

The Just War Theory and the 9/11 Wars: A Biblical and Eschatological Consideration.¹

P.H. Brazier

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ABSTRACT:

In recent years there have been calls to re-write the just war theory for a war on terror, part of the so-called 9/11 wars. Just war theories abound; they are not necessarily Christian, however, it is necessary to consider a Christian response in the sixth commandment. Is Biblical theology rather than philosophical disputation now an appropriate ground for considering the justice of a war on terror? From scripture we find three war ethics: Pagan, Hebrew, and Christian. Which path characterized the so-called war on terror? The answer is in objective facts, statistics: actions not intentions. A Christocentric Categorical Imperative asserts that there are moral absolutes, which the Bible and Church tradition attest to. Any consideration of the war on terror must therefore be from the eschatological context of Jesus' sayings and commands: for example, the return of the Landlord to the vineyard to settle accounts and weigh, sift, all according to his righteous judgement, also the dangers of religious practice by people who are irreconciled. This paper concludes that it may be justifiable to re-write the just war theory from a secular liberal humanist standpoint; however, from a Biblically informed eschatological perspective it cannot be justified.

I. INTRODUCTION

Come and see the works of the Lord,
the desolations he has brought on the earth.

He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth;
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear,
he burns the shields with fire.

'Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.'

PSALM 46:8-10

Early on after the 9/11 attacks on America, and in the subsequent years, there have been calls to re-write or extend the just war theory in response to terrorism. The so-called 9/11 wars are quantifiably different to the two twentieth century world wars and are seen as a culmination of terrorist

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atrocities enacted since the late 1960s (though terrorism has a much longer history). These post 1960s attacks are often (but not exclusively) seen as a form of global cold war between the West and the predominantly Muslim Middle East. September 11, 2001, marked a turning point, in many ways, of this sporadic global terrorist war, that is, the attacks on America by fundamentalist Muslim terrorists serving the religio-military organization Al-Qaeda and the subsequent invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the consequent terrorist attacks in various cities throughout the world (London, 7/7; Madrid, Mumbai, *et al*). The demand to re-write or extend the just war theory in response to terrorism has echoed from military quarters, but also, pertinently, from some within the churches,² and from elected leaders within Western governments. When talking about the war on terror initiated by the United States in 2001 in response to 9/11 what exactly do these calls for a rewritten and re-structured just war theory entail? We can deduce three principles: *first*, strike back harder, more destructively and more decisively than the antagonist; *second*, act, strike, pre-emptively if a threat is perceived (this involves a serious suspension of human rights and freedoms); *third*, colonization: take over countries that give shelter and succour to terrorists and attempt to convert the citizens away from the belief system that has led to the war in the first place. Do these three principles now constitute a secular just war theory? What is *the* just war theory and how does it relate to these three principles? What is the theological and more pertinently Biblical, basis for a just war theory—indeed what is a Christian approach to war and peace? We need to look back prior to the Age of Reason, and prior to the formulation of the essentially Medieval Catholic-Christian just war theory and see what scripture in the form of biblical theology can tell us.

2 Essentially from some British and American Presbyterian, Baptist and Evangelical churches, though not from the catholic-established churches. Many of the Church of England bishops were categorically against the invasion of Iraq, but were noticeably silent about the invasion of Afghanistan. See, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/2659673.stm>, for a report by BBC news on the bishops' stance on the eve of the invasion of Iraq: 'Church of England bishops have made their most outspoken criticism yet of plans for military action against Iraq with one of them accusing the government of acting as judge, jury and executioner. They repeated their view that an assault on Saddam Hussein would unacceptably lower the threshold for war and said it could not be morally justified . . . "There is absolutely nothing new now which would justify us going over the awesome threshold of war," Bishop of Oxford Richard Harris said.'

II. JUST WAR THEORIES

Just war theories abound; they are not necessarily Christian. Any nation or tribe will invent theories, principles, to *justify* aggression and war—either as a pre-emptive offensive strike, or in defence. Such theories will often invoke religious justification, claiming to be in accord with the will of some ‘god’ or ‘idol’. Recently Radan Karadzic, at his trial at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague, following the UN indictment, claimed his actions in the fragmented former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s were ‘holy and just.’³ Adolf Hitler’s, *Mein Kampf*, was in effect a just war theory, it justified in neo-Pagan religio-political terms the actions of the Nazis invading and subjugating Europe and attempting to annihilate the Jews. Karl Marx’s *Das Kapital* is often seen as a justification for the class war. The *pax romana* was in effect a just war theory, that is, the achievement of peace and prosperity within the Roman Empire by a brutal crackdown on dissent and any military attempt to challenge Roman authority: the use of crucifixion on a vast industrialized scale ensured that any rebellion was short-lived, hitting back hard served as a warning to others. Conceptualising, formulating and defining acceptable criteria for aggression, subjugation and war would appear to have evolved with the development of nation states often characterized by racial and cultural identity. But where does the concept of the ‘just’ come in? Is the concept of the ‘just’ integral to a religious perspective? Is the invention of justifiable criteria for war necessary to placate conscience? The theory of a ‘just’ war is often associated with a Roman Catholic doctrine of military ethics. However, the idea of containing and channelling, of ethically justifying, all-out war was a concern of Graeco-Roman writers. For example, Plato (c. 428-347BC) was concerned about the rightful conduct of war, and the importance of virtue and restraint in warfare.⁴

