

# Religious and Philosophical Justifications for War: A Synthesis of Selected Literature

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# Religious and Philosophical Justifications for War: A Synthesis of Selected Literature

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The Critical Issues Forum (CIF) is a cooperative education program supported in part by the Department of Energy's Defense Programs. The Science and Technology Education Program (STEP) at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory manages one component of this program. CIF engages high school students and teachers regarding issues of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, arms control, and international security. These issues are viewed in light of their scientific, economic, socio-cultural, and political/geopolitical influences and implications.

This year CIF's focus is on chemical and biological weapons (CBW). CBW is becoming more of a threat today than ever before. Many countries are developing these weapons. CBW also presents certain ethical dilemmas for many individuals, especially if those individuals feel it is their religious duty to use or avoid the use of such weapons.

Religion has become an important determining factor in international security because many cultures, and even governments make decisions based on religious traditions. This paper is an attempt to look at these religions and philosophical traditions with an emphasis on views of "just war." The ultimate purpose of this paper is to promote awareness about religion's influence on international security issues.

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## Introduction

Every major religion and ethical system has developed a societal concept of "just war." Today, the world's largest religions include Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Each faith lays claim to a heritage rich with thousands of years of history, and the power of great minds to support its ethical and moral beliefs. These religions have each developed separate and distinct beliefs regarding warfare. Whether those beliefs were developed through formal theological discourse, or through the dialogue in scriptures, they are valid and necessary today because they affect contemporary political action. Even today, many religious societies base their willingness to fight on the just war ethic that they hold.

## The Christian Concept

Though the origin of formalized "just war theory" was initially a Christian concept, "just war theory" has expanded to become a secular way of thinking rather than a theological debate that derives its sole origins from the church. Because Christianity has been the single most influential religion in western history, the Christian concepts are important to understanding the overall western concepts. Throughout its history Christianity has developed three basic attitudes towards war: pacifism, just war, and holy war/crusade (Brown 18). Today, a Christian may believe any combination of the three. I will examine each of the three within their historical context.

Upon its inception, the Christian religion had a strong dedication to pacifism. It was not until later that the development of "just war theory" began. As early the second and third centuries CE, the apostolic fathers Origen and Tertullian became the first post-canon theologians to depart from pure pacifism. Tertullian (155-240 CE), began the departure from pacifism by praying for the "brave" armies that fought to protect him (Holmes 39). He would pray in favor of the Roman armies, that they might win. However Tertullian refused to justify any adherent to Christianity who, upon his/her acceptance of the faith, continued to wield the sword (Holmes 39). Tertullian argued that to bear arms was to perpetuate an inherent conflict of interest. In one of his arguments on war he systematically developed a list of proposed contradictions between the life of a soldier and the life of a Christian believer, thus upholding the 150 year tradition of Christian pacifism that began with Jesus and his disciples (Holmes 47). Tertullian's contemporary Origen (185-254 CE), held an almost identical view of Christian involvement in war, although his reasoning was different. Origen argued that Christians had a specific duty to the emperor in the event of war: to fight the enemy, specifically enemies of the Roman Army, through prayer. Nevertheless his position was pacifistic (Holmes 48). The only significant effect that Tertullian and Origen had on Christian thought was the establishment of a "just war seed," the beginning of the Christian departure from pacifism. Even though they did not condone physical involvement in war, their theories legitimized certain wars, whereas all wars were previously considered to be intrinsically evil.

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE) completed the task of developing an actual "just war theory." Bishop Ambrose of Milan (339-397 CE) played a major role in Augustine's conversion, and was thereafter a major influence on Augustine's initial theological beliefs. Ambrose had developed an opinion regarding Christian just war that influenced Augustine. Ambrose continued the departure from pacifism begun by Origen and Tertullian by overtly stating what they had merely implied: a war can be just and proper. However, war is only just and proper if the political leader waging the war has a just intent to engage the enemy (Holmes 55). Furthermore, the war must be conducted in such a way as to not cause unnecessary bloodshed (Holmes 55). Ambrose's basic just war beliefs appear to be the foundation for St. Augustine's just war theory. They seem to be quite similar to the first two elements of Augustine's just war doctrine: *Jus ad bellum* and *Jus in bello*. The third doctrine, *Jus post bellum*

completed Augustine's three-tiered test, and became the Christian standard to legitimize situations of necessary violence. This Augustinian concept of just warfare is the primary guideline used by most Christian churches and theologians today.

