emperor Constantine defeated his rival Maxentius at Mulvian Bridge near Rome. Constantine's conversion to Christianity in 324 marked the marriage of Christianity to the Empire. The change that occurred in Christian attitudes toward war is so abrupt that doubt is cast on whether pacifism had actually been as widespread as the evidence would seem to indicate. Yet Constantine's victory and conversion is not the sole explanation of this change.

The judgment of John Chrysostom that as the Church increased in political influence it decreased in Christian virtue may be true in many ways, but this moral judgment ignores the many benefits that Christianity derived from its relation to the empire. After the fourth century, the Church could no longer chart its own course independent of the fortunes of the empire. The growth of Christianity demanded that it forge a symbiotic relationship with the empire and assume responsibility in maintaining order and peace conducive to maintaining Christian

ideals. The Asiatic bishops and Christians in Melito saw the empire as bringing peace and order to their world. The empire had, in their view, pacified the barbarians and established communication routes necessary for missionary work and conversion of the entire world. Eusebius of Caesarea recognized that the Christian marriage with the empire made possible the Stoic ideals of harmony and peace.⁶¹ Didor of Taurusus, a Christian theologian, declared that through the marriage of Rome to Christianity God had caused wars to cease and prepared the world to hear the gospel.⁶² Many Christians believed that the Pax Romana was indeed a fulfillment of the ancient prophecy that swords should be beaten into plowshares.⁶³

Perhaps even more significant is the fact that Christianity itself was at issue in the civil war that allowed Constantine to gain the throne. As a result of the liberation from the barbarians, Christianity had to confront various heresies. The old war between the Empire and Christianity was substituted by the war between orthodoxy and heresy. In 379, all heresies opposed to the divine will were ordered to be exterminated. By the edict of 381 orthodox Christianity became the religion of the Empire and resulting empirical acts required the Church clergy to oppose heresy by capital punishment if necessary.⁶⁴ In addition, the barbarians attacking Rome were "Arian heretics", those who denied the Nicean formulation of the trinity in terms of substantiality. Hence, defense of Rome was also defense of the faith. In the Christian view, catholic orthodoxy stood or fell with the Pax Romana. Moreover, since the barbarians

attacked Rome, Christians were compelled to defense of Rome and the faith.

the new alliance between church and state brought with it Christian participation in the military. The change in Christian attitudes toward war is marked by the surprising fact that by the end of the fourth century all pagan rites were excluded from the military rites and only Christians could serve in the military!⁶⁵ The emperor felt no necessary impropriety in placing the cross on the military labarus.⁶⁶ Even the Christian clergy occasionally took up arms.⁶⁷

The decline of pacifism was not complete however, for there were still Christians who refused to serve in the military. Martin of Tours was only one of the Christians of this period who stayed in the army until battle was imminent and then refused to serve longer, saying "I am a soldier of Christ; I cannot fight."⁶⁸ Lactantius, an early fourth century Christian writer, stated "When God prohibits killing, he not only forbids us to commit brigandage, which is not allowed even by the public laws, but he warns us not to do even those things which are legal among men. And so it will not be lawful for a just man to serve as a soldier - for justice itself is his military service - nor to accuse anyone of a capital offense, because it makes no difference whether thou kill with a sword or with a word, since killing itself is forbidden. And so, in this commandment of God, no exception at all ought to be made to the rule that it is always wrong to kill a person whom God has wished to be regarded as a sacred creature."⁶⁹

Generally, the pacifistic traditions of the first two centuries were restricted to the monks or clergy by the early fourth century. Nevertheless, the Church was finally required to develop a philosophy of war in face of Christian involvement therein. Though the writings of the clergy still demonstrated opposition to Christian participation in the military, in practice there was no longer any question whether a Christian could be a soldier.