3 ‘He [Radan Karadzic] spends two days outlining his case - that Bosnia’s Serbs were acting in self-defence against a Muslim elite who wanted total power in Bosnia. “I will defend that nation of ours and their cause that is just and holy,” he says. He dismisses some of the most infamous features of the Bosnian war - the massacre at Srebrenica, the siege of Sarajevo, the detention camps - as “myths”, designed to arouse Western sympathy for the Bosnian cause.’ BBC News, 4 March 2010. See: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/8332276.stm>

4 See, for example, the Alcibiades and Laches dialogues. See: Plato (trans. W.R.M. Lamb), *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, (Vol. 8; London: Heinemann, 1955). Text available online at: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Plat.+Lach.+178a&redirect=true>

Cicero (106 BC-43 BC) argued that military action had unambiguous aims and objectives, in particular how and when to fight, but also how different adversaries should be tackled and how they should be treated after the cessation of hostilities: ‘The only excuse, therefore, for going to war’, wrote Cicero, ‘is that we may live in peace unharmed.’⁵ A doctrine of military ethics grounded in a just war theory as we have received it is essentially the work of Augustine of Hippo⁶ and Thomas Aquinas;⁷ however, there have been many others who have attempted to square the circle and thereby close the dialectic, between war and peace from a just and equitable perspective.⁸

Aquinas opens with the basic statement that all wars are illegal: ‘It would seem that it is always sinful to wage war. Because punishment is not inflicted except for sin. Now those who wage war are threatened by Our Lord with punishment, according to Matthew 26:52: “All that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” Therefore all wars are unlawful.’⁹ However, he then goes on to

5 Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Officiis* (trans. Walter Miller, Loeb edn.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913). See: Bk. 1, §. XI, quotation from p. 34. For an online edition, see: http://www.constitution.org/rom/de_officiis.htm.

6 Augustine, in *de civitate Dei* (*The City of God*, completed work published 426) is essentially the first Christian writer to attempt to develop just war theory, that is, what are the conditions that make war acceptable: 1) war can only be acceptable if it is for a ‘just’ and a ‘good’, not for self-gain or for domination; 2) a war that is just can only be fought by an authority such as the state; 3) the primary motive should be peace, a peace only achievable through a state of temporary violence. See: Augustine, *The City of God* (trans., Henry Bettenson; London, Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1972), Bk. V, Chp. 22 ‘The Duration of Wars and their Outcome . . .’, pp. 216-218; also, Bk. XIX, Chp 7 ‘Human Society Divided by Differences of Language. The Misery of War, even when Just’, pp. 861-862.

7 Thomas codified three criteria derived essentially from Augustine for a just war: a) right authority—sovereign government, not individuals, or groups have the right of authority; b) a just cause whereby wrongs are avenged, including restoration of land unjustly occupied or seized; c) right intention, that is, the advancement of good and/or the avoidance of evil. See: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Second Part of the Second Part (SS) (QQ.1-189) Treatise on The Theological Virtues (QQ.1-46), On Charity (QQ.23-46) Question. 40 - OF WAR (FOUR ARTICLES): Article. 1 - Whether it is always sinful to wage war? Article. 2 - Whether it is lawful for clerics and bishops to fight? Article. 3 - Whether it is lawful to lay ambushes in war? Article. 4 - Whether it is lawful to fight on holy days?

8 For example, from the Patristic and Medieval period, Ambrose (337/340-397), Augustine of Hippo (354-430), Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), and Stanislaw of Skarbimierz (1360-1431). From the period of the Renaissance and Reformation Francisco de Vitoria (1492-1546), Francisco Suarez (1548-1617), Alberico Gentili (1552-1608), Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) and Baron von Pufendorf (1632-1694); from the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment, John Locke (1632-1704), Emerich de Vattel (1714-1767), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873); and from the modern to contemporary period, Paul Tillich (1886-1965), Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971) and H. Richard Niebuhr (1894-1962); these are amongst a plethora of philosophers and theologians of various persuasions and of numerous nationalities.

9 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, (P(2b)-Q(40)-A(1)-O(1))

