

The First Crusade and Just War Theory: An Evaluation of the Justification of the First Crusade

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From the confines of Jerusalem and the city of Constantinople a horrible tale has gone forth and very frequently has been brought to our ears, namely, a race from the kingdom of the Persians, an accursed race, a race utterly alienated from God...has invaded the lands of those Christians and has depopulated them by the sword, pillage and fire.... [It] has either entirely destroyed the churches of God or appropriated them for the rites of its own religion.... On whom therefore is the labor of avenging these wrongs and of recovering this territory incumbent, if not upon you? You, upon whom above other nations God has conferred remarkable glory in arms, great courage, bodily activity, and strength to humble the hairy scalp of those who resist you.¹

According to Robert the Monk, those powerful words were spoken by Pope Urban II in 1095, and were meant to incite a counterattack against the Muslims who had taken the Holy Land out of Christian hands. The question we must ask is, “Why would people listen to the Pope and undertake arms in the First Crusade – an unprecedented kind of war?” Was the First Crusade justified, according to Just War theory as known to medieval people? Such questions can be answered if one examines the sources of early Just War theory as applicable to the Crusades. When examining individual battles, or even wars, it is important to determine if those violent acts were considered justified by the standards of the time, so that any illusions of the past might be dispelled. In order to find out what constituted the just use of violence, one must look at the sources which medieval people would have used. It is very easy to judge the past from a modern point of view – a kind of arm chair historian that evaluates history without understanding the standards of the time being studied. Luckily for us, by the time of this study, there are number of prominent figures that develop the idea of Just War theory, which provide us

¹ Pope Urban II, “Speech at Clermont,” Version of Robert the Monk, in *The First Crusade: “The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres” and Other Source Materials*, 2nd ed., ed. Edward Peters (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 2-3.

with a lens through which to evaluate wars during the time period. Furthermore, it may seem obvious, but the written record is the only method we can use to gauge what was considered to fall within the norms of society. Although this work focuses mainly on church figures, ancient philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero provide the basis for the Just War theory medieval people would have manipulated and edited. Early church fathers such as Ambrose of Milan, Augustine of Hippo, and Isidore of Seville provide an interpretation of the Bible and other Christian sources which medieval people would have regarded as dogma. Finally, sources from high and late medieval times, such as those written by Bernard of Clairvaux and Thomas Aquinas – provide a gauge to which we can determine popular thought regarding the morality of warfare around this time. Furthermore, because war in the Middle Ages can encompass private war and public war, we must differentiate between the two types and determine what makes a morally justifiable war as well as identify what type of war is being studied by sources available during the medieval period. Ultimately, the goal of this research is to determine the criteria for a justified war, as known to medieval people, and apply it to the reasons provided for the First Crusade.

In order to gain an understanding of Just War theory, one must define warfare as applicable to the Middle Ages. Unfortunately, the medieval period complicates a seemingly simple task of defining warfare because, according to Maurice Keen, “war did not mean an exceptional period of international strife; it was the endemic condition of West European society.”² Because of the difficult task of separating war and peace time

² M. H. Keen, *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), 64.

in medieval times, I will categorize warfare into three types, all of which can overlap into the other, that is private war, holy war, and dynastic war. First, the Oxford English Dictionary defines private war as “a war fought by a restricted number of participants from personal or private motives.” Helen Nicholson describes private war by saying that “military hostilities carried on by the leader of one military band against another could be ‘war’, waged in a similar manner and even on a similar scale to military hostilities carried on by one king against another.”³ Secondly, there is holy war, which attempts to advance the will of God against the enemies of Christendom, and also represents the defense of clergy and church property.⁴ And lastly, there is what I call dynastic war, which takes place between two large groups, such as two monarchs.⁵ All three types of war are subject to justification under Just War theory.

Ancient Views of Just War Theory

Throughout the Middle Ages, Just War theory was a constantly evolving and changing subject, with newer thinkers building on the work and ideas of those who came before. Such an extensive foundation allowed it to be traced to the works of ancient philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero. Like the work of people who would follow, the ancient philosophers dealt with defining if there was ever a justifiable reason for war, and what those reasons were. In order to understand how medieval

³ Nicholson, 1.

⁴ Ibid., 26.

⁵ Here I use the word “dynastic” because I do not believe the word “national” would be necessarily indicative of the relationship between the powers that be and the people, and also that the concept of the nation was not yet formed. Furthermore, dynasty represents power at a much more personal level, and is more closely related to the concentration of power in a person, and not an office.

people viewed the justifications of warfare, we must first understand the philosophers who influenced the medieval war makers.

Plato (d. 348/7 BC), in *Laws*, describes that the world is in a constant state of war, and that cities must be constantly preparing as if there will be war.⁶ Preparation for war does not condemn violence; on the contrary, Plato is saying that violence must be used to obtain peace. With this world view in mind, Plato goes on to declare that any private war or peace treaty that does not coincide with the community's current ideas of an enemy is illegal, and the transgressors are to be put to death.⁷ Contemporarily, an appropriate analogy might be a private United States' citizen making an individual peace with Nazi Germany during World War II, while the rest of the Allied Powers continued to wage war. Furthermore, Plato goes on to say that if a portion of the community decides to make peace or war with a group said community is currently opposing, "the Generals are to bring those responsible for this action into court, and the judicial penalty for someone who is convicted shall be death."⁸ There is no differentiation between the consequences of the actions of one person and the consequences of the actions of a group of people, both groups are to be punished for undermining what the community has deemed necessary (in this case, war), and only the community as a whole can change their current course. The understanding is that the good of the community far outweighs the good of a single individual or group of individuals, and thus the power of war and peace are to be placed only in the hands of the community as a whole.

