

Scripture, “Just War” Theory and the Peace Testimony An Overview

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Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight . . . but now is my kingdom not from hence.”

- John 18:36^[1]

War is the terrible culminating symptom of man's alienation from his God and his fellow human beings. Pride causes war. Pursuit of power causes war. Hatred, envy, greed, anger, selfishness and even lust cause war. There have been uncounted wars in which both sides claimed God supported their causes. The law, the prophets, the gospel and the epistles repeatedly warn that God is not pleased by human warring. Yet through the centuries, the world and fallen humanity have continued to wage war, and to claim God's endorsement. This review of the Scriptures and the complex system by which humankind has attempted to justify war in light of the historic testimony of Friends (Quakers) hopes to assist the reader toward greater Truth.

Scripture

It is widely recognized that Jesus Christ did not condone war, or violence of any type, in His teachings. However, the popular view that this represents a radical departure from earlier teachings is oversimplified to the point of error. Throughout the Old Testament will be found passages and commandments which are in close harmony with the teachings of Jesus Christ. These warnings against war and violence are often obscured in the shadow of historical passages which recount wars and battles waged by the Israelites. The perception that God somehow endorsed the military campaigns of His chosen people is a similar oversimplification and ignores His express words and directions as recorded in the Scriptures.

Perhaps the earliest, least equivocal, and best known passage on the subject of war and violence is found among the Ten Commandments:

Thou shalt not kill.

- *Exodus 20:13*^[2]

These four words are the entirety of the Commandment; there are no qualifiers, no disclaimers, and no room for debate. It is sometimes argued, based on more recent translations of the Bible, that the verb in question should be understood not as *kill*, but as *murder*. The Commandment is then interpreted as forbidding individual acts of homicide, but permitting such collective acts of homicide as capital punishment and war. Some ethical contortionists have attempted to construe the verb with such mock precision as to permit individual homicide in “self defense” but also to forbid abortion under any circumstance.

The verb in question is *ratsach*^[3] which may be usefully rendered in English as “kill, murder, pierce.” There is no solid academic basis for rejecting the translation “kill” which occurs consistently for *ratsach* in the King James Version, nor is there an academic basis for preferring the narrower translation as “murder.” This is neither the first nor the last passage to be parsed and reparsed in an effort to meet the exigencies of *realpolitick*.

Despite the popular perception that God endorsed wars – including wars of conquest and expansion – in the Old Testament, it is clear that war and bloodshed were understood to be sinful and at odds with devotion to God from the earliest days of the Hebrew nation. Consider this passage, in which David tells his son and heir, Solomon, of God’s commands:

*Then he [David] called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build an house for the LORD God of Israel. And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God: But the word of the LORD^[4] came to me, saying, **Thou has shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight.** Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever. Now, my son, the Lord be with thee; and prosper thou, and build the house of the Lord thy God, as he hath said of thee.*

[emphasis added]

- I Chronicles 22:6-11

The sentence emphasized in this quotation was represented by David as the actual words of God, speaking to David, the second King of Israel. It may be worthy of note that David here apparently used the actual Name of God, which is represented in translation by the gloss LORD. This implies very strongly that he was speaking in the most solemn and truthful manner possible, for the Name of God was not spoken aloud. The Lord found David immoral and sinful quite specifically because of his great wars and bloodshed, and forbid him to build the temple, deferring that work to Solomon, who would be a person of peace. Though David's wars largely benefited Israel, and were supposed at the time to have God's sanction, David's record worked against him. God preferred a person of peace to conduct His work on earth.

Even in Old Testament times, God forbid war on at least some occasions:

Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren: return every man to his house: for this thing is done of me.

- II Chronicles 11:4

Several passages to be found in Psalms also record God's repugnance for war. For example:

Come, behold the works of the LORD . . . He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still and know that I am God.