outline acceptable criteria whereby the concept of a just war is underpinned by certain basic beliefs: first, that taking human life is wrong (we will come to the distinction between murder and lawful killing later), however, tribes and nations have an obligation of security, protection and preservation. This is a duty of defence, and raises questions of justice. Warfare must be just and not solely for colonization or for punishment; intervention must be to protect life rather than take it; likewise—the principle of comparative justice—the injustice suffered by one nation or peoples must significantly outweigh that suffered by the aggressor. The legitimate authority to wage war, for Aquinas, lies with Kings (and therefore governments, public authorities or transnational bodies - for example NATO or the UN) provided the motivation can be demonstrated to be just or that warfare corrects a suffered wrong. Right intention is just; economic or material gain is not. He then tackles the question of the probability of success: lives should not be lost in a futile cause, or where disproportionate measures are used to achieve a small or limited victory. Finally, war should be a last resort: all peaceful, diplomatic and feasible alternatives must be shown to be exhausted. By comparison we may ask, is pacifism just? It may not seem so to the oppressed. At times measured force and violence may be the only justifiable means of defence. In Christian terms, specific criteria and conditions were defined by which kings and rulers could decide a) if it was just to go to war, and b) the conditions under which a war could be fought. So is war just, or permissible? Is the concept of the just equitable with the good? From a broadly Christian perspective, and in the context of a doctrine of military ethics, a just war theory is grounded in the proposition that going to war is the *lesser evil*, but this implies that war and violence is still evil, just the lesser of two evils. From a Roman Catholic perspective the just war theory as we have come to know it was defined by and in relation to God in Christ: issuing from *reasoned* (logos) philosophy. Therefore in the Christian West, before the development of Postmodern secular liberal humanism, rulers and governments of all persuasions were implicitly recognizing and defining war as evil and wrong, but unavoidable under certain circumstances. According to the Roman Catholic doctrine there are two elements: *jus ad bellum* (the criteria whereby war is justified) and *jus in bello* (the manner in which war is conducted according to certain ethical criteria). In recent years, and in many ways resulting from the nature

of war in the twentieth century, a third category has been added—issuing essentially from secular theorists—which addresses how a war is ended, and how a just peace is achieved: *jus post bellum*: for example, peace treaties, reparation, reconstruction, war crimes trials, and so forth. The concept of the right of self-defence is often seen as complementary to a just war theory, however, they both differ by degree of emphasis. In secular liberal humanist terms this degree of emphasis allows for a greater or lesser use of force and re-scripting of ethics to suit the situation. Often this justifies the use of force as retaliation by any necessary means: the end justifies the means.

III. CONFLICT

Conflict between the Christian West and Islam is centuries old; much of the antagonism is historic (the Crusades) and is rooted in fundamental religious difference issuing from the revelation in Christ. However, since the mid-nineteenth century this age-old antipathy has changed due to the drift into secular liberal humanism in the West and a perception by Middle Eastern Muslim nations. Since the late 1960s, this ‘war’ has taken the form of industrialized terrorism (for example, the hi-jacking of passenger airliners, random shooting, sometimes chemical attacks, and suicide bombers). This was initially perpetrated by heavily politicized nominally Muslim groups in the 1970s, wedded to a Middle Eastern form of Marxist dialectic. From the late 1980s a form of fundamentalist Islamic religious dogma replaces the Marxist dialectic.¹⁰ The reality faced by ordinary citizens is that they are essentially relatively innocent bystanders caught between the military issues and the protracted and on-going political realities (essentially since the break-up of the Ottoman Empire,¹¹ and the reliance on Middle Eastern oil by the West). This fuels age-old resentments by factions and tribes and nations

10 See: James F. Pastor, *Terrorism & Public Safety Policing: Implications of the Obama Presidency* (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2009); Robert A. Pape, ‘The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism,’ *American Political Science Review*, 2003. 97 (3): pp. 1-19; Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (Columbia, SC: Columbia University Press, 1998); Mark Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

11 Norman Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980 [1972]); Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2003); Bernard Lewis, *Istanbul and the civilization of the Ottoman Empire* (Norma, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982 [1963]).

characterized by a keen sense of the salient features of the historic situation.¹² But amidst this welter of discussion and thesis, politicking and policy, nothing seems to change—except the situation has worsened. Talk of ‘rights’ and ‘legalism’ only makes the situation worse.¹³ Western forces are entrenched in what many see as an unwinnable ‘armed conflict’ (i.e. war) in Afghanistan and Iraq, while the Taliban merely bide their time waiting for the West to depart. Little has changed since the British Empire attempted (and failed) to subdue Afghanistan in the mid-nineteenth century. Human history is characterized by, for C.S. Lewis, money and poverty, war and ambition, prostitution and sexual degradation, the class struggle, empires and slavery; Lewis takes this further: original sin is the key to history, civilizations and cultures grow up, often founded on sound principles, good laws are formulated, but something always goes wrong: ‘some fatal flaw always brings the selfish and cruel people to the top and it all slides back into misery and ruin.’¹⁴

IV. WAR & PEACE

If political theorizing, reasoned philosophical disputation and Machiavellian scheming are not going to offer a solution to age-old conflicts then what will? Should a Christian take up arms and fight, kill, in these conflicts? What has Scripture, the Christian theological tradition, and—all importantly—Jesus Christ got to say about war? If all countries took a vow of non-aggression, only going to war in self-defence then war would be eradicated? But is it that simple? What of civil wars, warring neighbours, warring families—theft, aggression, sin? What of the war that rages in all of us between different elements of our personalities? Or the war we all wage to stay on the right side of sanity when anger boils up in us?

12 See: Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Gerard Chaliand, *The History of Terrorism: From Antiquity to al Qaeda* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007).

13 See: Lauren A. Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400-1900* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002).

14 C.S. Lewis, *Broadcast Talks*. Reprinted with some alterations from two series of Broadcast Talks ‘Right and Wrong: A Clue to the Meaning of the Universe’ and ‘What Christians Believe’ given in 1941 and 1942 (London: Geoffrey Bles, The Centenary Press, 1942).