*Jus ad bellum* is defined as the justice in resorting to war (Stanford 1). According to Robert McAfee Brown there are at least six sub-criteria that must be met to guarantee such justice: (1) war must be declared by a legitimate authority; (2) war must be carried out with right intention; (3) war must be undertaken only as a last resort; (4) war must follow the principle of proportionality, i.e., the good must outweigh the evil employed; (5) war must have a reasonable chance for success; and (6) war must be waged with all possible moderation (Brown 19, Augustine). This set of criteria was ultimately designed to avoid war. On this issue Brown cites Father John Coleman, S.J., "the presumption in 'just war' theory is always against war, not in favor of it" (20). Just war is therefore a compromise that Augustine designed to reconcile the idealistic Christian notion that pacifism is possible with the existence of an evil world.

Assuming a conflict meets all the criteria of *Jus ad bellum*, there are still limitations and guidelines necessary to ensure that the war remains just. Historically *Jus in bello* has served as a guideline to answer such questions as "should we ambush" or should we assassinate?" To ensure justice in situations such as these, *Jus in bello* defines just action concerning the physical acts of war and engagement. St. Augustine uses the Biblical Old Testament, and the example of the Israelites to prove that ambush and assassination warfare may be righteous. St. Thomas Aquinas, who is noted for his commentary on Augustinian "just war theory," discusses these questions in his *Summa Theologica* (1). In many ways Aquinas agrees with Augustine; both use the Old Testament (Joshua 8:2) as proof of deceptive, yet just warfare. Aquinas' further commentary establishes that ambush is just, as long as the war itself is just. Furthermore, Aquinas rationalizes trickery within war (such as an ambush), because no purpose is declared to the contrary (4). Therefore, guerrilla warfare and techniques of wartime espionage are legitimized insofar as the original *Jus ad bellum* criteria are met. The essential purpose of *Jus in bello* is to define the "lesser evil," so that it may be accomplished to prevent the proliferation of the "greater evil." Therefore it is true that in many cases violence "must" be done.

This notion of rationalized violence caused major struggle in the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was originally a pacifist. Nevertheless, he eventually condoned violence and took part in an attempt to slay Adolf Hitler, thus sanctioning assassination as a method of just warfare (Brown). Christianity and its just war theory pardon employment of extreme methods of warfare only because extreme circumstances dictate their use.

Even though the church has justified many methods of warfare, there are still major issues regarding new weaponry and modern strategic warfare, giving the test of *Jus in bello* particular importance today. There is no major country in the world that would hesitate to defend itself, but many would stop before using weapons of mass destruction (WMD) such as nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons. The Roman Catholic Church, for example, has been hesitant to give its support to the American nuclear weapons arsenal, because certain

implications of nuclear warfare violate just war doctrine. According to James Hitchcock, some American bishops in the past century began to doubt the legitimacy of nuclear war because it was essentially "unwinnable" due to Mutual Assured Destruction (91). Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) is a strategic doctrine: if one country launches a nuclear attack it will not only destroy its enemy, but it will also be destroyed because of the enemy's capability to retaliate. The entire process assures major losses on both sides, and makes the possibility of victory a moot point. The "non-winnable" nature of MAD makes nuclear warfare a violation of *Jus ad bellum* (Hitchcock 91).

The possibility of collateral damage is another major element of nuclear warfare that continued to plague the bishops (Hitchcock 92). An inherent characteristic of nuclear warfare is its threat to the safety of civilians. A major nuclear conflict would most likely include specific civilian targets, since MAD includes the destruction of both people and infrastructure. Harm to civilians presents Christian just war with a serious ethical dilemma. Hitchcock addresses this situation by citing the U.S. Bishops, who concede to and justify the US nuclear arsenal on the basis of Pope John Paul II's speech given to the United Nations. In his speech, the pope accepts nuclear weapons as a method and means of deterrence. However this strategy of nuclear deterrence must be in conjunction with earnest efforts toward worldwide disarmament (92). Because chemical and biological warfare (CBW) and nuclear weapons have similar socio-political implications, the church's attitude towards nuclear weapons can be easily applied to CBW. The secular world has legitimized this opposition by opposing the proliferation of CBW; this opposition has manifested itself through the formation of "watch-dog" organizations such as the Australia Group and the ratification of treaties such as the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

*Jus post bellum*, "the justice of closure" (Stanford 1) involves the treaties and the treatment of the enemy upon a war's end. The justice of closure is vitally important because it dictates the stability of future peace, and it was the promise of peace that justified the war in the first place. Unstable peace will often lead again to war. As Bishop Desmond Tutu points out, "It is self-defeating to justify a truce based on unstable foundations of oppression. Such a truce can only be inherently unstable, requiring that it be maintained by institutional violence" (72). Since violence itself is what war seeks to avoid, the post war process may be considered critical in justifying war.