⁶ *The Laws of Plato*, trans. Thomas L. Pangle (New York: Basic Books, 1980), bk. I, pt. 625c-626d.

⁷ *Ibid.*, bk. XII, pt. 955c.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Aristotle (d. 322 BC) continues the work of Plato, and in many ways provides a more detailed approach to what Plato had already advanced. For example, in *Politics*, Aristotle claims that it is just to make war in order to achieve equality with an oppressive ruler, but it is unjust to use war to gain more power over a group who is already unequal to the aggressors.⁹ Thus he is claiming that war is to be waged for justice's sake and in defense of your community, not to gain more power over those already oppressed. Furthermore, Aristotle goes on to say,

Neither should men study war with a view to the enslavement of those who do not deserve to be enslaved; but first of all they should provide against their own enslavement, and in the second place obtain empire for the good of the governed, and not for the sake of exercising a general despotism, and in the third place, they should seek to be masters only over those who deserve to be slaves.¹⁰

Here, Aristotle lays out the justifiable reasons for warfare in more detail than previously discussed. He provides reasons for war in order of descending importance, first for defense of the people from outside aggression, second to expand the empire for the good of the people, and lastly to conquer those who are deserving of being subject of conquest. Aristotle, like Plato, claims that war should only be used as a means to an end, with the end being peace.¹¹

Moving forward a number of years, Cicero (d. 43 BC) emerges as one of the greatest orators in the Roman Empire, and continues the discussion regarding Just War theory. In *De officiis* (On duty), Cicero claims that war and violence is only to be used as

⁹ Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), bk. VII, pt. II.

¹⁰ Ibid., bk. VII, pt. XIV.

¹¹ Ibid., bk. VII, pt. II.

a last resort, when diplomacy cannot succeed.¹² He differs from Plato and Aristotle slightly here by explicitly stating that which the preceding philosophers only alluded to, in that warfare should only be a last resort. Furthermore, he concurs with Plato and Aristotle in that “the only excuse, therefore, for going to war is that we may live in peace unharmed; and when the victory is won, we should spare those who have not been blood-thirsty and barbarous in their warfare,” and even then “war is never undertaken by the ideal State, except in defence of its honour or its safety.”¹³

The just war, according to Cicero, is the one that is waged following the declaration of warfare or the demand of reparations, and that even then the war can only be considered just if it occurs in response to aggression or for defense.¹⁴ Here, we see a new addition to the theory of Just War to this point and time, in that the declaration of war is necessary prior to waging war. Declaration of war forces the reasons for warfare to be examined and justified, at least in some remote sense, prior to the advancement of arms. Moreover, if reparations are demanded prior to engaging in violence, then warfare can be just.¹⁵ Although Cicero does not explicitly mention the idea of private warfare, the reader can infer that he is speaking of the state taking action when making war. Cicero uses the Roman Empire as an example of a state that has expanded its boundaries in a justified manner, not the actions of a single person or group.¹⁶ An alternative view may be that private warfare is justifiable and acceptable

¹² Cicero, *De officiis*, trans. Walter Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), bk. I, pt. 12.

¹³ Cicero, *De re publica*, trans. Clinton W. Keyes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), bk. III, pt. 34.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, bk. III, pt. 35.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

because Cicero never overtly states that war is to be made by the state, unlike Plato or Aristotle. However, because of the example Cicero provides in *De re publica*, it seems state warfare is the topic of discussion.

Conditions of Justified Warfare According to the Bible

As influential as the ancient philosophers were in developing Just War theory, perhaps the most influential view of warfare for Western medieval people came from Christianity. One need only look to the power of the Church invested in Rome to see that Christianity was a way of life, not just saved for Sunday. People paid attention to the pope, who had the power to make and break emperors, the power to call wars such as the crusades, and the power to withhold absolution from your sins through excommunication. The far reaching effects of Christianity also made their way to the battlefield, but in order to know how Christianity interpreted warfare, one must examine the Bible.¹⁷ The Bible was extremely important to the largely Christian society of Western Europe, providing a guide for living a life dedicated to advancing God's work, not to mention detailing what justifies a war. The Old Testament provides the earliest Christian examples of the morality of war, followed by the New Testament, which provides the most numerous discussions on the topic.

Within the Old Testament, the most obvious place to examine morality of violence would be within Exodus, in which Moses delivers the Ten Commandments to

¹⁷ In this work, I have chosen to include the Old Testament with the discussion of biblical sources, instead of separating it from the New Testament. This method allows readers to see the comparisons between the Old and New Testament laws much easier. However, if this paper was compiled completely chronologically, it would make sense to include the Old Testament before the introduction of Plato.

the Hebrews. Perhaps the most blunt and explicit of all resources regarding Just War theory, Exodus 20:13 states “Thou shalt not murder.” The original Hebrew word to describe the act condemned in the commandment, which is transliterated as “ratsach,” means “the taking of a person’s life by an individual or by a mob, who target an individual, with all the attendant savagery. In the wider context of the [Old Testament], the prohibition may be defined more narrowly as the taking of a life outside of the parameters (as in the case of war or capital punishment), laid down by God.”¹⁸ In other words, the commandment in question outlaws criminal killing, such as murder. Murder, as defined later in the Old Testament, describes a person who wrongfully kills another, as in an attack, ambush, or otherwise.¹⁹ In addition, the punishment of death for murder is outlined in several sections, providing guidelines for man to set up his earthly law.²⁰ Christian restrictions on murder are very clear in condemning private warfare; however, the Bible differentiates between justified killing and murder, most of latter being described in the context of dynastic warfare. Lastly, the word “murder” is more accurate a term for the commandment because there are numerous examples in the Bible in which people kill on behalf of God, in which he is pleased.