- Psalms 46:8-10

Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us. Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee. Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, till every one submit himself with pieces of silver: scatter thou the people that delight in war. Princes shall come out of Egypt: Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God. Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord; Selah:

- Psalms 68:28-32

Psalm 68 is a Song of David, chiefly concerned with praise of the Lord God. Psalm 68:4 uses a three-letter version of the divine Name, rather than a gloss, suggesting the psalm was originally (or very early) written, although the expected gloss appears in two subsequent references. The psalm apparently includes elements of prophecy: the temple at Jerusalem was built by David's son, Solomon, as discussed above, and was not present in David's time. The passage describes God's rejection of tribute such as a company of spearmen, and foresees the scattering of "people that delight in war." Such scattering must be understood as the dissolution of the warlike nation(s) or people, for no other stated reason than their delight in war. This description is found amid passages which extol God's might, majesty, justice, and care for His people. In this context, it is again abundantly clear that God views war as a sinful flaw of humanity.

Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

- Psalms 85:10

The lament of Psalm 120 will surely seem familiar to Friends and other peace activists even today:

My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war.

- Psalms 120:6-7

Psalm 120 is described as a Song of degrees, and is only seven verses long. It is in its entirety a lament, opening with a cry to the Lord (using a gloss for the divine Name), asking deliverance from "lying lips and a deceitful tongue." It seems likely that the phrase "him that hateth peace" is a reference to the adversary or tempter (i.e., Satan). In this case, the psalmist's lament is that he has long dwelt in the world, the kingdom of the adversary, where peace is reviled. The final verse may well refer to the psalmist's own lips, which were prone to parrot the perceived wisdom of the world, rather than boldly speaking Truth to power. The context is clear in any case: the psalmist cried to the Lord in the knowledge that to hate peace and be "for war" was (and is) sinful, and to love peace was (and is) in unity with the will of God.

In addition, the prophets also spoke of God's

disapproval of war. Most famously, Isaiah reported his vision:

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD . . . and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more . . . [C]ome ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.

- Isaiah 2:3-5^[5]

And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

- Isaiah 32:17

With the New Testament, an increased emphasis on God's rejection of war is evident in the teachings of Jesus, and subsequently of his apostles. In the Sermon on the Mount, often characterized as the greatest and most perfect of sermons, Jesus presented the Beatitudes, then admonished the people in words now more familiar than the Mosaic law He cited:

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. . . Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. . . Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.

- Matthew 5:9, 38-39, 43-45

In the Garden of Gethsemane, when the chief priests and elders with their soldiers came to arrest Jesus, one of his disciples (identified in John as Peter) produced a sword and sought to defend Jesus:

And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus

stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

- Matthew 26:51-54

This familiar passage gave rise to the assertion that Jesus could have called “ten thousand angels” (a typical assessment of the strength of 12 legions). This measure of might, though appealing to the worldly heart, misses the point: He did not call upon the angels, or even on one burly Galilean fisherman, to defend Him. It would have been an abdication of His role as Messiah to rely upon such force, and the use of force by a disciple was a form of betrayal. The heart of the passage is “all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” The way of the sword is not the way of Christ.

When Pilate interrogated Jesus, he pointed out that the chief priests of Jesus’ own people had delivered Him to Pilate:

Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?

Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?

Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now my kingdom is not from hence.

Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

- *John 18:33-37*

Jesus offered a complex response in simple words which have at times been misunderstood. The key to His response is the opening clause: "My kingdom is not of this world." He reiterated this point in the concluding clause: "my kingdom is not from hence." Reference to a "kingdom of this world" is clearly hypothetical, and at best, relates to future events described in Revelation. It is clear that His [present] kingdom is not of this world, and his servants are not to fight. Many view this distinction as bespeaking two kingdoms: one which is not of this world, and a future, millennial kingdom on earth. Jesus's kingdom not of this world is understood as being the souls of His followers, where He rules supreme now and at all times. The millennial kingdom on earth is addressed in Revelation, but it seems clear even there, as in Revelation 19, that His followers will not actually fight. Although His followers are characterized as a "armies," it is clear that the enemy armies at Armageddon "were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth," suggesting His words, rather than a literal weapon.

Following his dramatic conversion, Paul, the great missionary apostle, included the teaching of nonviolence in his epistles:

God hath called us to peace.

- *I Corinthians 7:15*

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.

- *II Corinthians 10:3-4*

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

- *Hebrews 12:14*

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. . .