From Augustine's death in the fourth century CE to the beginning of the crusades in the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE, the Roman Catholic clergy experienced an extreme change in its attitude towards war. The crusading doctrine, dictated for the first time by the Roman Catholic Church, altered the concept of "just war," because war became a holy quest. Violence officially became a tool of God rather than an act of extreme desperation necessitated by the evil nature of the world (Morris 79).

This movement towards "holy war" outside of the Roman Church began even before Augustine's just war theory. In 312 CE Emperor Constantine fought the last of his civil war

battles against Maxentius. Constantine fought this battle in the name of Christ because he had seen a vision of a cross. Because of the victory in battle and the vision, Constantine became emperor, converted to Christianity, and declared it to be the state religion. Thereafter, every Roman war had an underlying Christian purpose because the government in Rome was "Christian." Over the course of the next seven centuries the Church increased its involvement in government (Partner). Eventually it endorsed the free use of violence at the Council of Clermont in 1095 CE. At that council Pope Urban II announced what would be the beginning of the first crusade. This was the official beginning of war "for the church," or the "crusading doctrine," mentioned earlier. It was an era that many in the church today wish to erase. It was a major departure from the pacifism that Christianity originally held as its standard. Today the church distances itself from the "holy war" movement. Nevertheless, small sects supporting "holy war" movements still exist. Groups such as the Christian-Identity and Anglo-Israel are examples of such sects, which are not condoned by mainstream Christianity.

Since the end of the crusading period Christianity has changed. Mainstream Christianity has forgone the holy war movement, and most Christians follow pacifism or a just war doctrine similar to St. Augustine's. Nevertheless the Christian movement generally bases its beliefs on philosophies that are rooted in scripture. This contrasts with Islam, where the scripture is valued more in the development of just war doctrine.

### The Islamic Concept

While he was the leader of Islam, Muhammad (Islam's Prophet, 570-632 CE) began a trend that continued for centuries, and still makes a significant impression on thought in today's Muslim society: militarism. There are many misconceptions that western countries often have about Islam and war. Islamic militant behavior is often magnified by the press and distorted in the entertainment industry (Mayer 219). Extreme Islamic fundamentalist actions regularly make front-page headlines. But there are relatively few practical reasons for the apprehension that many westerners hold towards the Islamic states.

When Muhammad established Islam, he did so because he received visions and prophecies from Allah, or God. These visions became the basis for his ethics and teachings. Muhammad is responsible for the religion's origins and its first engagement in militarism. In 622 CE Muhammad first used military force to conquer adversaries (Bennett 2). According to Clinton Bennett, Muhammad sought peace, by "enter[ing] into peace accords with many tribes" (2). After his death, Muhammad's followers recorded his teachings, which would eventually serve as the final word on Islamic actions and ethics. Because of Islam's strong fundamentalism, Muhammad's teachings on war have essentially become Islam's way of war.

These teachings now reside in the Islamic Scriptures, the Qur'an and Muhammad's holy sayings, the Hadiths. Shortly after Muhammad's death, the Qur'an and the Hadiths became the primary foundation for Islamic ethical tradition. These Scriptures were endorsed by leaders such as the Noble Khalifs, the first post-Muhammadian leaders of Islam. The devotion that Islamic

peoples have for their scripture is rooted in the Qur'an's self-testimony to its own explicit meaning. In other words, the Qur'an claims to be an explicit text, therefore a "textual community" develops within the religion (Martin 101). Adherents to Islam often hold fast to their view of the Qur'an because its self-proclaimed absolute authority is based on a strong tradition that often eliminates question. Stronger than Islamic history, the Qur'an itself is Islam's obvious and absolute authority regarding any issue that it covers, including warfare.