Ambrose of Milano. Saint Ambrose (340-397) appears to be the first to attempt to formulate a systematic Christian ethic of war. Ambrose was a Roman by birth who served at one time as prefect of Milano. Ambrose brought a Roman political understanding to his later ministry as Bishop of Milano. His ethics were a complex synthesis of Stoicism and Christianity. Many of his ideas can be found in the writings of Cicero, but he also relied upon the Old Testament to justify Christian military service. His tractate on the Duties of the Clergy depended heavily on Cicero's De Officiis, taking over the concept of the just war which entailed war in defense of rights or aggression, lawful declaration by the ruler and required that promises made to the enemy be faithfully observed.⁷⁰

Because of his Roman heritage, Ambrose lived in a dual world requiring allegiance both to the Empire and to the increasingly powerful Christian Church. Because the invading barbarians were Arians (i.e., they believed that the Son was a creature rather than consubstantial with the Father), the defense of the Empire by Roman soldiers also constituted defense of the

orthodox faith. For Ambrose, the conflict was between believer and unbeliever, not between Romans and barbarians. Ambrose wrote *De Fide Christiana* in 378 for the Emperor Gratian, who was at that time attempting to consolidate his authority on the Danube after his victory over the Arian Valens. Ambrose assured Gratian that he could not lose, for Ezekiel had foretold his victory. The enemy was no other than the Gog of Ezekiel's prophecy.⁷¹ The Roman defeat at Adrianople was justified as God's wrath for punishment of the sins of the Arian Valens. Hence, just as in the Old Testament, God continued to punish sin by defeat and reward righteousness by political victory. In Ambrose's view, Christians engaged in defense of the orthodox faith should have the aid of the orthodox Emperor. Ambrose declared, "[n]ot eagles and birds (i.e., Roman military power) must lead the army but they name and religion, O Jesus."⁷²

Ambrose contributed at least three important factors to the Christian idea of just war. First, he placed the duty for defense of the Empire upon those duly commissioned in the military and relegated pacifism to the private citizens. There was a strict distinction between combatant and non-combatant. This distinction was absolute; he could not justify even the taking of another's life to save one's own. "I do not think a Christian," he said, "ought to save his own life by the death of another; just as when he meets with an armed robber he cannot return blows lest in defending his life he should stain his love toward his neighbor."⁷³ Neither would Ambrose allow the clergy to participate in war despite the activities of Joshua,

Jerobaal, Samson and David in the Old Testament. The study of the cleric was not to "look to arms but rather to the force of peace."⁷⁴ He believed that every Christian, however, owed a duty first to God, second to country, third to family and finally to others.

Second, Ambrose insisted upon honour in military conduct even during war time. Ambrose did not believe that courage alone justified fighting, for the cause had to be just. Ambrose noted that Old Testament prophets such as David had consulted God prior to open hostilities and Christians should seek the approval of God before undertaking military operations. Like Cicero, Ambrose distinguished the injustice consisting of causing injury to others from injustices arising from failing to defend those about to be injured. Hence, the only just cause for war is defense of peace from injury.⁷⁵

Finally, Ambrose insisted that honesty should prevail over crass utility in deciding for or against war. Good faith, loyalty and respect of the enemy's rights must be maintained in war. Despite Ambrose's reprehensible condoning of brutal treatment of heretical barbarians,⁷⁶ he demonstrated amazing sensitivity in unhesitatingly denouncing the needless bloodshed at Thessalonica by Roman soldiers in a letter to the Emperor Theodosius, successor of Gratian. In this letter, Ambrose recognized the necessity of war for the sake of a secure peace (just intent) and also illustrates the church's growing role as social prophet in its insistence on justice and compassion in the conduct of war.⁷⁷ Ambrose reminded Theodosius that slaughter

of innocent people was a sin as it was for David in the Old Testament: "I have written this, not in order to confound you, but that the examples of the kings may stir you up to put away this sin from your kingdom....I urge, I beg, I exhort, I warn, for it is a grief to me, that you who were an example of unusual piety...should not mourn that so many have perished."⁷⁸

Augustine. St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (354-430), is one of the most pivotal characters in the history of Western civilization. The world may never again see a man of such genius. He provided the template of the Christian doctrine of just war for all who followed him. He combined Roman, Neo-Platonic and Christian elements from the writings of Ambrose in a synthesis of thought that was to become the very essence of Christian orthodoxy well into the Middle Ages and into our own day.