Lordship & Obedience

The sixth commandment (Exodus 20:13) is often quoted by pacifists as a prohibition on all killing. Traditionally, this is stated simply as, ‘Thou Shalt not Kill’. The Hebrew word, *Ratsach* (pronounced *raw-tsakh’*), should be more accurately translated as ‘Thou shalt not commit an illegal killing.’ *Ratsach* is properly a primitive root meaning to dash in pieces, that is, to kill another human being, especially to murder, put to death in anger. *Ratsach* evokes an irrational act, an unmeasured response—to strike out destructively with no consideration whether the other person lives or dies, to slay, to exterminate, to destroy. This is the sin of Cain (Genesis 4:1-16, specifically 8b). Properly speaking *ratsach* applies to an illegal killing. The nearest we have in English is the word murder (that is, as a noun and a verb, the unlawful premeditated killing of one person by another); however, here we have a problem. The difficulty here is that national governments—secular liberal humanist governments—define what constitutes legal and illegal killing. Legality for the ancient Hebrews was defined by and in relation to God—to Yahweh (YHWH), the righteous LORD—hence the divine permission for the Hebrews to defend themselves, on numerous occasions, against the invading Philistines. The response from the ancient Hebrews was in obedience to YHWH, God, the personal Lord, the eternal self-existing one. This was no impartial deity, but the one true God, the personal God who expected right behaviour, who benevolently dictates the terms of morality and ethics and expects his chosen people to behave as such: war and justice were part of this heteronymous ethic, given, revealed, serving salvation history.

In the ancient near east, the armies of the tribes and nations that surrounded the ancient Hebrews believed that they were led by their ‘gods’. The Hebrews carried the divine presence in the form of the Ark of the Covenant—the law given by YHWH—onto the battlefield (Numbers 10:35-36; 1 Samuel 14:18). Therefore, because God could not be conquered, any victory was ascribed to YHWH, triumph and conquest reflected God’s will for his chosen people; a defeat was ascribed to the faithlessness of the Israelites. However, for the ancient Hebrews, different categories of war were distinguished: *milhemet hovah* (obligatory war), was considered by some as identical with *milhemet mitsvah* (war commanded by God); and *milhemet reshut* (permitted war). One only has to consider the dynamic account of apocalyptic war contained

in one of the Dead Sea Scrolls (the ‘War Scroll’) to consider the implications of this; or the apocalyptic tension only resolved through war in the Book of Daniel (and in Revelation in the New Testament). In the state of Israel today Jewish scholars debate whether Jews should serve in non-Jewish armies in wars that do not directly affect Israel: the majority decided that the principle of *dina’ de-malkhuta’ dina’* (the laws of the country are to be observed) obliges Jews to serve.

Justice and Reconciliation

But what does Jesus Christ require? Christ’s requirement is embodied in the Law of Love—cited on numerous occasions in the New Testament generally, the Gospels specifically. The question then is how do you define love? The obvious answer is in the Greek word *agape* (self-giving, self-denying, altruistic love). Therefore do we just sit back and do nothing when darkness and evil engulf our neighbours, ourselves? The Lutheran Pastor and theologian Martin Niemöller commented—

First they came for the communists, and I did not speak out—
because I was not a communist;
Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—
because I was not a trade unionist;
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—
because I was not a Jew;
Then they came for me—
and there was no one left to speak out for me.¹⁵

It was, in effect, for situations similar to this that the church evolved a just war theory. Does this not represent an apparently irreconcilable dialectic between war and peace, defence and aggression, also commission and omission? If we take up arms to defend, we sin in our slaughter and destruction of others; yet if we do nothing our sin is that we are complicit in the evil and destruction? This element of commission-omission is embodied in the General Confession in the Church of England Book of Common Prayer: ‘We have left undone

15 Martin Niemöller (Friedrich Gustav Emil Martin Niemöller, 1892-1984, Lutheran pastor theologian) speaking before the Confessing Church in Frankfurt on 6 January 1946 about the rise to power of the National Socialists.

those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done. And there is no health in us'.¹⁶

The just war theory identified not only armed conflict between or among nations or groups of people, but also an intense protracted struggle not involving arms/weapons: 'soldier of Christ' (*miles Christi*) and the 'army of Christ' (*militia Christi*) engaged in spiritual combat with evil. The majority of Christians have accepted armed conflict as characteristic of life in an, as yet, not fully redeemed world. Christians may, therefore, morally participate in a just war according to the guidelines laid down in the tradition; by contrast, Christians must not take part in unjust wars. In essence Augustine, working from the ideas of his teacher Ambrose of Milan, defined the principle of the lesser of two evils. A Christian could take up arms or participate in war if the evil of war was less than the evil that would result from not taking up arms (the lesser of two evils principle). A just war therefore can only be defensive, never offensive or aggressive, although the theory did allow for the reluctant and limited use of force whereby a Christian might be required in charity to serve the needs of an innocent neighbour being attacked. However, the just war theory has been severely tested by contemporary events: nuclear weapons, or the so-called 'war on terrorism', or 'wars of liberation', and of course the perverse thinking of a suicide bomber. How far a Christian can participate in war will continue to be a problematic question with relativistic answers: defence is a necessary response to evil; but hostility is a negation of the good.