There are a number of examples in the Bible in which God commands the Israelites to eliminate an enemy completely. For example, God commanded Moses, saying “Avenge the children of Israel of the Mid’i-anites; afterward shalt thou be

¹⁸ Willem A. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology*, MI: Zondervan, 1997), s.v. “רצח.”

¹⁹ Numbers 35:16-21.

²⁰ Genesis 9:6; Numbers 35:9-34.

gathered unto thy people.”²¹ The Israelites went on, under the command of God speaking through Moses, killing all Midianite males (including children and kings) and all non-virgin women.²² Furthermore, the Israelites took the spoils of war through plundering the Midianite villages, and kept the virgin women as captives.²³ The act of plundering and taking of booty makes sense in this context as God commanded the Israelites to destroy a group completely, and taking away their wealth and food sources would surely set the Midianites on the path of destruction. Also, the act of taking the spoils of war, including women, children, and cattle, were lawful as stated in the Old Testament under certain circumstances:

When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it: And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies which the Lord thy God hath given thee.²⁴

The description of how to wage war, first by asking for peace through submission and then in violence itself, mirrors the ancient philosophers’ ideas that war is to be a last resort, unless God commands you to “utterly destroy” a group.²⁵ Such examples from the Old Testament give the reader the idea that the only justifiable reason to wage war is by the commandment of God because the Israelites are God’s chosen people, while all

²¹ Numbers 31:2.

²² Numbers 31:1-19.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Deuteronomy 20:10-14.

²⁵ Ibid. 20:17.

other peoples worship false idols and do not follow His commandments.²⁶ The New Testament, however, provides a much more nuanced and differentiated vision of the justification of warfare, and provides much of the evidence to which medieval people would have turned.

Within the New Testament, the words of Jesus are invaluable to people looking to lead a Christian life, and the same would have been true of medieval people. Jesus's words are sometimes cryptic and require interpretation and context in order to draw a full meaning, unlike the general bluntness of the Old Testament examples cited in this text. Examining what is omitted in the text will also lead to an understanding of the teachings of Jesus. For example, there is a passage in the Gospel of Matthew in which a Roman centurion asks Jesus to heal his servant. Throughout the New Testament, Jesus has been present at his healings, however the faith of the centurion is so strong that he knows all Jesus has to do is say that he will heal his servant, and it will be so.²⁷ The important part of the passage is that Jesus praises the centurion's faith, and does not condemn the soldier's profession.

There is another example in the New Testament that deals with the conversion of a Roman centurion, by Peter. The passage of importance states: "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."²⁸

²⁶ Deuteronomy 7.

²⁷ Matthew 8:5-10.

²⁸ Acts 10:34-35.

Like early in the Gospel of Matthew, the centurion is not looked down upon because of his profession; on the contrary, Peter accepts him and, by extension, his soldier status.

Likewise, John the Baptist looks favorably on a group of Roman soldiers looking to him for teaching. In the Gospel of Luke, “the soldiers likewise demanded of him [John the Baptist], saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.”²⁹ Strikingly similar to the responses and actions from the Apostles toward soldiers, John the Baptist keeps with the current trend of not denouncing a soldier’s occupation, but merely instructs him to be happy with his income.

The New Testament, in the above passages, does not discourage the professions of soldiers, especially the ones directly responsible for the execution of Jesus, and because of such a fact, one would think the Romans would be condemned as soldiers before any other. However, the authors of the Bible decline to reprimand soldiers because of their professions, taking the time to conduct them in the manners of Christianity and the teachings of Jesus, focusing on making them better Christians instead of changing their careers. It is through omission in these passages that a person learns that he can be a man of God but still be a soldier. Omission however, is not the strongest form of confirmation, and thus further evidence needs to be drawn from the New Testament.

Perhaps one of the most shocking moments in the New Testament, especially to a person who thought Jesus would only preach pacifism, is passage in which Jesus says

²⁹ Luke 3:14.

that he has come to earth not to bring peace, but a sword, and that he will turn families against each other.³⁰ At face value, it seems that Jesus is contradicting earlier proclamations of seeking peace; however, Jesus's words fall in line with what was said in the Old Testament, in that vengeance is God's and not for the people.³¹ God taking vengeance on behalf of His people as a justifiable form of warfare falls in line with Cicero's idea of warfare, wherein only vengeance and defense are just reasons for war. Jesus himself sets the example of using violence when he uses a whip on illegal moneylenders who were using the Temple as a place of business instead of a place of worship, defending a house of God.³²

Another famous passage of the New Testament, the Sermon on the Mount, provides a break from the cryptic nature of Jesus's words for something more explicit. During his sermon, Jesus reiterates the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament, using the phrase "Thou shalt do no murder."³³ The word "murder," when used by Jesus, provides a much different look at violence than was previously available in the Old Testament. "Murder" denotes the killing or slaying of a person without a just cause. Therefore, one can ascertain that Jesus was not condemning all violence or warfare, but only that which cannot be justified. This idea is furthered during the apprehension of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane prior to his crucifixion, when Peter draws his sword and cuts off an ear of an apprehender. Jesus corrects Peter, telling him "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

³⁰ Matthew 10:34-39.

³¹ Deuteronomy 32:35; Romans 12:19; Judges 11:36.

³² John 2:13-17.

³³ Matthew 19:18.