- *Galatians 5:21-22*

In his general epistles, the apostle Peter also

stressed peace and nonviolence:

Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

- I Peter 3:8-11

In the greatest of prophetic writings, John the Divine reported his visions of the end times, including:

If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

- Revelation 13:9-10

It was clear to the early church that Christians were forbidden by Jesus Christ to wage war. In fact, prior to the adoption of Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire under Constantine I (reigned 306-337 AD), the church promptly recognized early war resisters as saints.

St. Martin of Tours (316-397 AD) was a teen-aged Hungarian conscript in the Roman army. Upon his conversion to Christianity, he refused to bear arms, and was imprisoned for a time. After his release from prison, he became a priest and ultimately a bishop.

St. Maurice (d. c. 287 AD) was an officer in the Theban Legion, in Egypt – and a Christian. He and his Christian companions, including Exuperius, Candidus, Victor, Uraus and others refused orders and withdrew from the legion. They were summarily executed. One account contends the entire legion of 6,000 soldiers joined them in refusing orders, and that all were executed. This seems unlikely, but not impossible.

St. Theodore (d. c. 306, 319 AD) [Theodore of Heraclea, Theodore Stratelates, and Theodore Tiro are probably one individual; if not, all three deserve mention here] was a general in the army of Licinius, but became a Christian and was tortured and beheaded for his faith.

Accounts of Theodore Tiro indicate he was burned to death rather than beheaded.

The early church accorded these and certain other "warrior saints" a degree of veneration which probably derived from previous pagan hero cults; however, it is clear that nonviolence and rejection of war were not simply tolerated, but were a significant and highly esteemed element of the early church, and those who embraced nonviolence and lived their beliefs were admired in the most whole-hearted way.

Just War Theory

"Just war" theory was initially proposed by St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD), in the Fifth Century AD, but was apparently strongly influenced by the concept of "just violence" originating with the great Roman orator and statesman, Cicero^[6] (106-43 BC). St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 AD), one of the church's greatest scholars, made significant contributions to the development of the theory. Each era and generation has seen additional development and refinement of the theory, with the nuclear era imposing particularly heavy burdens upon the theologians and theoreticians.^[7]

"Just war" was a concept foreign to Christianity prior to Constantine and the adoption of Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire. From its inception, the theory has been palpably accommodationist - designed as a compromise between the original pacifist, nonviolent roots of the Church and the putative necessities of the state. The theory traditionally sets seven slightly overlapping criteria, *all* of which must be met before a war may be deemed just. It is understood that the Church cannot formally countenance, nor may Christians participate in, a war which does not meet these criteria.^[8]

1. **Just Cause.**^[9] This phrase is a term of art, and has a specific legal meaning and history. Just Cause simply means both good and sufficient reason and related goal exist - and are the actual basis for the proposed action (see "Right Intention" below). The cause must be just, and the enemy must be recognizably unjust. Effectively, the cause must be limited to defense of a stable and morally preferable order against destruction and/or injustice.

2. **Competent Authorization. (Prior**

Declaration of War) War must be declared prior to initiating hostilities, by a body of appropriate jurisdiction and authority. In the U.S., the power to declare war is vested exclusively in the Congress. For example: U.S. involvement in World War II was declared by Congress; U.S. involvement in Viet Nam was not. Actions such as Korea or the Persian Gulf I are a gray area, involving action by competent authority within the United Nations, then endorsement by Congress. U.S. indignation over the World War II Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was based in large part on lack of prior declaration of war; i.e., it was a "sneak attack." The proverbial "first strike" is by definition unjust, whether nuclear or otherwise, since it is intended as a "sneak attack."

3. Comparative Justice. (Reasonable Hope of Success) The action undertaken must be in response to the stated Just Cause, and directed toward the related goal. Effectively, when related to "Discrimination" below, this criterion requires that actions be military against military. There must also be a reasonable expectation of success; that is, that the putatively just side will prevail. Absent a realistic expectation of this nature, it is wrong or unjust to wage or continue war. It is also wrong or unjust to conduct war by means likely to destroy the stated objectives. It is not permissible to destroy a village in order to save it from the enemy. It is not permissible to "defend democracy" by establishing a dictatorship.