As Roland Bainton points out, Augustine's genius is in part a result of the fact that he was the product of powerful contradictions.⁷⁹ An African by birth, he had experienced the defeat of his people and endured the status of the conquered. He was a Roman citizen, however, speaking Latin and not Punic. He had been schooled in Neo-platonism and stoicism and participated in degradation, yet the teachings of Jesus left their imprint on his soul through an experience of forgiveness inexplicable but for divine grace. He was a student of the Roman imperial persecutions of the church and the writings of the early Fathers, but he was a member of the Church which was coextensive with the Empire. It was against this background

of personal experience that Augustine approached the task of explaining the interaction between Christianity and society and, more importantly, Christianity and war.

To fully understand Augustine it is essential to focus on the two problems that confronted him throughout his life: (1) the problem of evil and (2) the relation of the State of Christianity. Evil for Augustine is *privatio bono*, or the lack of God given existence. Evil is necessarily a corruption of something good in Augustine's thought. War is thus merely the absence of an ordered peace, a corruption of the pristine civil society. The corruption is to be accounted for in terms of human freedom. This tension between divine control and human freedom continued to plague Augustine. Nevertheless, Augustine's emphasis on human freedom allowed a vision of individual moral responsibility in the political realm. Perhaps we do not fully appreciate the magnitude of this quiet revolution today. Augustine endowed humans with freedom and consequent moral responsibility over against the state despite his doctrine of human depravity. In this way, Augustine made possible the ideal of social order resting upon free human action seeking a common moral end--an ordered peace.⁸⁰

Augustine justified the union of Christianity with the Roman State by developing a philosophy of the truly Christian State, though Rome was definitely not that ideal state. Augustine compared Rome to Babylon as the enemy of the City of God.⁸¹ True justice could not be realized in the pagan state, for it emerged out of original sin and sought to rule unjustly in

the stead of God. Augustine does not deny that the State can be just, but he emphasizes that only a Christian State is a truly just State. Augustine defined society as consisting of "a multitude of rational creatures associated in a common agreement as to the things which it loves."⁸² The state that loves God loves justice; the pagan state loves power and domination. It is Christianity which makes mortals good citizens in Augustine's view. Two consequences follow from this vision: (1) The Christian Church will try to transform civil society with its own celestial principles of conduct; and (2) the Church is the only perfect society and is superior to the State. The Church is called to convert the pagan state into a Christian State.

Augustine rationalized the continued relation between the Empire and the Church notwithstanding his awareness of Rome's multitude of sins. Augustine believed Rome provided the possibility of justice in the state--a possibility that could not exist in a pagan state. The very precepts of the Sermon on the Mount that led early Christians to pacifism now justified war. War is necessary to preserve peace rather than inherently sinful. The basis of this shift is a reevaluation of the New Testament message in light of political realities. It was also based on a reassessment of human nature.

Augustine's beliefs about the perfectibility of humans was more gloomy than the early Fathers. He did not believe that humans could obtain perfection on earth despite the statement in the Sermon on the Mount that Christians should do so. Augustine stated that the precepts of the gospel should be lived as

perfectly as the apostles themselves lived them, and nothing more could be expected.⁸³ Similarly, Augustine had abandoned hope for a lasting peace on earth in light of the political climate than prevailing. Though peace remained the Christian's goal, a true peace would not be found in this life.⁸⁴ Augustine also formulated a concept of the Church unlike that espoused by the early Fathers. According to Augustine, the Church on earth was not to be equated with the Church in heaven which would be composed of the elect. On earth, both the wheat and the tares grow together in the Church. Nevertheless, Augustine believed that the church had an important role to play in fashioning society despite its imperfections.