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?"³⁴ Again, on the surface, it appears that Jesus is completely condemning violence; however, later passages reveal that Jesus had instructed his disciples at the Last Supper to begin carrying a sword while they preach.³⁵ The reason Jesus tells Peter to sheath his sword, even though he told his followers to carry a weapon, is that Jesus must be taken into custody for the fulfillment of the prophecies and the salvation of mankind – he is not contradicting his earlier statements. It is not yet time for the disciples to physically defend Christianity. Jesus must be crucified and die in order for the prophecies of the Old Testament to come to fruition. Then and only then may the disciples of Jesus defend their teachings and religion by physical measures. Thus the thread of self-defense as a form of justified warfare (in this case, on an individual basis) is accepted. Although Jesus spoke on an individual basis with his disciples about defending themselves, there are hints of state wide warfare in the Last Supper.

Within Luke's telling of the Last Supper, Jesus commands his followers to begin carrying a sword while preaching,

And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.³⁶

³⁴ Matthew 26:52-54.

³⁵ Luke 22:35-38.

³⁶ Ibid.

There are numerous theories regarding the symbolism of the two swords; however, the most prevalent interpretation is one made by Pope Gelasius in 495 AD, in his letter *Duo sunt*, in which he makes a distinction between earthly and spiritual powers (i.e. the two separate swords, with the spiritual power being having more authority).³⁷ However, the Pope did not come to this distinction between two powers by himself. Jesus presents the separation of secular and spiritual authorities by saying “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s,” the oft cited passage being from the Gospel of Matthew.³⁸ This distinction further defines the justification of warfare as presented in the Old Testament, in that God can command you to make war. Moreover, the temporal authorities now command power to make war, and must be obeyed.

Paul, in Romans, discusses the role of secular authority, and declares that people must obey secular authority because those authorities are “ordained of God,” and that “rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.”³⁹ Paul’s strong faith in earthly authority following spiritual guidance is evident when he claims that temporal authorities will not use violence in vain.⁴⁰ His words would give secular rulers of medieval times something to think about, in that their actions would be an extension of

³⁷ “There are two powers, august Emperor, by which this world is chiefly ruled, namely, the sacred authority of the priests and the royal power. Of these that of the priests is the more weighty, since they have to render an account for even the kings of men in the divine judgment. You are also aware, dear son, that while you are permitted honorably to rule over human kind, yet in things divine you bow your head humbly before the leaders of the clergy and await from their hands the means of your salvation. In the reception and proper disposition of the heavenly mysteries you recognize that you should be subordinate rather than superior to the religious order, and that in these matters you depend on their judgment rather than wish to force them to follow your will.” J. H. Robinson, trans., *Readings in European History* (Boston: Ginn, 1905), 72-73.

³⁸ Matthew 22:21.

³⁹ Romans 13.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 13:3.

God himself. Average people, on the other hand, were forced to obey their secular rulers as they would their spiritual ones, because of the divine authority behind each power. Although Paul admitted there may be times when leaders would have to use violence, he recommends that all people try to live in peace with each other, like the teachings of Jesus before him.⁴¹

With the large amount of information regarding justification of violence and war contained within the Bible, one can see that there exists a trend in the information. Most of the teachings of the Bible regarding violence follow Cicero's, in that war should only be used for defense and as a last resort, as well as most of what Plato and Aristotle had said. The Bible introduces the idea of using violence in defense of a holy place, and will be examined later in detail. Also, there are new distinctions between spiritual and earthly powers which offered an interesting topic of discussion for early church fathers to develop further. Church fathers provided the medieval people with an interpretation that would be held throughout the Middle Ages because of its development into church law; moreover, reverence would have been given toward those writers because of their later canonization and position within the church. Furthermore, these writers provide a look at Just War theory through the lens of the Bible, as opposed to the ancient philosophers who did not have a unified authority to which they could refer.

⁴¹ Ibid. 12:18.

Church Fathers and War

Saint Ambrose (d. 397 AD) wrote heavily on Just War theory in his work, *De officiis ministrorum* (On the duties of the clergy). As expected, his thoughts follow the Bible fairly closely. When exploring the idea of being virtuous, Ambrose said that courage is a virtue when it leads someone to defend their homeland or when used to protect people who cannot protect themselves, but sinful when used without justice and consultation with God does not occur.⁴² Ambrose likely draws his ideas about defending the homeland from Hebrews 11 in the New Testament, in which the Hebrews are praised for defending their homeland and religion. The idea of consultation with God reflects the Old Testament point of view, in that violence comes from God, and those who fight by a commandment from God are not committing the sin of murder. Furthermore, it is not a choice to defend those who cannot protect themselves, but a requirement, for if you are in a position to defend your neighbors and do not, you are at fault as much as the aggressors.⁴³ This is an early instance in which violence is being openly condoned by a Christian leader. You are no longer simply required to live peaceably with your neighbors, but to protect them in the case of an unjust attack upon them from an outside force.⁴⁴ Ambrose also discusses the idea of defending a religious center or holy place as a justified reason for warfare.⁴⁵ He likely takes this position from the Gospel of John, in which Jesus uses a “scourge of small cords” to chase the illegal

⁴² Ambrose, *De officiis ministrorum*, trans. and ed. Ivor J. Davidson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), bk. I, pt. xxvii, 129; *Ibid.*, 221.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 221.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 233.

moneylenders from the Temple in Jerusalem.⁴⁶ The idea of defending a holy place would seemingly be largely influential upon such people who preached a crusade in later years, using a the power of a saint's words to protect their brethren.

Although Ambrose mostly discusses what it takes to justify warfare, he does take the time to condemn some reasons behind violence. For example, he states that people should be wary of seeking glory too much, and that fighting solely for glory only causes more pain and suffering.⁴⁷ Ambrose falls in line with Cicero in regards to glory as well, in that Cicero states that glory can be sought so long that war is not made solely for glory's sake.⁴⁸ Surely, one who only seeks glory would fail to remain stalwart in the tenants of Christianity, in moving toward excessive pride. One can see why Ambrose, as a church father, would discourage glory seeking because of its relation with sin. Although the discussions of justice and warfare from Ambrose are rather brief compared to those of the Bible or earlier philosophers, his direction is an early indication of how other influential church figures might respond to further inquiries regarding violence.