But what did Jesus Christ have to say? Jesus looks at the issue eschatologically: how will we stand when we come before *Him* in judgement at the end of days? Hence Jesus' emphasis on reconciliation: be reconciled with your neighbour before coming before God or you will both face retribution (Matt 5:23-24 & 18:21-35). This, like much of Matthew's gospel, is about inter-Christian relations. But we also bear a responsibility to those outside of the faith, both on an individual and on a national level: we are our brother/sister's keeper (Gen 4:9), and we will be held responsible (Ezek 33:8-9). Therefore we must exhaust, utterly, all avenues of reconciliation and making peace before resorting to war:

16 The General Confession, Morning and Evening Prayer, The Church of England Book of Common Prayer, 1662.

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments . . . are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Rom 13:8f

When confronted by the centurion who sought the healing of his servant, Jesus does not use the situation for an anti-war polemic, or a criticism of the military mindset. On the contrary, he praises the military discipline in the centurion's mind that has produced such faith—'Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith' (Matt 8:5-13). And we are told to obey the authorities over us because they are God-given: 'render unto Caesar' (Mark 12:17)—so much for rebellions, civil wars and revolutions.

But to take this issue of reconciliation further, it is this that perhaps is at the heart of how Christians (indeed how all people) should live. Conflict may be inevitable but warring issues from the Fall—pertinently the sin of Cain—therefore it is not how we should live. Ideally, we should live in peace and harmony. Jesus does appear to be talking about conflict between individuals, or small groups, hence the principle which we cannot, must not, ignore of turning the other cheek even when confronting evil (Matt 5:38-42): again, is this because of the eschatological implications? Does this apply to individuals or to nations? How do we extrapolate this ideal onto tribes, countries, nations? Also we are called to love not just our friends but our enemies (Matt 5:43-48)—endorsed by Paul's comments (Rom (13:8f)). If we are called to love one another, what sort of love is this—erotic love, friendship, family love? The greatest love of all is altruistic: agape. And agape is the greatest sacrificial love: to lay down one's life for one's friends. Even greater is the love that lay down one's life for those we do not even know but to give one's life to protect others from destruction, from warring invaders, or—as on D-Day—to liberate them from evil. The greater love is to lay down one's life in defence against manifold evil. For example, where teenage pilots in the Battle of Britain laid down their lives not even being sure of the consequences of their actions—

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love . . . This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

John 15:10-13

V. A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

To make any reasoned sense out of the apparently irreconcilable dialectic between war and peace, defence and aggression, and to postulate what an acceptable response to terrorism would be, we need to see what theology we can read from the Bible—that is, doctrine, principle and axiom, which can be read from Scripture, to create a biblically charged and informed mindset. If this is so then we find three distinct ethical responses to war and conflict in the Bible. The first is Pagan characterized by ego and desire, religious self-interest, and political domination; the second and third are communitarian, heteronomous, and are given by God, they are revealed. On this basis, there were three courses of action following 9/11: one Pagan, one Hebrew, and one that is Christian.

The Pagan Principle: Vengeance in Excess

Amongst the Pagan nations that surrounded ancient Israel—indeed this is an ethic that can be found amongst tribes and nations the world over—is a war ethic, recounted several times over in the Old Testament, evidenced in the actions of these Pagan nations as they preyed on the Israelites. The Hebrews were explicitly forbidden by the Lord God, by YHWH, from following this war ethic as a way of retribution. To give this a name it is the principle that vengeance is demanded in excess of an equitable, measured and just response. According to this war ethic, if one goat was stolen, five—on average—were taken as revenge and reparation. If one man was killed, five—on average—were killed in revenge from the murderer's tribe. But when the five were killed, twenty-five were then demanded from the victim's tribe, and so on. According to this ethic, hostilities cease when one side capitulates under the pressure of all-out violent war. The victorious side would often then execute hundreds simply as a warning against insurrection, and to celebrate victory. In occupied territories such as France and Norway during the Second World War, the Nazis ratcheted-up this demand for greater reparation. If one German soldier was killed, 100 civilians were immediately rounded up at random, and summarily executed; the ratio of reparation was therefore increased from 5:1

to 100:1.¹⁷ If this ethic was applied to 9/11, then the demand would be for a greater number than the 3,000 lives lost on 9/11—15,000 or greater.

The Ancient Hebrew Principle: An Eye for an Eye

An 'eye for an eye' (Leviticus 24:19-21, Exodus 21:22-25, and Deuteronomy 19:21; in Hebrew, *ayin tahat ayin*) countered the principle where vengeance was demanded in excess of an equitable, measured and just response. Properly considered an eye for an eye was a *measured* response to an unlawful act, a *measured* response that limited violence whilst attempting to answer cries for justice. This principle is grounded in the law of equitable retribution; an offence should not generate a greater offence. Retribution is thereby restricted, contained and defined, but in relation to the will of YHWH and the given laws of the Torah: an exact, proportionate, measured and controlled response was designed to ensure justice, reparation, and to prevent either the anarchy of lynch mob vengeance, or matters escalating out of control into all out war. Ghandi is reputed to have said that an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind. Ghandi is objecting to the concept of reparation, which can be seen as stoking the furnaces of resentment. However this is not what is happening here. An eye for an eye was specifically given to ensure a constrained, just, and measured response so that intensification and escalation was avoided. This was why hangmen and executioners developed as hooded anonymous outsiders, separate from society—they had no tribal allegiance, so when one man was executed for the murder of another, no tribe was then offended by the actions of the executioner. Around 3,000 lives were lost on 9/11, so according to this ethic, 3,000 Al-Qaeda terrorist combatants should have been sought-out, arrested, and after due process of law, executed. That is, an eye for an eye—and no more! This is the Old Testament approach, which the Lord, YHWH, required of the ancient Hebrews to prevent an escalation of conflict whilst guaranteeing justice.