The heart of Augustine's doctrine of just war is the belief that war is both a consequence of and a remedy for sin. He believed that war and peace were in the hands of God and that God may will or permit war as a means to correct the excessive pride of man or to punish sin. Augustine was thus able to justify Christian participation in war by forging a distinction between the inward disposition and its outward consequences. The real evils in war are not the pain, suffering and death, but the inward hatred for mortals and love of war and violence. Hence, God was justified in allowing war because He did so out of love, out of a desire to promote repentance. Sin originated in the wounded will rather than in actions, and when man's evil will led him to sinful actions, war provided a just punishment initiated out of Godly love. Christians were also justified in war if motivated by an inward love for the enemy. Christian virtue was

not necessarily opposed to war, for when Moses put sinners to death he was motivated not by cruelty, but by love for them. He said,

The account of the wars of Moses will not

excite surprise or abhorrence, for in wars carried on by divine command, acted not in cruelty, but in righteous retribution, giving to all what they deserved, and warning those who need warning. What is the evil in war? Is it the death of some who will soon die in any case, that others may live in peaceful subjugation? This is mere cowardly dislike, not any religious feeling. The real evils in war are love of violence, revengeful cruelty, fierce and implacable enmity, wild resistance, and the lust of power, and such like.⁸⁵

Augustine also justified war by adopting the divine command theory of ethics, the view that "good and evil" are whatever God says they are. Augustine looked to the Old and New Testaments for support of this position. Christians could not second guess God's commands recorded in the Old Testament, even when He commanded war, for the puny and depraved human intellect must acknowledge God's goodness. Further, Augustine interpreted several passages in the New Testament to show that Christ had not prohibited military service. He relied heavily on Christ's statement to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Matt. 22:21) Jesus did not prohibit serving the state, but merely distinguished the earthly from the heavenly kingdom. Augustine also relied upon the statements of John the Baptist to soldiers who came to be baptized (Luke 3:14) as legitimizing military service, otherwise John would have replied "Lay down your arms, depart from military

service," instead of "do violence to no man."⁸⁶

Augustine addressed the propriety of Christian military service in his letter to Count Boniface, a military leader in North Africa. Augustine counseled Boniface that it is not necessary for a Christian to leave the army and become a monk to please God. Augustine pointed to the examples of David in the Old Testament, the soldier whose son the Christ had healed (Matt 8:8-10), Cornelius the soldier blessed by Peter (Acts 10:4), the soldiers baptized by John the Baptist (Matt. 11:11) and the soldiers to whom Jesus said "Do Violence to man," but rather than command them to leave the military he told them to be content with their wages (Luke 3:14). Count Boniface was justified if he possessed a righteous intent:

Peace should be the object of your desire; war should be waged only that God may by it deliver men from the necessity and preserve them in peace. For peace is not sought in order to the kindling of war, but war is waged in order that peace may be obtained. Therefore, even in waging war, cherish the spirit of a peacemaker, that, by conquering those whom you attack, you may lead them back to the advantages of peace...Let necessity, therefore, and not your⁸⁷ will, slay the enemy who fights against you.

Augustine believed that a Christian could not participate in every war even though the Gospel did not prohibit war per se, for some wars are indeed unjust. There is only one question that should preoccupy the Christian when faced with the necessity of war: "Is the war which is to be undertaken a just one?"⁸⁸ Augustine established the criteria for Christian participation in war around this concept of "just war."