Saint Augustine (d. 430 AD), in his work *De civitate Dei (The City of God)*, has a lengthy discussion regarding Just War theory in response to what was presented in the Bible, much like Ambrose. He goes so far to describe minute differences between murder and killing within his work so that people would not be confused by the omissions of the Bible. Regarding Just War theory, Augustine goes into much more

⁴⁶ John 2:15.

⁴⁷ Ambrose, 231; *Ibid.*, 239.

⁴⁸ Cicero, *De officiis*, bk. I, pt. XI, 38.

detail than Ambrose, and provides explanations for the benefit of soldiers seeking to lead Christian lives.

An example of the great detail and length to which Augustine goes to insure that the reader understands the law of God is located within the chapter title “Of those cases of homicide which do not incur the guilt of murder” within *The City of God*. Within this chapter, Augustine claims that exceptions to murder “include only those whom God commands to be slain, either by a general law, or by an express command applying to a particular person at a particular time.”⁴⁹ Obeying a command from God coincides with the Old Testament view of violence and warfare, in which God may command a person or group to destroy another.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the person doing the killing is not actually viewed as killing a person at all. The person is considered a tool of God, and God is directing that tool to commit the act.

Following a command to kill as outside the “thou shalt not murder” commandment is presented by Augustine, which coincides with Paul’s actions in Romans, in which the Roman centurion is not chastised for following his profession.⁵¹ The soldier must obey his superior in orders, even if the soldier knows that the particular act is wrong, including killing someone.⁵² As discussed earlier, disobeying temporal powers is like disobeying God himself, for those who command earthly forces

⁴⁹ Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), bk. I, ch. xxi.

⁵⁰ Numbers 31:2.

⁵¹ Augustine, bk. I, ch. xxi.

⁵² *Ibid.*, bk. I, ch. xxvi.

are ordained by God and do not use force in vain.⁵³ Augustine continues to place power with temporal powers, having heavy implications for war makers in medieval times.

Peace is a subject breeched by Augustine later in *The City of God Against the Pagans*. He gives man the benefit of the doubt, in that he believes that all people and nations seek peace, and even war is made with peace in mind, as shown by the following statement: “For every man seeks peace, even in making war, but no one seeks war by making peace.”⁵⁴ This view adds to Plato’s view that the world is constantly at war, and paints a picture of mankind as creatures seeking a peaceful existence through violent means, if necessary, as long as that violence is justified.⁵⁵ The nation that must gain peace through warfare is justified, but the victor must realize that peace and victory are a gift from God and not something that was accomplished by man alone.⁵⁶ Furthermore, Augustine goes on to describe unjust warfare as “no more than robbery on a majestic scale.”⁵⁷ Transgressing the laws of warfare is like taking advantage of a defenseless person, you are reaping the spoils of something that did not rightfully belong to you. R.A. Markus best describes Augustine’s view of the Just War in his article “Saint Augustine’s Views on the ‘Just War,’” in that,

He did not repudiate the possibility, even the necessity, of fighting a “just war”; what he came to repudiate was a whole set of attitudes towards it induced by the euphoria which encouraged Christians to invest wars such as Theodosius’s with a religious significance.⁵⁸

⁵³ Romans 13:3.

⁵⁴ Augustine, bk. XIX, ch. xii.

⁵⁵ Plato, bk. I.

⁵⁶ Augustine, bk. XV, ch. iv.

⁵⁷ Ibid., Book IV, i.

⁵⁸ R.A. Markus, *Saint Augustine’s Views on the ‘Just War,’* in *Warfare in the Dark Ages*, eds. John France and Kelly DeVries (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 206.

The implication made is that Augustine understood that there were just wars and holy wars which needed to be fought, but applying Christian significance to wars which seemed unjust was not acceptable.

Saint Isidore (d. 636), wrote primarily on what makes an unjust war, adding another layer to Augustine's definition, in that "unjust war is that which results from passion, not from lawful reason; as Cicero explains in his Republic, unjust wars are those on which men enter without good reason."⁵⁹ Passion could lead to anger and recklessness, both of which could cause people to abandon their values and sense of justice, and could be dangerous. In the passage we again we see references to Cicero's earlier work on justified warfare and the length to which his work was examined by medieval scholars. Thus far we have examined ancient philosophy and early Christian thought, but sources in the high and late Medieval Times may provide further insight into how people viewed warfare.

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153 AD) provides further examination into the Christian approval of life as a soldier; moreover, Bernard's letter to Hugh de Payens (founder of the Knights Templar) evaluates justification of warfare in the name of Christ.⁶⁰ He looks at soldiers in much more detail than any previous sources have examined, instead of just focusing solely on large scale violence as the topic of discussion. Bernard makes the distinction between the "two swords" as mentioned in the Gospel of Luke and further examined in *Duo sunt* by Pope Gelasius, in that soldiers

⁵⁹ *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach, and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), bk. XVIII, ch. i.