¹⁷ However, the same can be said for the allies during WW2. When on the night of 14 November 1940 the city of Coventry was carpet-bombed by the Luftwaffe (generating a new verb—to 'Coventrate'—meaning to destroy an entire city) approximately 600 people were killed. Winston Churchill commented that 'They have sown the wind, they shall reap the whirlwind'. In return the allies carpet bombed Hamburg beginning on the evening of 24 July 1943 for 8 days and 7 nights killing according to cautious estimates 50,000. Later in the war the allies carpet-bombed Dresden (13 and 15 February 1945) killing according to cautious estimates 24-40,000.

The Christian Principle: Turn the Other Cheek

In the Gospels we find a radical and diverse approach from either the ancient Pagan nations, or from the Pentateuch: to turn the other cheek, bite the bullet, stop and think, ‘Why have we been attacked?’, ‘How may we have offended?’, ‘How can we stop the escalation of violence?’ This is the New Testament approach, explicitly stated by Jesus Christ in the Gospels. And in case we decide to dismiss this as a one-off Jesus sound bite that was misreported or can be contextually rejected, or whittled away by a hermeneutic of suspicion, the emphasis is clear:

You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Matthew 5:38-46

This is not just passive resistance, but complicity to a degree; this is radical. Indeed the victim is taking control of the situation. But it exudes authority, the authority of the righteous one—who allowed *Himself* to be tortured, then slaughtered on a cross. However difficult this sounds, Jesus certainly practiced what he preached. Luke extrapolates:

But I tell you who hear me: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Luke 6:27-31

The Apostle Paul talks of blessing those who persecute us, mourning with those who mourn, attempting to live in harmony and leaving no room for pride (Romans 12:14-16)? Should we fight evil with evil? No, we should not take revenge, for revenge is the Lord’s prerogative (Deuteronomy 32:35,

Romans 12:19 & Hebrews 10:30), and we should not repay anyone evil for evil (Romans 12:18-19). If we are attacked, we should shame our enemy into retreating: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good' (Romans 12: 20b-21). If we do not want others to treat us violently, brutally, if we do not want our enemies to kill us, then why do we do this to them?

The principle of turning the other cheek is not without precedent in the Old Testament. For example, 'You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord' (Leviticus 19:18), and 'It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for one to bear the yoke . . . to give one's cheek to the smiter, and be filled with insults' (Lamentations 3:26-27 & 30). However, there is an assertive claim to equality, given the socio-cultural context of Jesus's sayings, in turning the other cheek. Greeks and Romans would spar and box, but both participants were deemed equal. When they fought they used fists or the back of the hand. If a master was to strike a slave it was with the palm of the hand - a slap - never the fist or back of the hand as this would imply equality. By turning the other cheek a slave would be inviting the same punishment but—using the same hand—the slave master would have to use the back of the hand to strike the other cheek, thereby implying equality. By turning the other cheek the slave (or a subjugated nation like Israel under the Romans) was provoking the assailant rather than submitting submissively: I am your equal, you cannot harm or destroy me in the long term.¹⁸ This is radical.

The War Ethic for a War on Terror?

Jason Burke, historian and journalist, has travelled to the main theatres of the 9/11 wars, and through painstaking research compiled accurate statistics of casualties: deaths, serious injuries, and destruction of communities essentially by Western military action, but also by the religious terror foisted on their own

¹⁸ This socio-cultural context was recounted to me by a fellow theologian from a lecture given by the American Bible scholar Walter Wink at King's College London.

people by Al-Qaeda, and other terrorist groups.¹⁹ Burke notes, ‘Throughout the 1990s a vast conflict was brewing. The storm broke on September 11, 2001. Since then much of the world has seen invasions, bombings, battles and riots. Hundreds of thousands of people have died. These are the 9/11 wars.’²⁰ By visiting all local and national governments (and NGOs on the ground), by cataloguing the actual deaths and injuries in villages, towns and cities, by cross-checking and cross-referencing, Burke catalogues in excess of 250,000 civilians, military and police killed.²¹ If injuries and displacement of civilians (i.e. total destruction of buildings and communities, deaths among refugees) are taken into account, confirmed by a conservative ratio of 3:1, then the total cost in terms of deaths, injuries and lives wasted through the Western response to 9/11 is now over one million.²²

So, which Biblical war ethic is the war on terrorism comparable to: Pagan, Hebrew or Christian? According to the data compiled this is considerably more than the 5 lives for every 1 life killed that the Pagan tribes surrounding the ancient Hebrews demanded. It is more than three times the level of reparation (100:1) demanded by the Nazis in the occupied territories.