First, the war must be just as to its intent, the only morally legitimate purpose in war is the restoration of peace, with justice for foe and friend. Augustine would not allow war to avenge property or civil rights as Cicero and his beloved teacher Ambrose had done. Second, war should be waged only if necessary, or as a last resort. Though Augustine never articulated the means to avoid war through negotiation, arbitration and compromise, such a position is logically entailed in the requirement of last resort necessity and in the idea that humans are rational beings whose nature is to settle disputes by reason, and not an animal resorting to force to resolve disputes. As Augustine said to Boniface, "Peace should be the object of your desire; war should be waged only as a necessity."⁸⁹

Third, just war entails war pursued only through just means (*ius in bello*), or pursued only with sufficient force to resist violence and restore peace. Fourth, since a just war is pursued for the limited objective of restoring peace, obliteration of an enemy's society, economy and political institutions cannot be justified: "Without the benevolent design that, after the resisting nations have been conquered, provision may be more easily made for enjoying in peace the mutual bond of piety and justice."⁹⁰ Wanton violence, the profanation of temples, looting, massacre, conflagration, vengeance, atrocities and reprisals were prohibited by Augustine.

Fifth, a just war required lawful declaration by a proper authority. Because Augustine believed that war and peace were

in the hands of God, any war decreed by God was ipso facto just. From this premise it followed that since the right to rule was granted by God (cf. Romans 13:1), rulers could wage war righteously even if the ruler's inspiration stopped short of divine command.⁹¹ Since only a lawful government has a right to initiate war, however, the use of force is limited to the state and its legally authorized agents. Hence, Augustine followed Ambrose in distinguishing between combatant and non-combatant. The private citizen and cleric must be pacifistic: "As to killing others to defend one's life I do not approve of this," declared Augustine, "unless one happens to be a soldier or a public functionary acting not for himself but in defense of others or of the city in which he resides."⁹² Augustine apparently did not extend this distinction to a rule of immunity for non-combatants. Augustine also believed that a soldier was innocent if acting under order of the ruler and if the order were improper the sin belonged to the ruler, not the obedient soldier. The Christian soldier should obey even the orders of Pagan military commanders such as Julian.⁹³ If a Christian refused to kill at the order of a ruler, he was guilty of treason both against the earthly king and against the divine precepts that established the ruler. Hence, Augustine could extend this reasoning to absolve a soldier who obeyed a sacreligious king in an unjust war.⁹⁴

Finally, a just war must arise for a just cause (ius ed bellum). Augustine defined a just war as "those which avenge injuries, when the nation or city against which warlike action is

to be directed has neglected either to punish wrongs committed by its own citizens or to restore what has been unjustly taken by it. Further, that kind of war is undoubtedly just which God himself ordains."⁹⁵ Augustine did not distinguish between offensive and defensive wars. Defense of one's country was just cause for war, but so was the refusal of the Amorites to grant the Israelites the right of innocent passage (Numbers 21:5-21). Since such a refusal abridged the *ius gentium* (the conventions of human society and equity), God had caused the Israelites to wage war against the Amorites to punish them and appropriate their lands for the Israelites.⁹⁶ Such war could also be explained by the mere fact of God's having commanded it.

Hence, a just war is one characterized by (1) just intent; (2) last resort necessity; (3) just means; (4) limited objectives; (5) lawful declaration; (6) legal status as combatant, and (7) just cause. When a just war is waged, Augustine taught that the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" was inapplicable to those acting under lawful authority. Despite all of this, Augustine mourned the need for "just wars" and noted that "it is a higher glory still to slay war itself with the word, then men with the sword, and to procure or maintain peace by peace, not by war."⁹⁷

Augustine's thought was clearly not without its problems as viewed from the vantage point of sixteen centuries of Christian dialogue. Augustine had apparently forgotten Jesus's statement that God's kingdom was not of this world. Augustine emphasized that the heavenly kingdom had to transform earthly kingdoms. He

did realize however that this transformation must begin from within each individual where the kingdom of God was in fact present. He departed from Jesus's explicit condemnation of violence and the teaching to eschew the sword as a resolution of disputes. Augustine did not believe that two opposing parties could both have just causes to defend. As Roland Bainton has pointed out, today we can appreciate the social forces that oppressed the so called barbarians that "attacked" Rome. We can also clearly see that perhaps infant orthodoxy may have been normative, but if all who disagreed with the theologians of the fourth century were put to death, most modern Christians would hardly survive. We can also understand that the transition of the Church from a sect of Judaism to a new world religion probably could not have been accomplished without Augustine's genius.