⁶⁰ Bernard of Clairvaux, "In Praise of the New Knighthood," in *The Templars*, trans. Malcolm Barber and Keith Bate, Manchester Medieval Sources Series (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2002), 215-227.

are wielding the earthly sword to defend against temporal threats, while the clergy are wielding the spiritual sword to protect the soul.⁶¹ The idea is that the physical use of violence can be righteous only when it is used as self-defense, not motivated by vengeance or some other vice, and that spiritual battle is always justified because such a battle is done only in the name of Christ, not for some earthly possession.⁶² The Knights Templar is a fusion of the physical and spiritual aspects of war, wielding the temporal sword and the spiritual sword, if you will, to advance the will of God on earth.⁶³ Furthermore, a knight should be happy to die for Christ, as no other form of death could be appropriate; however, if death did not find the knight, he should surely revel in advancing God's work by eliminating the enemies of Christianity.⁶⁴

Bernard goes on to clarify what makes the kind of knight that can use warfare justifiably and without sin. First, the knight is disciplined and obedient in that he obeys the teachings of God and the commands of his superior, following almost perfectly what Paul and Augustine had said about those who are under command.⁶⁵ As if to reinforce the idea of obedience to temporal power, Bernard states that "to refuse obedience is like the crime of idolatry" in that a person places the laws of someone else above the laws of God.⁶⁶ Secondly, those knights follow a monastic lifestyle in that they have no property or family outside of the knightly order, and care not to go into battle with

⁶¹ Ibid., 219-222.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., ch. 4; Romans 13; Augustine, bk. I, ch. xxvi.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

adornments that serve no purpose other than vanity.⁶⁷ Third, the Templars are never idle and if they are, they must be doing something to advance their order, such as “repairing their worn armor and torn clothing.”⁶⁸ The ideal is that, like monks, the knights are constantly busy advancing the work of Christ on earth, as opposed to finding themselves exposed to temptation and potentially committing sinful acts.

The knights’ humble appearance was not to diminish their ferocity in battle; on the contrary,

Once he finds himself in the thick of battle, this knight sets aside his previous gentleness, as if to say, "Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord; am I not disgusted with your enemies?" These men at once fall violently upon the foe, regarding them as so many sheep. No matter how outnumbered they are, they never regard these as fierce barbarians or as awe-inspiring hordes. Nor do they presume on their own strength, but trust in the Lord of armies to grant them the victory.⁶⁹

Here is a separation between wrath and fervor in battle, in that those people engrossed in wrongful passion are in a state of sin while fighting, but these knights fight on behalf of God, not for their own sake, thus their cause is righteous in the eyes of Bernard.⁷⁰

Furthermore, Bernard’s sampling of Psalm 139:21 uses the Bible in order to justify his position on the just nature of warfare for God, providing evidence to a Christian people using a source with which they would be familiar. His focus on the soldierly aspect of

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Interestingly enough, Geoffroi de Charny, a knight employed by King John II of France, held true to these claims when writing *The Book of Chivalry* almost two centuries after Bernard. He believes that people who want to fight without reason are not worthy of being a knight, and that a good knight can indeed satisfy and please God. *The Book of Chivalry of Geoffroi de Charny*, trans. Richard W. Kauper and Elspeth Kennedy (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1996), 175-81 and 195-99.

war as opposed to the decision to wage war itself provides a new perspective when examining Just War theory.

Thomas Aquinas (d. 1275), in his *Summa Theologica*, approached many different questions about the church's position on different topics. One topic of importance is his position on war. Immediately, Aquinas condemns private war for lacking authority to order people to take arms.⁷¹ His position on private war is not unlike previous thinkers before him; however, he does differ from the pack by providing a checklist of sorts for the evaluation of a just war. According to Aquinas, three conditions must be present in order to have a justified war.⁷² First, warfare must be commanded from a person who has proper authority, as mentioned in the Bible; secondly, the people making war must have a just cause; and lastly, they must have the right intentions.⁷³ For Aquinas, proper authority rests in sovereigns or spiritual authority, and he quotes Paul's words from Romans in that one must obey the authority of superiors, because their duty is to protect the common good.⁷⁴ According to Aquinas, just cause stems from the idea that those who are being attacked may be subjected to violence only for a good reason. He uses Augustine to support his argument:

Secondly, a just cause is required, namely that those who are attacked, should be attacked because they deserve it on account of some fault. Wherefore Augustine says (QQ. in Hept., qu. x, super Jos.): "A just war is wont to be described as one that avenges wrongs, when a nation or state has to be punished, for refusing to make amends for the wrongs inflicted by its subjects, or to restore what it has seized unjustly."⁷⁵

⁷¹Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, vol. II (New York: Benziger Bros., 1947) II.ii.Q.40, 1359-1360.

⁷² Ibid, 1360.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.; Romans 13.

⁷⁵ Thomas Aquinas, II.ii.Q.40, 1359-1360.

Lastly, the right intentions are described as existing for the purpose of “the advancement of good, or the avoidance of evil.”⁷⁶

Thus far, we have examined sources from which medieval people would have taken their ideas of Just War, which Raymond of Penafort (d. 1275 AD) consolidated into a number of conditions that must be met for justified warfare.⁷⁷ He held five conditions for Just War, which were simplified by Maurice Keen:

It [war] must be just with regard to the persons engaged in it (that is, it must be fought by laymen, since clerks cannot justly engage in war); it must be just with regard to its object (that is to say, its aim must be to redress some injury or other, whether to right or possessions or person); it must be just with regard to its cause (which means that this must be a necessary cause, and that there must be no alternative way of achieving the object, other than by recourse to arms); it must be just in intention (that is to say, the person levying it must be moved by a genuine desire for justice, not by hate or cupidity); and it must be waged on valid authority (that is to say, on the authority of the Roman Church or of a sovereign prince).⁷⁸

With such a list, justifying warfare in medieval times becomes much simpler. However, it would be appropriate to examine reasons for which an individual might go to war.

Medieval Reasons for Warfare

Oftentimes, through the examination of history, it becomes easy to overlook the motives of the average individual in the sweeping movements of great people of the past. For example, what would drive a person to go to war for his or her Lord?