VI. A WAR ON TERRORISM

By its very nature terrorism has little or no respect for life and will kill indiscriminately regardless of perceived innocence or guilt, indeed using terror as a tactic relies on the victims—or target—having no understanding of the criteria used by the terrorist: anyone, anywhere, at any time could be

19 See essentially, Jason Burke, *The 9/11 Wars* (London & New York: Penguin Group, Allen Lane, 2011). This is a massive volume—over 700 pages, around 300,000 words—with detailed accounts of all the 9/11 wars, the Western response to 9/11, and the continued terrorist activities from Al-Qaeda. A 4-page summary of the salient argument and statistics from the book appeared in the British Newspaper, *The Guardian*, Aug. 22, 2011, in the G2 supplement. See also, Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda: The True Story of Radical Islam* (London: Penguin, 2007).

20 Burke, *The 9/11 Wars*, p. xviii.

21 The detailed statistical information on deaths and injuries can be found in Burke, *The 9/11 Wars*, pp. 503f.

22 Burke notes that although around 3000 were killed on 9/11, the total deaths attributed to Al-Qaeda in the first 10 years of the 9/11 wars, the total of civilians killed in terrorist actions directly linked to the Al-Qaeda-affiliated or inspired Islamic militants, “was almost certainly in excess of 10,000, probably nearer 15,000, possibly up to 20,000.” Burke, ‘Counting the cost of the 9/11 wars’, *The Guardian*, Aug 22, 2011, G2, p. 10

a target and could suffer horrendous injuries or death. Terrorism is often defined as the use of fear or terror as a means of retribution or coercion. In terms of its effect on civilians terrorism is similar to carpet bombing. When the town of Guernica was bombed during the Spanish Civil War on 26 April 1937 killing between 200 and 400 civilians the term coined was ‘terror bombing’—aerial bombing of cities and towns is indiscriminate, and terrifying, or terror-generating. The connection with conventional warfare is in the use of violence and injury, intimidation and death; the intention is to create terror and fear for ideological reasons. Far from scripting rules of engagement or just war theories, terrorists will deliberately target randomly: no one can be defined as a non-combatant. Terrorism is by definition reasonless, random; it is perhaps one of the closest human invention to evil that we can perceive. The problem with a so-called war on terror is that it relies on the tactics of the terrorist, it will be fought on similar ideological lines, and it seeks to make the defenders as evil as the terrorist.

VII. AN ESCHATOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

So, what is the theology that underpins our emerging criticism of the just war theory in relation to the 9/11 wars? The Incarnation-Cross-Resurrection can be seen as the central pivotal point in human history. As such, this point is the end of time, yet also the beginning: all human history, *ante* and *post* is defined by this central event. Meaning flows from this point—the point of the moment of the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Yet, we live. We live, as Karl Barth referred to it as, *Zwischen den Zeiten*, between the times. That is between the first and the second coming, in a bubble of time constantly inflating between the resurrection and the completion of all things: the *eschaton*. Therefore everything Jesus said relates to the end of times. All his sayings can only be understood eschatologically. Hence the categorical imperative for reconciliation—before it is too late. Are not Biblical ethics grounded in this transcendent categorical imperative? Is not the Decalogue—the Ten Commandments—likewise grounded in and issuing from this transcendent reality: YHWH, the Lord, requires right action of us, and behind and within YHWH is the universal Christ, the second person of the Trinity,

incarnated in Jesus of Nazareth? These moral absolutes issue from and relate to the economic Trinity, which the Bible and Church tradition attest to, moral absolutes that will existentially press on us from the pneumatological element of the economic Trinity. These are absolutes that should govern our behaviour. But to what extent do our religious egos interfere and deny this imperative?

This transcendent categorical imperative is therefore towards eschatological reconciliation. We have our chance, but the dangers are very real. The key scriptural passage is in Matthew's Gospel, the Sermon on the Mount and the sayings that follow. We are *blessed* if people insult us, we are *blessed* if we show mercy and are peacemakers, we are *blessed* if people utter all manner of evil against us because Jesus is the eschatological fulfilment of the law, and our Father in heaven takes notes and prepares to weigh, to sift, all. This evokes an eschatological reality:

'You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, "You shall not murder"; and "whoever murders shall be liable to judgment." But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, "You fool," you will be liable to the hell of fire. So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.'

Matthew 5:21-26

Given the eschatological context of Jesus' sayings and commands, we must surely conclude that Jesus is neither a pacifist nor a militarist. For example, the return of the Landlord to the vineyard to settle accounts (Mark 12 and Luke 20) and weigh, sift (Luke 22:31), all according to his righteous judgement (Luke 12:58), the perils of judging others (Matthew 7:1-2; Luke 6:37; John 8:15-16), the dangers of religious practice when we are estranged, irreconciled, from our neighbour in worship (Mark 5:23-26), and the categorical importance of reconciliation because those who are reconciled reflect Christ's commandment and are not judged (John 12:47-48). It is clear from YHWH's command to the ancient Hebrews that defence was legitimate—if YHWH declared it so.