4. Right Intention. (Right Attitude) The only permissible intention is the restoration of justice. Retribution, revenge, anger and national prestige are not permissible motives. War to correct an injustice may be "just;" war to punish the enemy for whatever reason is not "just."

5. Discrimination. (Noncombatant Immunity) Portions of the enemy's population are selectively excluded from hostilities. Noncombatants are defined as all persons not directly engaged in the manufacture, direction or use of weapons. Noncombatants may not be targeted. The extent of permissible "double effect" injuries/deaths to noncombatants (current jargon approximates "collateral civilian casualties") is debated; theologians tend to severely limit, while governments tend to expand acceptable levels. This factor must be related to "Proportionality" below.

This criterion has historically been understood as applying to offensive actions, requiring respect for the enemy's noncombatants. However, careful consideration argues for application to one's own noncombatants, as well. It would be unjust to place offensive weaponry in schoolyards or hospitals, using noncombatants as a shield. When dealing with an enemy who fails utterly to respect noncombatants (or to observe other "just war" criteria), protection of the lives of civilians and noncombatants often may only be achieved by massive evacuation, similar to that practiced in World War II London during the Blitz.

6. Proportionality. There must be a reasonable expectation that the intended just result will exceed the damage done by the war. This consideration applies not only to the war as a whole, but to individual battles and campaigns, and even to specific tactics. Atrocities in one engagement may not be averaged against proper conduct at other times. For example: Will destroying desalinization plants to handicap the enemy's army produce an excessive level of casualties, hardship, disease, etc. to the noncombatant civilian populace? If so, the tactic is unjust. Will deliberate release of millions of barrels of crude oil into a body of water produce more environmental and noncombatant damage than damage to the enemy's military? If so, this too is unjust.

7. Last Resort. War may only be invoked when all other means of resolution have been exhausted. Historically, this has not been understood as requiring acceptance of an unjust resolution (i.e., surrender or submission). This element does not recognize the impatience of rulers, politicians, or other leaders who may wish to rule out some means as "too slow." A slow, but nonviolent and just resolution is to be preferred to a war, no matter how quickly concluded.

All seven criteria must be met for a war to qualify as "just." It is not enough to satisfy six of seven, and it was never intended to be easy to justify a war. Further, these criteria make it almost impossible to justify a war of aggression, while wars of defense are, by comparison, easier to justify.^[10]

Several options exist for a nation or individual faced with invasion, including full military resistance,

guerilla warfare, sabotage, varying degrees and methods of nonviolent resistance (roughly 200 types have been catalogued^[11]), negotiated settlement, and submission. When this spectrum is honestly considered, it is most unlikely that any given war will qualify as “just.” Were “just war” theory applied as intended, in good faith, there would be few if any wars.

Despite the efforts of governments over the centuries, the application of “just war” standards is the prerogative of every individual, not of the great and powerful alone. The underlying principle permits an individual to find a war unjust, and to refuse to participate in or support that war, regardless of governmental and/or majority position on the subject.

This is the basis of conscientious objection, and is supported by United Nations standards. Many western democracies now recognize this as a basic human right. In the U.S., current law recognizes only objection to all war. The failure to recognize selective objection to a particular war effectively arrogates to the state the conscience of the individual, and the exercise of conscience required to apply “just war” criteria. This has helped to foster the mistaken view in U.S. society that “just war” criteria may only be applied and assessed by the great and powerful, such as those in “competent authority.” A peculiar irony can but attach to such a view in a governmental system where that authority derives from the electorate - the great mass of individuals.

It must, however, be noted that prior to World War II the prevailing Roman Catholic theological viewpoint denied this individual exercise of conscience and application of the “just war” criteria. A pronouncement attributed to Fr. Wilfred Parsons, S.J. aptly summarizes the pre-1941 view: “The presumption is always with the government until something is shown to the contrary and the citizen knows for certain that all the facts necessary for this contrary judgment have been revealed.”^[12] This viewpoint began to change during World War II.

In the end, it is clear that “just war” theory is a human artifice, devised by academic theoreticians, whether in ivory tower or cloister, in an attempt to somehow quantify, justify, and render moral the system of war, which they could not control, and did not hope to end. The vague lip service offered “just war” theory over the centuries has

not prevented or even moderated wars. “Just war” remains an oxymoron, and its theory has not been supported by experience.

