

# Pacifism

From the Latin **Pax** and **Facere**, meaning 'to make peace'

Pacifism seeks to abolish war and to reconcile enemies through the power of love and social justice.

Pacifism means *to make peace*—it demands actively working for peace.

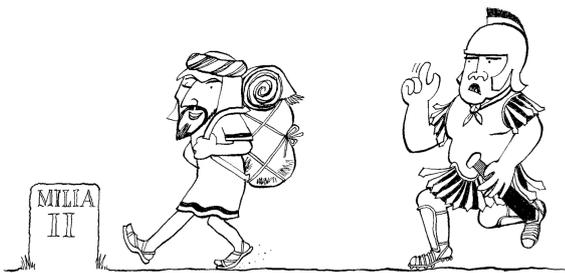
## Key Scripture: Mt 5:38-42

**Turn the other cheek:** Robs the oppressor of the power of humiliation. “Try again! Your first blow failed. I am a human person equal in dignity. You cannot demean me.”

**Give your cloak:** In this debtor/creditor relationship the giving of everything—leading to nakedness—is a protest. By leaving court naked the debtor refuses to be humiliated and shines a light on the injustice in the system that led to his poverty.

**Go the extra mile:** Roman soldiers could force subjects to carry their pack for one mile but no more. By continuing for another mile the subject refuses to be powerless, seizes the initiative, and causes a problem for the soldier (who appears to be breaking the rules).

These examples introduce the sort of nonviolent action that is at the heart of pacifism.



**Other Scripture:** Mt 5:1-12; Mt 5:23-34; Mt 5:43-48; Mt 26:51-52; Eph 6:10-17

## Dominant Era: The Early Church

Pacifism was the dominant Christian witness for the first few centuries after Christ's death.

Overwhelmingly Christians refused to serve in the army—or engage in violence of any form—well into the fourth century.

Pacifism was adopted for a variety of reasons—Christians in the Roman army wouldn't participate in worship of Caesar; the second coming was expected imminently; a general aversion to Rome—but the greatest reason was Christ's command to *love your enemies*.

## Church Writers and Thinkers

*The Lord, in disarming Peter, ungirt every soldier.*

**Tertullian** (160-220)

*I will never serve you. You can cut off my head but I will not be a soldier of this world, for I am a soldier of Christ... I will not take the badge [of the soldier]. If you insist, I will deface it. I am a Christian, and am not allowed to wear that leaden seal around my neck.*

**St Maximilian** (274-295)

*Hitherto I have served you as a soldier, let me now serve Christ... I am a soldier of Christ and it is not lawful for me to fight.*

**St Martin of Tours** (316-397)

## Christian Pacifism Today

Although Christian pacifism lost its position as the dominant Christian attitude to war during the fifth century it has remained a thread within Christian thought ever since. St Francis of Assisi during the medieval period and the growth of Peace Churches after the Reformation kept the flame alive. Today the Quakers ([quaker.org.uk](http://quaker.org.uk)) are a Peace Church and peace groups such as Pax Christi ([paxchristi.org.uk](http://paxchristi.org.uk)) champion this philosophy.

**Further Reading:** Walter Wink, *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way*, Fortress Press 2003

# Just War

*The love of enemies admits no dispensation, but does not exclude wars of mercy waged by the good.*

Just War is a set of principles that define when it is acceptable to go to war, the conduct that is acceptable during war, and how the aftermath of war is to be dealt with. These principles seek to limit war and they remain the basis for many international treaties today.

## Principles of Just War

### **Ius ad Bellum** (Right to go to war)

1. There must be a **Just Cause**
2. War must be declared by a **Proper Authority**
3. War must be for the **Right Intention** (to restore peace)
4. War must be the **Last Resort**

### **Ius in Bello** (Conduct in war)

1. War must be winnable (**Probability of success**)
2. Only combatants are legitimate targets (**Just conduct**)
3. The benefits must outweigh the consequences (**Proportionality**)

### **Ius post Bellum** (Justice after war)

1. A conditional surrender should be negotiated (**Just Termination**)
2. Victor must repair damage to innocent people and infrastructure (**Restitution**)

## Dominant Era: 5<sup>th</sup>—11<sup>th</sup> Century

By the 4th century Christianity was the official religion of the Roman Empire. Christians were no longer other-worldly, concerned only with heavenly things, but were fully immersed in this earthly realm.

Heavenly ethical systems were impractical on earth (apart from in monasteries) so a different ethical system developed to deal with the messiness of the earthly realm and the imperfection of humankind.

Wars were considered inevitable so attention turned to efforts to limit their effects. Pacifism was superseded as the dominant response by *Just War* which permitted defence of the empire and the faith by military means.

**Just War in Scripture:** Mk 12: 13-17;  
Jn 2:13-16; Mt 10:34-39; Lk 22:35-38;  
Mt 8:5-10; Jn 15:12-17

## Church Writers and Thinkers



*Love does not preclude a benevolent severity, nor that correction which compassion itself dictates. No one indeed is fit to inflict punishment save the one who has first overcome hate in his heart. The love of enemies admits no dispensation, but love does not exclude wars of mercy waged by the good.* **St Augustine of Hippo** [Pictured] (354-430)

*In cases where it belongs to a community to provide a ruler for itself, that community can without injustice depose or restrain a king whom it has appointed, if he should abuse royal power tyrannically.* **St Thomas Aquinas** (1225-1274)

## Just War Today

Just War was never meant to justify war but to limit it. Some feel it is used more often to find a reason to go to war rather than a reason not to. At a Vatican conference in 2016 a call was made for the church to replace *just war* with *just peace*, partly in order to address this: [www.nonviolencejustpeace.net](http://www.nonviolencejustpeace.net)

**Further Reading:** Lisa S. Cahill, *Love Your Enemies: Discipleship, Pacifism, and Just War Theory*, Augsburg 1994

# Holy War

Holy War is known, outside a religious context, as Total War.