Thus Muhammad set the standards for Islamic warfare. One standard was his personal action; the other lives on in his recorded teachings. The vast majority of today's Islamic population believes the Qur'an's teachings regarding warfare; however their practices are not extreme. Just as Christianity began with pacifism and moved on to what is now a modified just war, Islam began with an "open door policy" towards war. Since then it has moved on to become a more "peace-seeking" religion. According to Peter Partner, "In modern terms the difference between Muhammad and Jesus was the difference between Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Ghandi" (35). Muhammad was more like an Old Testament prophet, not seeking war, but not avoiding it if it seemed in accordance with the will of Allah (Partner 35). In this way Muhammad is like Mandela because he and Mandela practice religious restraint before they decide to fight. In contrast, Jesus was perceived as a gentle person. His mannerisms and character were the most likely cause of the early Christian pacifism. Jesus was like Gandhi because of his apparent opposition to violence, and because his followers continued his non-violent tradition.

Muhammad's personal military actions began when he started to accumulate followers. Partner comments, "The early Islamic community could not subsist either economically or politically unless it defended itself by war. It had to use any means of defense it could find, and not rely exclusively on the idealism of the pious. Muhammad made military alliances with non-Muslim tribes..." (34). The necessities of political existence during early Islam are comparable with the needs of the Islamic states today. Muhammad developed a theology that was consistent and supportive of the real world actions that his people needed to undertake in order to survive in a harsh political environment. But the religious nature of Muhammad's decisions gave rise to a military-moral dimension of ethics that became central to Muhammad's teachings and encoded in his Scriptures (Partner 33). Therefore his own military exploits (such as the battle of Uhud and the conquest of Mecca) became events that only foreshadowed the eventual fruition of his military theology: the discourse of the Qur'an.

Although the Qur'an claims to be an explicit text, its stance regarding war and violence is not as explicit as some authors may lead us to believe. In "The Sources of Islamic Conceptions of War," Fred Donner explains the textual idiosyncrasies of Quranic language pertaining to war:

The Qur'an makes occasional reference to "war (*harb*), frequent reference to "fighting" (*qital* and other words derived from the root q-t-l), and even more frequent reference to "struggle" or "striving" (*jihad* and other derivations), by which physical confrontation or fighting appears often – but not always – to be



intended. In some passages, of course the words may well have been used in a symbolic rather than a literal sense. The Qur'anic text as a whole conveys an ambivalent attitude toward violence. On the one, hand, oppression of the weak is roundly condemned, and some passages state clearly that the believers are to fight only in self-defense. But a number of passages seem to provide explicit justification for the use of war or fighting to subdue unbelievers, and deciding whether the Qur'an actually condones offensive war for the faith, or only defensive war, is really left to the judgment of the exegete ( 46-47).

The Qur'an, then, lends itself to some ambiguity regarding war. Islamic war doctrine is based on the interpretation and teaching of the Islamic peoples, each in their own time. Each era subsequently forms its own exegetical (contextual) definitions and explanations of the Qur'an's passages on warfare. We looked earlier at Peter Partner's idea that Jesus and Muhammad compared to Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Ghandi. This comparison is important because the earlier Islamic peoples interpreted the Qur'an in the light of Muhammad's actions, the warring culture that was familiar to them. As time has progressed, the Qur'anic tradition became more peaceful.

*Jihad* has become an important part of this tradition. *Jihad* is the most frequent reference in the Qur'an regarding war, however *jihad* does not always mean a literal physical warfare. *Jihad* is sometimes offensive in nature, and it is a type of warfare with spiritual roots. *The striving* (in the path of God) is its literal meaning. This striving (*jihad*) actually serves as a definition for war (*harb*), because it is the effort put forth by an Islamic person to be pious and tame his/her life in the will of Allah (Martin 92). *Jihad* however has a very important distinction because there are two types of *jihad*: the greater and lesser *jihad*. The greater *jihad* is the war against one's inner self; whereas the lesser *jihad* is the war against one's enemies.

The fact that there are two kinds of *jihad*, a violent and non-violent, helps contribute to western misconceptions about Islam and warfare discussed previously. The term *jihad* is often used today by the people of Islamic nations in a non-violent way. In the Hadiths Muhammad clearly differentiated between the two types of *Jihad*: "A group of Muslim soldiers came to the Holy Prophet [from a battle]. He said: Welcome, you have come from the lesser *jihad* to the greater *jihad*. It was said: What is the greater *jihad*? He said: The striving against his low desires" *Al-Tasharraf*, Part I, p. 70 (Bitshop 3). Even though many Islamic people know the difference between the greater and lesser *jihad*, many people from other cultures do not. This confusion (between the two types of *jihad*) could possibly escalate into an international dilemma if a significant Muslim leader were to call for lesser *jihad*, and be mistaken for an extremist seeking physical war.