The Peace Testimony

Prior to the Protestant Reformation, what is now the Roman Catholic Church was The Church, and enforced orthodoxy rigorously. Orthodoxy meant “just war” theory, with deference to the secular government, generally a monarchy officially held to be divinely ordained.

During the Seventeenth Century, the second wave of the reformation took place in England^[13] Prominent among the nonconformists of the period were the people who soon became known as Quakers. Led by George Fox, Quakerism sought to return to early Christianity, reviving the faith as it existed before the exigencies of the Roman (and subsequent) states began to distort the true gospel message.

In 1660, Fox reported the following message was sent to the king of England, clearly stating the beliefs and practice of Quakers. It is likely this message was sent in part to reassure the monarch; Charles II had arrived in England for the restoration of the monarchy only six months before, following the fall of the Commonwealth and Protectorate. Since Quakers did not serve in the Royalist forces, they were suspect and subjected to persecution and oppression for their nonconformity. It is also likely that Fox, having explained his beliefs to Cromwell earlier, felt led to share his faith with the monarch as well. The likelihood that the politics of the era influenced the timing of this statement should not be presumed to invalidate the statement itself.

This message sent to the king is the earliest comprehensive statement of the Friends’ Peace Testimony, and has often been quoted in excerpted form. For the sake of context and accuracy, it is offered below in its entirety:

A declaration from the harmless innocent people of God, called Quakers, against all sedition, plotters, and fighters in the world; for removing the ground of jealousy and suspicion from both magistrates and people in the kingdom concerning wars and fightings.^[14]

Presented to the king the 21st day of the Eleventh month, 1660.

Our principle is, and our practices have always been to seek peace and ensue it; to follow after righteousness and the knowledge of God; seeking the good and welfare, and doing that which tends to the peace of all. We know that wars and fightings proceed from the lusts of men, (as James Chapter 4:1-3), out of which lusts the Lord has redeemed us, and so out of the occasion of war. The occasion of war and war itself, arises from the lust, (wherein envious men, who are lovers of themselves more than lovers of God, lust, kill, and desire to have men's lives or estates). All bloody principles and practices we, as to our own basics, do utterly deny, with all outward wars, strife, and fighting with outward weapons for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever: this is our testimony to the whole world.

And whereas if someone should object and say: "But although you now say, that you cannot fight nor take up arms at all; yet if the spirit move you, then you will change your principle, you will sell your coat and buy a sword, and fight for the kingdom of Christ." To this we answer, Christ said to Peter, "Put up your sword in its place;" though he had said before, he that had no sword might sell his coat and buy one, (to the fulfilling of the law and the scripture), yet after, when he had bid him put it up, he said, "He that takes the sword shall perish with the sword." And Christ said to Pilate, "do you not know that I can now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" And this might satisfy Peter, after he had put up his sword, when he said to him, "He that took it, should perish by it;" which satisfies us. Matthew 26:52-53.

In the Revelations it is said, "He that kills with the sword shall perish with the sword; and here is the faith and patience of the saints." So Christ's kingdom is not of this world, therefore his servants do not fight as he told Pilate, the magistrate who crucified him. And did they not look upon Christ as a raiser of sedition? And did not he pray, "Forgive them?" But thus it is that we are numbered among transgressors, and among fighters, that the scriptures might be fulfilled. That the spirit of Christ, by which we are guided, is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing, as evil, and again to move unto it. We certainly know and testify to the world, that the spirit of Christ, which leads us into all truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ nor for the kingdoms of this world. First, because the kingdom of Christ, God will exalt, according to his promise, and cause it to grow and flourish in righteousness, "Not by might, nor by power, (of outward sword), but by my spirit, said the Lord" Zechariah 4:6. So those that use any weapon to fight for Christ, or for the establishing of his kingdom or government, their spirit, principle, and practice in that we deny.