ENDNOTES

All cites to early Christian literature in the classic form are from J.P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus: series Graecae*, 161 vols. [Paris J.P. Migne, 1857-1868] (hereafter cited specifically as PG); *Patrologiae Latinae*, 221 vols. (Paris: J.P. Migne, 1877-90) [hereafter PL]. All English translations of early Christian writers, unless otherwise indicated, from *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 9 vols. (1967-72; reprint Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951) (hereafter *Ante-Nicene Fathers* by volume and page number).

¹ Ronald H. Bainton, "The Early Church and War," 39 *Harv. Theological Review* 189-212 (July 1946).

² See generally, P. Bainton. Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace (Nashville: Abingdon, 1960); Michael Halzer. Just and Unjust Wars 1977); C. John Cadoux, The Early Christian Attitude Toward War (London 1919); J. Eppstein, The Catholic Tradition of the Law of Nations (London 1935); Adolphus Harnack, Militia Christi (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963 reprint), trans. David McInnes Gracie; J. Helgeland, "Christians and Military Service, A.D. 173-337" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1973); J. Hornus, It Is Not Lawful For Me to Fight (Scottsdale, Penn: Herald Press, 1980), trans. Alan Kreider; E. Ryan, "The Rejection of Military Service by the Early Christians" 13 *Theological Studies* 1 (March 1952) 1-32; A. Dumas, "L'Eglise d'avant Constantin et al Violence." *Esprit*, 39 (1961) 308-19; G. Gianelli, "La Primitiva Chiesa Cristiana di Fronte alle Persecuzioni e al Martirio" *Nuovo Didaskaleion*, 3 (1949), 5-22.

³ Bainton, supra note 2 at 67-8

⁴ The various scholarly attitudes are discussed in Hornus, pp. 118-127; Translator's introduction to Militia Christi, pp 10-22; Bainton, supra note 1.

⁵ Harnack, at 66-68 (footnotes omitted)

⁶ Bainton at 75

⁷ II Peter 3.4 This work appears to be a pseudepigraphic work dating from the middle of the second century, see *The Interpreter's Bible*, Albert Barnett Introduction to the Second Epistle of Peter, (Abingdon: Nashville, 1957) Vol. 12:164

⁸ Leonhard Goppelt. Theologie des Neuen Testament (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1976), p. 156. The question of the delay of the parousia was addressed only sporadically in the first two centuries, as in James 5:8ff; Hebrews 10:36-39; I

Clement 23:11; II Clement 11; II Peter 3. The announcement of the parousia as imminent in fact persisted into the second century right alongside this disappointment, as in I Peter 4:7; Didache 10.6.1; I Clement 23:5; Barnabas 4:3; Hermas Pastore, Visions 3.8.9; Similitudes 9.12.3, 10.4.4.

9 A. Mehat. "Apocastase: Origen et Clement d'Alexandrie" Vigilae Christianae X:3/4, p. 196ff; Henri Crouzel and Manilo Simonetti, eds., Origen's Traite des Principes (Paris, Editions du Serf; 1978), 2 vols., 1:40

10 Goppelt, supra; See Tertullian, Apologia XXXII, XXXIX; Cyprian, Ad Donatus, XX.

11 Bainton, p. 76

12 Gerrit Jan Heering. The Fall of Christianity (Garland Publishing Co: New York and London, 1972), p. 21

13 Pier Cesare Bori. La Chiesa Primitiva (Editrice queriniana: Brescia 1977), pp. 42-46 Bori points out that the task of developing a distinctive Christian identity and opposing heresy totally consumed the early Church. One branch sought only to condemn the world and go to the glory of the other life as soon as possible, and another branch sought to establish the Church as a viable institution.