Whereas *Just War* considered war inevitable but also regrettable and avoidable, *Total War* understands human society to be in a perpetual state of war and that victory requires the annihilation of enemies. *Holy War* is God's act against a sinful humanity; God's total war against the forces of evil.

## Holy War in Scripture

Holy War can be seen to be championed in both the Old and the New Testaments:

- God as a warrior fighting for His chosen people  
Deut 20:1-4
- God's people may seize the lands of their enemies  
Deut 20:16-18
- Enemies are to be annihilated  
Deut 20:16-18; Josh 8:24-28
- God's armies will conquer evil  
Rev 19:11-21
- The good are rewarded with a place in heaven; the evil are damned to hell  
Rev 20:4; Rev 20:7-10

## Dominant Era: 11<sup>th</sup>— 20<sup>th</sup> Century

The capture of Jerusalem and holy places in Palestine by Muslim Turks in 1071 led to increased fear of Islam. Pope Urban II called for a *Holy War* in defence of Christians against these *infidels*.

These holy wars became known as the Crusades which were fought for the glory of God and approved of by the Church. Crusaders were granted several privileges including a *Papal Indulgence* which guaranteed their immediate entry into heaven should they die in battle annihilating the enemies of Christianity.

Holy War later evolved into the persecution of heretics, Jews, witches, and indigenous peoples in God's name.

## Church Writers and Thinkers

*Go forward therefore, in confidence, O Knights, and with dauntless spirit drive out the enemies of the cross of Christ. Be certain that neither death nor life can divorce you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. In all danger repeat this within yourselves: "Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's" [Rom 14:8]. With what happiness they die, martyrs in battle! St Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) preaching the 2<sup>nd</sup> Crusade*



*Then you would be one of Christ's company, going to fight the unbelieving dogs who have possession of our holy place, where gentle First Truth lived and endured sufferings and death for us. You find so much satisfaction in fighting and waging war, so now I am begging you tenderly in Christ Jesus not to wage war any longer against Christians (for that offends God), but to go instead to fight the unbelievers, as God and our Holy Father decreed.*

**St Catherine of Siena (1347-1380)** in a letter to a mercenary

## Holy War Today

The response to terrorist atrocities around the world, notably the attacks on New York of 11 September 2001, can be seen to be a Total War response which has clear parallels with the Holy War of the Crusades. In both cases there is an enemy that must be annihilated by any means necessary with the ends justifying the means; a righteous cause with the intention of promoting noble ideals—truth, justice, and liberation, or freedom and democracy.

**Further Reading:** Joseph J. Fahey, *War and the Christian Conscience*, Orbis 2005 pp115-146

# World Community

*Peace is the fruit of anxious daily care to see that everyone lives in the justice that God intends.*  
(Populorum Progressio)

A model of global cooperation based on a democratic union of states pursuing an end to war, securing social justice, protecting human rights, and preserving the environment.

## Key Scripture: Isaiah 2:2-4

In days to come  
the mountain of the Lord's house  
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,  
and shall be raised above the hills;  
all the nations shall stream to it.

Many peoples shall come and say,  
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,  
to the house of the God of Jacob;  
that he may teach us his ways  
and that we may walk in his paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,  
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.  
He shall judge between the nations,  
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;  
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,  
and their spears into pruning hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war any more.

**Other Scripture:** Isaiah 42:1-7; Lk 4:18-19;  
Mt 28:19-20; Gal 3:27-29; Rom 1:13-16;  
Rom 12:9-21

## Dominant Era: from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

The Papal Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, published in 1963 by Pope John XXIII, placed international cooperation and the universal common good at the heart of peacemaking.

This came after centuries of progression from the earliest suggestion that indigenous peoples had inherent rights and dignity, to the recognition that natural law gave every person inalienable human rights.

Church teaching of the 20<sup>th</sup> century set out the respective duties of citizen and state, emphasised our common humanity, and placed global interdependence and justice as the foundation of good relations between nations. Peace is based on truth, justice, freedom, and love.

*John XXIII's Pacem in Terris was the first Papal Encyclical to be addressed to all people of the world—not just to Catholics.*



## Church Writers and Thinkers

*We are hopeful that, by establishing contact with one another and by a policy of negotiation, nations will come to a better recognition of the natural ties that bind them together as human. We are hopeful, too, that they will come to a fairer realisation of one of the cardinal duties deriving from our common nature: namely, that love, not fear, must dominate the relationships between individuals and between nations. It is principally characteristic of love that it draws people together in all sorts of ways, sincerely united in the bonds of mind and matter; and this is a union from which countless blessings can flow.* **Pope John XXIII** (1881-1963) in *Pacem in Terris* (#129)

## Ongoing Development

A vision of World Community has seen the Church champion a number of positions that allow this community to flourish in peace. These include calls for disarmament and an end to the arms trade, support for conscientious objection, and the promotion of nonviolent conflict resolution and peace education.

**Further Reading:** John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, CTS 2002