Secondly, We earnestly desire and wait, that (by the word of God's power, and its effectual operation in the hearts of men), the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ; and that he may rule and reign in men by his spirit and truth; that thereby all people, out of all different judgments and professions, may be brought into love and unity with God, and one with another; and that all may come to witness the prophet's words fulfilled, who said, "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Isaiah 2:4. Micah 4:3. So we, whom the Lord has called into the obedience of his truth, have denied wars and fightings, and cannot any more learn them. This is a certain testimony unto all the world of the truth of our hearts in this particular, that as God persuades every man's heart to believe, so they may receive it. For we have not, as some others, gone about cunningly with devised fables, nor have we ever denied in practice what we have professed in principle; but in sincerity and truth, and by the word of God, we have labored to be made manifest unto all men, that both we and our ways might be witnessed in the hearts of all. And whereas all manner of evil has been falsely spoken of us, we hereby speak the plain truth of our hearts, to take away the occasion of that offence, that so we, being innocent, may not suffer for other men's offences, nor be made a prey of by the wills of men for that of which we were never guilty; but in the uprightness of our hearts we may, under the power ordained of God for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well, live a peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For although we have always suffered, and do now more abundantly suffer, yet we know it is for righteousness' sake: "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." 2 Corinthians 1:2. which for us is a witness for the convincing of our enemies. For this we can say to all the world, we have wronged no man, we have used no force nor violence against any man, we have been found in no plots, nor guilty of sedition. When we have been wronged we have not sought to revenge ourselves; we have not made resistance against authority; but wherein we could not obey for conscience sake, we have suffered the most of any

people in the nation. We have been counted as sheep for the slaughter, persecuted and despised, beaten, stoned, wounded, stocked, whipped, imprisoned, haled out of the synagogues, cast into dungeons and noisy prisons, where many have died in bonds, shut up from our friends, denied needful sustenance for many days, together with other the like cruelties. And the cause of all these our sufferings is not for any evil, but for things relating to the worship of our God, and in obedience to his requirements. For which cause we shall freely give up our bodies a sacrifice, rather than disobey the Lord; knowing, as the Lord has kept us innocent, he will plead our cause when there is none in the earth to plead it.

So we, in obedience to his truth, do not love our lives unto death, that we may do his will, and wrong no man in our generation, but seek the good and peace of all men. He who has commanded us, "that we shall not swear at all," Matthew 5:34 has also commanded us, "that we shall not kill." Matthew 5:21. So that we can neither kill men, nor swear for or against them. This is both our principle and our practice, and has been from the beginning; so that if we suffer, as suspected to take up arms or make war against any, it is without any ground from us; for it neither is, nor ever was in our hearts, since we owned the truth of God; neither shall we ever do it, because it is contrary to the spirit of Christ, his doctrine, and the practice of his apostles; even contrary to him for whom we suffer all things and endure all things.

And although men come against us with clubs, staves, drawn swords, pistols cocked, and beat, cut, and abuse us; we never resisted them, but offered them our hair, backs, and cheeks. It is not an honor to manhood or nobility to run upon harmless people, who lift not a hand against them, with arms and

weapons. Therefore consider these things, you men of understanding; for plotters, raisers of insurrections, tumultuous ones, and fighters, running with swords, clubs, staves, and pistols, one against another; we say, these are of the world, and have their foundation from this unrighteous world, from the foundation of which the Lamb has been slain; which lamb has redeemed us from this unrighteous world; we are not of it, but are heirs of a world of which there is no end, a kingdom where no corruptible thing enters. Our weapons are spiritual, not carnal, yet mighty through God to the pulling down of the strong holds of sin and Satan, who is the author of wars, fighting, murder, and plots. Our swords are broken into plough shares, and spears into pruning hooks, as prophesied of in Micah 4:3. Therefore we cannot learn war any more, neither rise up against nation or kingdom with outward weapons, though you have numbered us among the transgressors and plotters.

The Lord knows our innocency in this, and will plead our cause with all people upon earth at the day of their judgment, when all men shall have a reward according to their works.