14 Ignatius, To the Romans 6:3, in P. Serra, ed., Padri Apostolici, Antologia (Editrice Paoline, Milan 1965); See also the influence of encratism and ascetism in Hermas Pastor, Visions 3.8.4; II Clement 15.1; Tertullian, Apologia 39.12.17

15 The author of the Ascension of Isaiah (circa 150 A.D.) saw the Roman Nero as satan himself, iv, 204. R.H. Charles. The Ascension of Isaiah (Adam & Charles Black: London 1900), pp. lxxix-lxxii. For the general negative attitude of the Pastor of Hermas toward Rome see A Loisy. Le Origini del Cristianismo (Guilio Einaudi Editore: torino 1942), pp. 454-459

16 Bainton, p. 74

17 Lactantius, Institutions, VII,25

18 Bainton, supra p. 75

19 Irenaeus, Adversus Haereses, IV,30.3; Origen, Contra Celsum II.30

20 McKenna, "Ethics and War: A Catholic View," 54 American Political Scientist Review 647, 649; J. Eppstein at 39

21 Harnack, preface p. 14

22 Eppstein, op. cit.

- 23 Harnack, supra at 43
- 24 Hornus, pp. 45ff.
- 25 See works in footnote 2 which generally treat this period.
- 26 H. Leclercq, "Militarisme" Dictionnaire d'Archeologie et de Liturgie ed. F. Cabrol, H. Leclercq, and H.I. Marrou, Paris, 1907-1953, II, cols. 1130ff.
- 27 Hornus, pp. 118-122; Bainton, 69
- 28 Cadoux, p. 421
- 29 Hornus, op. cit.
- 30 Cited in Hornus, p. 120
- 31 Eppstein, supra at 33-34. The letter said in part: "When therefore I had compared myself and the number of my men with the hoards of the barbarian enemy, I betook myself to pray to the gods of my fathers. But, since they neglected me and I saw to what straits my forces were reduced, I called out of the ranks those whom we call Christians, and having questioned them, I perceived what a great multitude of them there were and raged against them: which indeed I should not have done, because I afterward perceived their power. For they did not begin by the contemplation of spears or arms or trumpets (which is hateful to them because of the God which they keep in their conscience; for it seems as if these men, whom we suspect of being atheists, have a God residing of his own will in their conscience), but prostrating themselves upon the ground they prayed not for me only but also for the whole army, that they might shake our present hunger and thirst. For we had not water for five days, because it was utterly lacking; and we were in the midst of Germany and in the enemy's country. But no sooner had they knelt upon the ground and invoked the god whom I know not, than a most cooling rain fell straight from heaven upon us, but upon the enemies of the Romans lightning and hail."
- 32 Origen, Contra Celsus VIII.73
- 33 Clement of Alexandria, Protrepticus X.100, cf. Paedagogus I.viii.65; Cyprian, De Bono Petientiae 21;
- 34 Tertullian, Apologia XXXVII and XLII.
- 35 Hornus, 123ff.; Bainton 72, Harnack, 43ff.
- 36 Justin Martyr, Ad Tryphos CX
- 37 Municius Felix, Octavius XXX.6