For centuries *jihad* has been used in many different ways. Some believe that *jihad* is the only war justified and condoned by Islam. Ashton Welsh maintains that "a *Jihad* [sic] is the only kind of violent war sanctioned by Islam" (1). Apparent support for this theory comes from *Philosophy of Islam*, a publication of the internationally established Islamic Seminary.

According to the seminary, violent war is often an important element of *jihad* because the “three aims” of *jihad*, by their very nature, often require some form of forceful assistance. The following are the three aims of *jihad* according to the Islamic Seminary:

(1) Expansion of the belief in Allah and Adherence to His commandments.

“Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you”. (Surah al Baqarah, 2:190). “Fight for the cause [sic] of Allah with due determinations”. (Surah al-Hajj, 22:78).

(2) Helping the weak and the deprived.

“What stops you from fighting for the cause of Allah and of the helpless men, women and children?” (Surah al-Nisa, 4:75).

(3) Putting an end to persecution.

“Fight them until there is no persecution”. (Surah al-Anfal, 8:39) 568-569.

With “expansion,” aid to the weak, and ending persecution as the aims of *jihad*, *jihad* is easily the modern Islamic equivalent of “Just war theory.” However the “expansion” element of *jihad* is more similar to the crusading element in Christian warfare history. In today’s modern society the majority of both Christians and Muslims seek peace first, a contemporary phenomena that I will address later. Nevertheless *jihad* exists, but the focus of *jihad* may change for it remains both a personal struggle, and a violent struggle. Although Islam condones violence, it does not necessarily condone all forms of violence. Islamic tradition has more recently transitioned to “The de-emphasis on *jus in bello*” (Mayer 197). Mayer stipulates that this is a major contrast to the views of “pre-modern jurists, who were every interested in elaborating rules for the treatment of the non-Muslims who were vanquished or captured in the *jihad*” (197). According to the reasoning of the “jurists,” non-Muslims had no right to fight against the expansion of Islam; therefore their resistance was grounds for any kind of treatment deemed necessary (Mayer 198). Contemporary Islamic people and nations have veered from these views. As Mayer notes: “Muslims today seem to concur that modern norms of ‘humane treatment’ should be accorded to both combatants and noncombatants” (198). Just as Christianity’s modern concept of warfare has developed and been modified by international influence, so has Islam’s concept of warfare been modified by the United Nations and the Geneva conventions. Even fundamental and pious Islamic nations, have been affected by the expectation of non-violence set forth by the international community. These nations too have conformed on international peace issues, but oftentimes fail to give a meaningful reconciliation between their theology and their state policy (Mayer 197).

Another possible application of violent *jihad* is terrorism. Some Islamic groups have been noted for using terrorism in the name of Allah. These actions are almost never condoned by the formal theocratic-Islamic states. Nevertheless, small factions exist. Just as the Irish Republican Army and Jewish Defense League employ terrorism, various Islamic groups also employ it as a means of *jihad*. Many will argue that there are no arguments in the Qur'an or

Hadiths that directly oppose terrorism as a means of warfare. But the Qur'an's opposition is not the issue, rather the Qur'an's encouragement is the issue. Many terrorist groups act under the belief that their religion requires such violence. However these beliefs "have very tenuous foundations in Islamic law or theology" (Mayer 218). They cannot often be supported, but they cannot be easily condemned. Modern Islamic nations that do not engage in terrorism deal with this in different ways. Some attempt to redefine *jihad* (to appear more peaceful); others condemn the action but not the men; others remain silent. Walid Phares, in a letter to *The Jerusalem Post* opposes those who attempt to redefine *jihad*: "In the Christian world, modern Christians outlawed Crusading; they did not rewrite history to legitimize themselves. Those who believe that the *Jihad*-Holy War is a sin today must have the courage to delegitimize it and outlaw it as well" (3). Many Islamic nations have conformed and made the first step to "delegitimize" unnecessary and violent lesser *jihad*.

Islam has a just war system that is based on many fundamental and Scriptural beliefs that date back to the beginning of the Islamic tradition. Even earlier than the Islamic tradition, the Hindu tradition began amongst the people of the Indian subcontinent. Although the Hindu outlook on war is based on written historical guides, much like Islam's, the theory itself is much different.