Therefore in love we warn you for your souls' good, not to wrong the innocent, nor the babes of Christ, which he has in his hand, and tenders as the apple of his eye; neither seek to destroy the heritage of God, nor turn your swords backward upon such as the law was not made for, i.e. the righteous; but for the sinners and transgressors, to keep them down. For those are not peacemakers nor lovers of enemies, neither can they overcome evil with good, who wrong them that are friends to you and all men, and wish your good and the good of all people upon earth. If you oppress us as they did the children of Israel in Egypt, if you oppress us as they did when Christ was born, and as they did the Christians in the primitive

times, we can say, "The Lord forgive you;" and leave the Lord to deal with you, and not revenge ourselves. If you say as the council said to Peter and John, "You must speak no more in that name," and if you serve us as they served the three children spoken of in Daniel, God is the same as he ever was, that lives for ever and ever, who has the innocent in his arms.

Oh friends! Offend not the Lord and his little ones, neither afflict his people; but consider and be moderate. Run not hastily into things, but mind and consider mercy, justice, and judgment; that is the way for you to prosper and get the favor of the Lord. Our meetings were stopped and broken up in the days of Oliver, under pretence of plotting against him; in the days of the Committee of Safety, we were looked upon as plotters to bring in King Charles; and now our peaceable meetings are termed seditious. Oh! that men should lose their reason, and go contrary to their own consciences; knowing that we have suffered all things, and have been accounted plotters all along, though we have always declared against them both by word of mouth and printing, and are clear from any such thing! Though we have suffered all along, because we would not take up carnal weapons to fight against any, and are thus made a prey upon because we are the innocent lambs of Christ, and cannot avenge ourselves! These things are left upon your hearts to consider; for we are out of all those things in the patience of the saints, and we know as Christ said, "He that takes the sword shall perish with the sword." Matthew 26:52 and Revelations 13:10.

This is given forth from the people called Quakers, to satisfy the king and his council, and all that have any jealousy concerning us, that all occasion of suspicion may be taken away, and our innocence

cleared.

Postscript - Though we are numbered among transgressors, and have been given up to rude, merciless men, by whom our meetings are broken up, in which we edified one another in our holy faith, and prayed together to the Lord that lives forever, yet he is our pleader in this day. The Lord said, "They that feared his name spoke often together," as in Malachi; which were as his jewels. For this cause, and no evil doing, are we cast into holes, dungeons, houses of correction, prisons, (sparing neither old nor young, men nor women), and made a prey of in the sight of all nations, under pretence of being seditious, so that all rude people run upon us to take possession; for which we say, the Lord forgive them that have done thus to us; who does and will enable us to suffer; and never shall we lift up hand against any man that does thus use us; but that the Lord may have mercy upon them, that they may consider what they have done.

For how is it possible for them to requite us for the wrong they have done to us? Who to all nations have sounded us abroad as seditious or plotters, who were never plotters against any power or man upon the earth, since we knew the life and power of Jesus Christ manifested in us, who has redeemed us from the world and all works of darkness, and plotters therein, by which we know the election before the world began. So we say, the Lord have mercy upon our enemies, and forgive them for what they have done unto us. Oh! do as you would be done by; do unto all men as you would have them do unto you; for this is but the law and the prophets. All plots, insurrections, and riotous meetings, we deny, knowing them to be of the devil, the murderer; which we in Christ, who was before they were, triumph over. And all wars and fightings with carnal weapons we deny, who have the sword of the spirit; and all that

wrong us, we leave to the Lord. This is to clear our innocence from that aspersion cast upon us, "that we are seditious or plotters."^[15]

For three and one-half centuries, Friends as a body have held to the Peace Testimony. There have been times when some Friends, as individuals or as groups, have set aside the testimony and have engaged in war or related activities. Following the several divisions within the Religious Society of Friends during the Nineteenth Century, the resulting bodies have given greater or lesser weight to the Peace Testimony. The Wilburite or Conservative traditions within the Society hold most closely to historic Quakerism, and have most closely embraced the testimony. Outside the Wilburite tradition, however, during the 1930's and 1940's (i.e., the World War II era), it is estimated that something less than 15 percent of Friends individually embraced the Peace Testimony. This tragic level of apostasy has not resulted in a corporate abandonment of the testimony, but has significantly reduced the distance between Friends and mainstream Protestants.