- 38 Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* IV,34.4 (circa 200 A.D.)
- 39 Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* I,12; Cf. *Stromata*
IV.8
- 40 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, V,33; VIII,73
- 41
- 42 Origen, *Contra Celsum* VIII,73. Translation in
Robertson & Donaldson (eds.) Ante-Nicene Christian Library
(Eerdmans: Grand Rapids 1872), Vol. 23
- 43 For the challenge of Gnosticism to orthodoxy, see
Elaine Pagels. The Gnostic Gospels (Vintage Books: New York
1979), 33-56; Henri-Charles Puech. Storia delle Religioni: II
Cristianesimo delle Origini (Laterza:Bari 1977), trans. Maria
Novella Pierini, pp. 54-67
- 44 Origen, *Contra Celsus*, VII, 26
- 45 Heering, p. 26
- 46 Bainton, p. 83, Cf. *Contra Celsus*, VIII,55-75 Cf. I,29
- 47 Tertullian, *De Idolotria* XIX, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*.
Tertullian mentions Christians in the army circa 197 A.D.
Eppstein believes that Tertullian's statements are contradictory
and his later, more anti-militaristic writings, should be
discounted because Tertullian had become a Montanist (a sect of
Christianity considered heterodox by the "orthodox" writers of a
later day) by about 200 A.D. Eppstein at 33-47. Harnack accused
Tertullian of keeping two sets of books, one for the public in
general and another intended for the Christian community, with
the latter condemning war and military service. Harnack at
75-77. Other writers, however, do not find Tertullian's
statements inherently inconsistent. Bainton, 75-75.
- 48 Tertullian, *De Cornoa* XI
- 49 Id. V,35
- 50 Id.
- 51 Tertullian, *Apologia* XXXVII
- 52 Henri Secretan, "Le Christianisme des Premiers Siecles
et le Service Militaire" Revue de Theologie et de Philosophie 2
(1914):345-65; Bainton, 189-211.
- 53 J. and A. Perier, eds. "Les 127 Canons des Apotres:
Texte Arabe," Patrologia Orientalis, eds. R. Graffin, F. Nau &
F. Graffin, Paris 1903-1922, B (1912), 553

- 54 Bainton, 77-78
- 55 Harnack, Introduction p. 14
- 56 Hornus p. 173
- 57 Plato, The Republic 5
- 58 Laws 1, in Arthur F. Holmes (ed.) War and Christian Ethics (Canon Press: Grand Rapids 1975), p. 23
- 59 Cicero, De Republica in Holmes, p. 25
- 60 Id.
- 61 Eusebius, Oratio Constantini, XVI, 3-8 in P.G. XXI, 35-42
- 62 Bainton, 87
- 63 Chrysostom, Expositia in Psalm 45.3 in PG IV,207
- 64 Frederick H. Russel. The Just War in the Middle Ages (Cambridge University Press: London 1975), p. 13 Cf. Codex Theodosiani 16,i,2
- 65 Bainton 88
- 66 Id.
- 67 Id.
- 68 Bainton, p. 90
- 69 Lactantius, Divina Inst. VI,xx.15-17. The Testament of Our Lord written in the second half of the fourth century indicates that new Christians still had to renounce military service, "If they wish to be baptized in the Lord, let them cease from military service." in Heering p. 30 n. 83
- 70 Ambrose, De Fide Christiana II,16, 136-43 in PL 16.611-14
- 71 Russell, p. 14
- 72 Ambrose, De Fide Christiana II,16,136
- 73 Ambrose, De Officiis, I,XVI
- 74 Id.
- 75 De Officiis, I<XXVIII, sec. 129
- 76 See Russell, p. 15ff

- 77 Holmes, supra at 55
- 78 Letter 51, To the Emperor Theodosius in Holmes at 58
- 79 Bainton at 91
- 80 Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy: Mediaeval Philosophy Vol.2, part I (Image Books: Garden City, New York 1962), pp. 105-105
- 81 In Psalm 51.6ff
- 82 De Civitate Dei 19.24
- 83 Sermo Dom. I,iv,12; Retractus I,Xix,1
- 84 In Psalm CXLVII,20
- 85 Contra Faustum Liber XII,73
- 86 Id. XXII,74
- 87 Holmes at 63
- 88 Quoestione in Heplateuchum VI,10a
- 89 Epistolae ad Bonifacium 189,vi in Holmes, supra
- 90 Epistolae ad Marcellinum II,14-15
- 91 Contra Faustum XII,lxxv
- 92 Confessions III,8,15
- 93 Russell p. 22; De Civitate Dei I,21,26
- 94 Confessions III,19,1 et. seq.
- 95 Quoestione in Heplateuchum VI,100
- 96 De Civitate Dei I.21
- 97 Epistolae ad Darium 299