### The Hindu Concept

According to John Ferguson, Hinduism is a tribal religion (28). It is a religion that values both cultural history and personal ethics (*dharma*). Often it is the cultural history that guides the ethics of the Hindu people. Specific scriptures used by the Hindus can be found in ancient tales such as *The Ramayana*, *The Bhagavad Gita*, an element of the *Mahabharata*, and the rest of the *Vedic*. Certain passages within these *Vedic* texts are often cited as guidelines for war. Historically, the Hindu culture has shown no aversion to warfare; nevertheless, *Ahimsa*, or nonviolence has an important role in the Hindu spiritual world. To oversimplify, Hinduism has two concepts regarding war: "Vedic just war" and *Ahimsa*. Anything else is a mixture of the two primary Hindu beliefs. The evidence for each of these concepts of warfare is normally presented in the form of quotations or short summaries from Hindu primary sources.

When I say that Hinduism has a "just war theory," it is important to note that most Hindus do not call it that. There are two religio-cultural elements that help dictate just war in the Hindu tradition. One element is the caste system, the other is the Vedic stories.

The Hindu caste system is a five-tiered social structure that includes the priestly caste, the warrior caste, the tradesman caste, the servant caste, and the outcaste (untouchables). There are rules that govern each caste within society. The most important element of the caste structure, for our purposes, is the warrior caste. The fact that there is a warrior caste means there must be further commentary within the Hindu tradition on war, and the necessity of force in certain situations.

The most popular and the most widely followed Hindu commentary on war can be found in the Bhagavad Gita 2:11-37. This story is about two warriors: Arjuna and Krishna (a manifestation of god in the Hindu tradition). Wm. Theodore DeBary summarizes the story in *Sources of Indian Tradition*.

When the armies of the Kauravas and the Pandavas were arrayed on the battle field of Kurukshetra, waiting for the signal to commence the fight, the Pandava hero, Arjuna, seeing that relatives and friends were ranged against each other, was suddenly overcome by deep spiritual despondency. It would be sinful, he felt, to kill his own kindred for the sake of kingdom. Therefore, not as a coward, but as a morally conscientious and sensitive person, he lay down his bow and declared to his friend and charioteer, Krishna, that he would not fight. Krishna then attempted to convince Arjuna that he would be committing a sin if he failed to perform his own duty (*sva-dharma*) as a warrior. As for his concern over taking the lives of others, this arose from a delusion that Krishna proceeds to dispel....

Krishna continues to give a lengthy discourse regarding the *dharma* (way of action) that Arjuna must follow. Each warrior has a particular way that he must follow; each person has a particular way to follow. The role of *dharma* in the Hindu tradition is important, and each warrior has his own *dharma* to follow when the situation demands it.

The Buddhist just war tradition uses an ethical based personal *dharma* as well. However the Buddhist tradition has some specific ethical guidelines and Scriptures that give it a "just war theory" distinctive and separate from the Hindu tribal tradition.

#### Buddhist Concept

Buddhism began in the fifth and sixth centuries BCE when Sidhartha Gautama – the Buddha first became enlightened. Gautama transcended desire and the world (the goal of Buddhism) to the extent that he was capable of leaving the world. However he decided to remain and preach his new message of salvation. His message essentially contained his guidelines for *dharma* (which has the same meaning in both Hinduism and Buddhism): right action. These guidelines form the Buddhist system of ethics that is based on the Four Noble Truths and the Eight-Fold Path.

The Four Noble Truths lead directly to the Eight-Fold Path, a guideline through which one may achieve *dharma*. Nevertheless, the assumptions of the Four Noble Truths are essential to understanding Buddhism.

- (1) Life: All life is suffering.
- (2) Suffering: All suffering comes from attachment to this world, desire, and the will to live.
- (3) Destruction of Suffering: Comes only from the elimination of desire.
- (4) Elimination of Desire: To do this one must follow the Eight-Fold Path.

The Eight-Fold Path is applied Buddhist ethics. This is significant to the Buddhist theory of just war, because each warrior who engages in battle must continue to follow these guidelines lest the warrior fall into sin.

- (1) Right Understanding.
- (2) Right Thought.
- (3) Right Speech.
- (4) Right Action (addresses killing).
- (5) Right Vocation.
- (6) Right Effort.
- (7) Right-mindfulness.
- (8) Right Concentration.