Friends continue to refine and develop contemporary statements of the Peace Testimony, often motivated and strongly tinged by partisan political agendas. Too often, the philosophies underlying such contemporary restatements of the Peace Testimony do not in fact eschew war, but only deplore particular wars, an outlook better suited to the sophistry of "just war" theory. The developments and refinements of the Twentieth Century version of the war system should have served to awaken humanity at large to the evil nature of war. Alas, humanity instead devised a "Doomsday Clock" to calculate how very, very close tensions came to the actual moment of destruction. In recent annual assessments, the clock has begun to advance once again.

If the Peace Testimony is to retain greater Truth than the discredited "just war" theory, Friends must return more nearly to their roots, to the faith of the First Friends, including the Peace Testimony, once again "live in the Life and Power which takes away the occasion of all wars," and offer to apostate humanity the Truth revealed by Scripture and by Christ Within.

Notes

[1] All passages from the Holy Bible quoted are from the King James Version.

[2] The Commandment is reiterated in Deuteronomy 5:17 and incorporated in discussion in various passages elsewhere in scripture.

[3] The Hebrew word is here transliterated into the Roman alphabet for want of a suitable type font and the requisite knowledge of Hebrew to do otherwise.

[4] LORD in this form is a gloss for the divine Name, sometimes termed the Tetragrammaton, and usually transliterated as *YHWH*.

[5] Compare to Micah 4:2-3, a virtually identical prophecy.

[6] Durland, William. *The Apocalyptic Witness*, Pendle Hill, Wallingford, PA. 1988.

[7] It may be worth noting here that despite elaborate intellectual exercises attempting to extend "just war" theory to include justification of nuclear war, such reasoning was formally rejected by the Vatican, and has never been adopted. The implied conclusion would appear to be that nuclear war or use of nuclear weapons cannot be justified under any circumstances within the context of this theory.

[8] It must also be understood that not all Christian denominations or individual Christians accept this theory. Notable examples include the historic peace churches, such as the Religious Society of Friends (i.e., Quakers), Mennonites and Brethren. Such churches and individuals may not support or participate in even the most "just" conceivable war.

[9] This listing of "just war" criteria is drawn from Chittister, Sister Joan D., O.S.B. "There's No Such Thing as a Just War," *U.S. Catholic*, May, 1992. pp. 13 - 15. This special issue focused solely on peace and conflict, with heavy emphasis on "just war" theory, and is an excellent contemporary assessment and resource. *U.S. Catholic*, 205 W. Monroe St., Chicago, IL 60606. For an equally excellent

contemporary Protestant assessment of the theory, consider Sider, Ronald J. and Taylor, Richard K. ***Nuclear Holocaust and Christian Hope***, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL 1982, Chapter 4, "The Just War Tradition," et seq. Variant parenthetical headings are drawn from this source.

[10] For a notable historical attempt to justify wars of aggression and conquest, including enslaving and forcibly "converting" the enemy, consider the debate between Juan Jines de Sepulveda and Bartolome de Las Casas, in the mid-Sixteen Century, addressed in: "The Great Debate," and Deiros, Pablo A. "Cross and Sword," ***Christian History***, Issue 35, pp. 24-25, 31.

[11] Sharp, Gene, ***The Politics of Nonviolent Action*** (three volumes). Porter Sargant Publishers, Boston, 1973.

[12] Unsworth, Tim "Inductive Reasoning: Is it time to give the draft its notice?" in the "Salt Mines" feature, ***Salt*** magazine (Claretian Publications), November/December, 1992, pp. 12 - 15.

[13] The first wave in England was the creation of the Church of England by Henry VIII.

[14] ***The Works of George Fox: The journal of George Fox*** (Volumes 1 & 2), pp. 421-426

[15] When the statement was reprinted, some 20 years later, the following was added: "Courteous reader, this was our testimony above twenty years ago, and since then we have not been found acting contrary to it, nor ever shall; for the truth that is our guide is unchangeable. This is now reprinted to the men of this age, many of whom were then children, and does stand as our certain testimony against all plotting and fighting with carnal weapons. And if any, by departing from the truth, should do so, this is our testimony in the truth against them, and will stand over them, and the truth will be clear of them."