Nicholson provides a concise list of reasons people might choose to go to war; they

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Keen, 66-67.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

were forced, to seek fame, to gain wealth, and also to possibly gain a suitable partner in marriage and thereby promote the continuation of the family name.⁷⁹

Wealth is an interesting reason for seeking warfare. J.F. Verbruggen discusses a knight's choice to go to war, by saying "war, and the plundering raids it involved, helped these impoverished knights make ends meet."⁸⁰ As mentioned earlier, seeking wealth for wealth's sake would not be considered a justified act of violence. However, if a knight were to be participating in a holy excursion (i.e. a crusade) which was authorized by a church figure such as the Pope, any riches that knight may find through battle would be won justifiably in the eyes of God.⁸¹

According to Just War theory, private war is almost never justified, unless it comes from the authority of a king or prince using his authority to wage war; however, that would almost certainly fall into dynastic warfare and thus be partially justified because of the inherent authority commanded by a king. Secondly, holy war can be justified in that the Pope represents sufficient authority to wage war, in that he has the temporal power of a king and the spiritual power granted by Christ.⁸² Lastly, dynastic war can be justified because of the proper authority granted by sovereigns. Because private war is almost never justified, we can move on to the justification of a holy war.

In the eleventh century, "churchmen came to advocate a justification for armed force based on its usefulness in defending the faith, the church, and the weak and helpless. Hence weapons were blessed, and church banners, often honoring a patron

⁷⁹ Nicholson, 2.

⁸⁰ J.F. Verbruggen, *The Art of Warfare in Western Europe During the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed., trans. S. Willard and R. W. Southern (Woodridge, UK: Boydell Press, 1997), 49.

⁸¹ Augustine, bk. XV, ch. iv.

⁸² Nicholson, 26.

saint, were carried into battle.”⁸³ The crusades offered a perfect chance for the church’s position on holy war to be tested, in that what was considered Christian land was invaded by infidels, and the churches and relics therein were defiled.⁸⁴ The war which will be evaluated according to Just War theory as presented in this research will be the First Crusade.

We have examined the general reasons a person might go to war, but what about religious reasons for an individual to go to war? As mentioned earlier, a person who is not fighting with a justified cause is viewed by Christianity as being sinful, in that there was no order demanding you take another’s life.⁸⁵ However, if given the command by the pope, a pious person must go to war for at least two reasons. First, the pope represents the authority of Christ on earth, and secondly, he holds within himself temporal power to command armies. Thus, if a believer was commanded to defend Christianity, he must obey, or else he would be disobeying a direct command from a secular authority superior to himself, as well as a religious authority representing God. Disobeying both a secular authority and a religious authority would hold both physical and spiritual consequences, and thus an act of holy war would be hard to avoid in a theoretical world.

Fear of punishment was not the only reason a person may go on a holy war. Frederick Russell points out that “theologians offered three inducements to knights debating whether to go on a crusade: a plenary indulgence; the chance to take spoils;

⁸³ Joseph R. Strayer, ed., *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1984), s.v. “Concept of Crusade.”

⁸⁴ Urban II, 2.

⁸⁵ Romans 12:18.

and the opportunity to escape from a feudal situation that threatened their spiritual and temporal welfare.”⁸⁶ Indulgence, put simply, meant the “remission of sins,” and would be a far better reward for fighting than spiritual damnation that threatened your spiritual well-being.⁸⁷ Also, the spoils of war would be awarded to those who participated; moreover, the act of taking spoils was promoted by the clergy, so long as the victory and wealth of warfare were attributed as gifts from God.⁸⁸

An example of holy war is the First Crusade, which began with Pope Urban II preaching at Clermont in 1095 of the invasion of Muslims on Christian lands, their acts of defilement, and the commandment of people to help their brethren in the East.⁸⁹ The people at Clermont also heard what the Muslims had supposedly done in great detail, in that,

They destroy the altars, after having defiled them with their uncleanness. They circumcise the Christians, and the blood of the circumcision they either spread upon the altars or pour into the vases of the baptismal font. When they wish to torture people by a base death, they perforate their navels, and dragging forth the extremity of the intestines, bind it to a stake; then with flogging they lead the victim around until the viscera having gushed forth the victim falls prostrate upon the ground.⁹⁰

One can see how such language in front of a group of Christians could incite a crusade, for the birthplace of their religion was being defiled in some of the worst ways imaginable, according to the Pope.

⁸⁶ Frederick Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 255.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 255; Deuteronomy 20:10-16.

⁸⁹ Urban II, 2-5.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

Urban II then instructed Christians to take up their cross as Jesus had done, and used Biblical quotes to reinforce the severity and necessity of such a task.⁹¹ The Holy Land, which Christians viewed as God's inherited land, had been taken by the Muslims from the Israelites, and the Christian religious centers had been taken over.⁹² Could the First Crusade be justified according to Just War theory as known to the medievalists?

Medieval Justification of the First Crusade

According to the criteria laid out by Raymond of Penafort, one must first look to see if the crusades had been fought by lay men.⁹³ The First Crusade was indeed fought with lay men, in that clerics did not fight physical battles.⁹⁴ Secondly, one must examine whether or not it is in response to some injury that had been inflicted upon by the group they are attacking. The Muslims had taken possession of what was once perceived by Christians as Christian land, inherited by the Israelites.⁹⁵ Gaining back what had previously been yours falls into the argument of defense and making amends for what had been wrongfully taken, which had been preached by earlier just war theorists, and had become known as a basic tenant of the theory. Third, there must be no other cause with which to redress the injury inflicted upon you. Because Muslims were not, as commanded by their religion, supposed to make treaties with those outside of Islam, the only option to gain back what had been lost would have been through the use of

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Russell, 253.

⁹³ Keen, 66.

⁹⁴ Ibid,; Bernard of Clairvaux, *In Praise of the New Knighthood*, 219-222.