The Buddhist theory of just war is “built in” to the ethical system. Each individual bases his/her actions' on the right *dharma*. Each warrior must weigh the Eight-Fold Path in relation to his/her knowledge of the Buddhist Scriptures.

The Buddhist Scriptures and holy books appear to be contradictory regarding warfare. Some passages seem in favor of war, some against it. Arguing from one Sutra might make Buddhism sound like a religion for pacifists; arguing from another may make it sound like a religion for warriors. The truth is that both warriors (such as the Japanese Samurai) and pacifists have lived and followed the Buddhist tradition. Each had to understand the meaning of their action in relation to their lives. The Buddhist Scriptures do aid the process in the search for a “war dharma.”

“Everyone is afraid of violence; everyone likes life. If one compares oneself with others, one would never take life or be involved in the taking of life.” (Buddha, Dhammapada 130). In this case Buddha creates what should be a self-imposed moratorium on killing, nevertheless other Buddhist writings contradict Sidhartha Gautama.

Good Men! In order to uphold the true dharma, you must arm yourselves with swords and bows and arrows even if you cannot observe the Five Commandments and maintain your dignity. No matter how hard a man preaches, unless he aggressively defeats the evil opponents of Buddhism, he would not be able to save himself and others. You should know that such a person is an idle man. Even if he observes commandments and practices pure conduct, you should know he will not attain Buddha hood. Should a monk upholding the true dharma aggressively defeat violators of the Buddhist commandments, probably they all would become angry and try to harm him. Even if he were killed, he is worth being called an observer of the commandments and a savior of himself and others (Mahaparinirvana Sutra).

This scripture presents a perplexing problem to the situation of Buddhist just war. It is apparent that killing is bad, nevertheless, it may be necessary in some situations. That is why the right warrior has the right *dharma*; he contains within himself the cessation of desire. He will commit

a sin for the greater good, and he will not be swayed by the instinct for survival. This agrees with Buddhist core ethics and essentially becomes the Buddhist "just war theory."

Quite different from the Buddhist theory is the Communist theory. It is based on a single group ethic rather than personal ethics, decided by the government rather than the individual. The Communist concept is concrete where the Buddhist concept is subjective.

### Chinese Communist Concept

Perhaps the most simple concept to understand belongs to Chinese Communism. One of the primary figures of Chinese Communism, Chairman Mao-Tse Tung wrote a piece on Communist just war theory. It is short, precise, and to the point.

History shows that wars are divided into two kinds, just and unjust. All wars that are progressive are just, and all wars that impede progress are unjust. We Communists oppose all unjust wars that impede progress, but we do not oppose progressive, just wars. Not only do we Communists not oppose just wars, we actively participate in them. As for unjust wars, World War I is an instance in which both sides fought for imperialist interests; therefore the Communists of the whole world firmly opposed that war. The way to oppose a war of this kind is to do everything possible to prevent it before it breaks out and, once it breaks out, to oppose war with war, to oppose unjust war with just war, whenever possible. (Vol. II p. 150).

The Chinese Communist's view of just war is based on the Communist definitions of progressive. The state determines what must be the best interest for the enrichment of Communist goals of progress, and it follows that course of action. If that progress requires war, then war will ensue. Pacifism can exist, but only when progression is free from opposing forces.

### Conclusion

In Christianity, the "just war theory" is a well-developed philosophy originating from St. Augustine who based his just war beliefs on the Judeo-scriptural tradition. In Islam the "just war theory" is based on the Qur'an and tempered by the Muhammadan tradition. In Hinduism and Buddhism the "just war theory" is based on scriptural/traditional texts, but is ultimately decided by the individual so that he/she may maintain *dharma*, or right action. In Chinese Communism, war is a simple decision made by the state, and it meant to be progressive and advance society in accordance with the communist tradition. Essentially each tradition has developed a just war theory that can be applied without compromising the integrity or continuity of the tradition. Within each tradition pacifism exists, but the prevalent belief is in a form "just war theory."

There are some limitations to this research. First, was the omission of Judaism from the group of researched traditions. Adherents to Judaism, although they account for less than 1% of

the world's population, are important in the political world because of their position to make policy in the Middle East. Judaic tradition is also a basis for St. Augustine's Christian tradition, and it deserves consideration alongside of other larger religions. Unfortunately when I wanted to add Judaism I could not access an appropriate number of sources. In future research I would recommend that sources on Judaism be found. Second, the topic could be covered much more thoroughly, as the resources on this topic are quite vast.

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