⁹⁵ Russell, 255.

arms.⁹⁶ Fourth, the person authorizing such an act of warfare must be moved to do so by a genuine desire for justice. As we cannot read the thoughts of Pope Urban II, we cannot say for sure if he had private motives for the First Crusade; however, he did lay out a number of reasons for warfare in his speech at Clermont, most of all the reason to defend the Christians in the East.⁹⁷ Furthermore, Pope Urban II would have been well versed on Ambrose's opinion of just war, in that if a person were in the position to defend a neighbor, they must do so or be at fault as much as the aggressor.⁹⁸ Lastly, the war must be authorized by a person of proper authority. In the case of the First Crusade, Pope Urban II had commanded the people to go forth, thus starting the war. Also, according to Christianity, the Pope represented Christ on earth, and must be obeyed if a command is issued.⁹⁹ According to the tenants of Just War theory, it seems that the First Crusade can be justified. Some contemporaries agreed with such an assessment, as they viewed the First Crusade as just in that the war's goal was "to reconquer the Holy Land, on the grounds that the Holy Land was the Church's rightful inheritance, just as Amorite territory belonged rightfully to the Israelites."¹⁰⁰

There are, however, reasons for which the First Crusade may be viewed as an unjustified war. Russell states that "within the just war the crusade coexisted uneasily at best, partly because there was no clear precedent to serve as an unambiguous

⁹⁶ Bat Ye'or, *The Dhimmis: Jews and Christians Under Islam*, trans. David Maisel, Paul Fenton, and David Littman (Rutherford: UK, 1985), 45.

⁹⁷ Urban II, 2-5.

⁹⁸ Ambrose, 221.

⁹⁹ Robinson 72-73.

¹⁰⁰ Russell, 253.

guide.”¹⁰¹ Of course it would be difficult attempting to justify a type of war that had not been fought exactly as previous wars. In order to justify the war, the clergy had to use writings given by early church fathers as well as Biblical texts to which they could draw comparisons. Through the lens of the Old Testament, those commanded by God to eliminate the enemies of their faith were righteous in their endeavor.¹⁰² The New Testament showed that Christians must obey their secular and spiritual leaders, including the order to enter combat, as well as Jesus himself defending the Temple with a whip.¹⁰³

The First Crusade, although a violent act, can be interpreted to be emerging out of love for one’s neighbor, as Pope Urban II had “promised indulgence to those Bolognese who joined the First Crusade, ‘seeing that they have committed their property and their persons out of love of God and their neighbor’”¹⁰⁴ The idea that the crusades can be conducted as an act of love was approached by Jonathan Riley-Smith in an excellent article defending the church’s use of force in the Crusades. His argument hinges on the idea that “love, in fact, could involve physical correction, in the same way as a father punished a son or a master a servant.”¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, he argued that medievalists believed they must help their neighbors, as presented as one of the commandments, in that “neighbourly love demanded that men prevent their neighbours from doing evil and that Christians could, in fact, sin if they did not

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 294.

¹⁰² Numbers 31:1-19; Deuteronomy 20:10-1.

¹⁰³ Romans 12:18; John 2:13-17.

¹⁰⁴ Jonathan Riley-Smith, “Crusading as an Act of Love,” *History* 65 (June 1980), 177.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 188.

prefecture those engaged in evil works.”¹⁰⁶ Someone might say that the act of punishing outside groups is easy, but Riley-Smith is sure to note that “Moses, too, punished the Israelites not out of cruelty but out of love.”¹⁰⁷ The Bible, through depicting punishment out of love, not for an unjust reason, gave Christians a precedent for acting to correct those people who they believed were not obeying God – in this case, the Muslims. Although existing in a theoretical context and contending that all people involved in the Christian side of the war were motivated by Christian values, Riley-Smith provides the lens through which medieval clergy may have viewed the Crusades.

Through examination of the sources, one can see the overlap between the different types of war. Within the First Crusade, you had the overlap between dynastic and holy war, both of which could be evaluated according to Just War theory. It is important to note that dynastic war and holy war are not mutually exclusive, because Christianity is not a state in the sense that France was a state. The Pope could command Christians, who were many times powerful monarchs, and thus the overlap between the different types of warfare can exist. At the very least, it was important for leaders to justify their reasons for making war, because “the whole notion of a ‘nation in arms’ was inimical and dangerous to an elite that claimed a monopoly of war,” much like a king may claim.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 189.

¹⁰⁸ John France. *Western Warfare in the Age of the Crusades, 1000-1300* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 5.

Conclusion

After an extensive examination of the evolution of Just War theory throughout the ages, I have come to the conclusion that the formation of the First Crusade was justified insofar as medieval people had known Just War theory. The compilation of the major writers' thoughts on Just War theory allows for the comparison of what was perceived as a just war with wars that took place during the Middle Ages. I chose the crusades because they seem to be a controversial topic for people to examine, and also because I believe a comprehensive examination of the sources available to medieval people would lend insight into the thought process they may have had when deciding whether or not to go to war, and what reasons were appropriate. I believe that the First Crusade, at least superficially (for I cannot read the mind of Pope Urban II), appeared to be well thought out over an extensive period, and not just on a reactionary impulse. This work, however, does not pretend to determine what the crusaders did as actually right in terms of human rights, contemporary views of morality, or later Christian views. What this work does do is examine the formation of the First Crusade through the eyes of medieval people, using the knowledge they may have held about the morality of warfare. We must be fair to people in the past, for they had not the sources and discussions we have had regarding morality, but only had what was available to them. In order to judge whether or not what people did was morally justified, we must break ourselves away from the chronocentric view of the past and immerse ourselves in the time period which we study, and thus we are able to provide a just view of the past.

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