Defence therefore had its place in salvation history. But history ends with the Incarnation-Cross-Resurrection; reconciliation is therefore an imperative if we are to avoid a judgement that condemns us. Hell and damnation are real, and are very real possibilities. Our actions when they contradict the will of God and are in opposition to ethics that can be read from Scripture—ethics that should be exercised through a categorical imperative, actions that are contrary to the law of reconciliation revealed through the Christ—these actions have the potential to condemn us before God in Christ in judgement.

In religio-political terms, a war on terror appears to have no concept of reconciliation; furthermore, it appears to be motivated by a pre-Christian and pre-Hebrew war ethic defined by nationhood and boundaries, retaliation and retribution: vengeance in excess of an equitable, measured and just response.²³ The reality of a war on terror is defined by the *offensive* war ethic of the Pagan nations that surrounded ancient Israel, and not by the *defensive* war ethic of the Ancient Hebrews, or the eschatological realism of Jesus's command to turn the other cheek and to love our enemies. In eschatological reality, what has happened between the West on the one hand and Afghanistan-Iraq on the other is not an argument between Christianity and Islam but a row between two warring Pagan tribes each battling—on a global scale—to impose its own religio-political vision on the other: Western secular liberal humanism is here set against Al-Qaeda?

VIII. CONCLUSION

Because of the invasion and subjugation of Afghanistan and Iraq Al-Qaeda moved (according to media reports) its training camps its headquarters and its operations control centres into the mountainous no-man's-land between Pakistan, and Afghanistan, also into Kenya, the Sudan, and other tribal territories in Africa, but also to the Far East—Indonesia and the Philippines—

23 1500 to 800 ago the first born son of a Viking, Norse, or Angle chieftain was required to prove himself by not just equalling his father's war conquests and military exploits but by surpassing them; has this happened in recent history in the context of two American presidents where the son has excelled his father's war exploits?

and now the Yemen. Therefore the war on terrorism is not against a nation state. The enemy shifts and changes, moves, and disappears into the night, relocates and re-emerges transformed but as dangerous as before. All of these locations are in reasonably peaceful nation states, which then suffer collateral damage (i.e. civilian deaths) through conventional military tactics by the West. This conventional war mentality does not make the West any safer; this is a totally unwinnable scenario, and simply creates yet more recruits from peaceable civilians who wanted nothing to do with Al-Qaeda but are forced into terrorism out of a desire for revenge. The war on terrorism can by no means be considered a measured response.

So what was the alternative? Given the precedence of the sixth commandment, and what we can read of these three war ethics from the Bible, then we may ask what is implied by George W. Bush and Tony Blair's war on terror, grounded as we have seen in a pre-Christian Pagan war ethic? If George W. Bush was correct in bombing and invading Afghanistan because of the support of the Taliban government for Al-Qaeda and if this invokes and relates to a categorical imperative, then would the British Prime Minister Mrs. Thatcher have been justified in sending Her Majesty the Queen's Royal Air Force to bomb the Irish community in New York?—because the IRA bomb that blew up the Grand Hotel in Brighton (12 October 1984) nearly killing the Prime Minister and the heart of the British government was paid for by Irish-American dollars. Did not many American senators ideologically support the IRA? Such a bombing raid on the Irish quarter of New York would have been amoral, evil, and ridiculous. But no more ridiculous than invading and laying waste two sovereign nations because terrorists associated with one of those countries had demolished two buildings in New York. There is therefore no alternative to the Gospel precedent that Jesus established. The British government and its anti-terror agencies tracked down the Brighton bomber who was tried, convicted and imprisoned, not assassinated by special forces at the behest of a presidential leader: we should be wise as serpents yet tender as doves (Matt 10:16b.), in turning the other cheek (Matt 5:39b).

So, is it justifiable to re-write the just war theory for a war on terrorism? The answer depends on how you define a just war theory. From a secular liberal humanist standpoint a just war theory is whatever a given group of

people—an oligarchic liberal elite?—want it to be at any given time, for any given situation. However, from a Christian perspective, more specifically from a Biblically informed eschatological perspective, rewriting the just war theory to allow for a first strike if there is the threat of terrorism cannot be justifiable; neither can a retaliatory strike which destroys and subjugates a people out of all proportion to the initial act of terrorism be justifiable. From a strictly Christocentric eschatological perspective, the only option is to turn the other cheek, to pour shame on the terrorists, in an attempt to generate reconciliation. The just war theory has been re-written from an essentially secular perspective. Retaliation comes, in principle, before being attacked, and there is no means of offence that is out-of-bounds, provided the government of the day can put a suitable spin on the affairs. If this is indeed a just war theory, it bears little resemblance to the Catholic-Christian just war theory, indeed one is tempted to consider this secular just war theory merely an attempt to shelter behind the credibility of the Augustinian-Thomist foundation of a Catholic-Christian just war theory. Suspected Al-Qaeda camps in the hinterland between Pakistan and Afghanistan are now attacked by pilotless drone aircraft controlled by technicians behind a computer screen located in a bunker deep in the American desert: there is absolutely no risk to the technician in this as compared to the risk to a foot soldier; those attacked don't know they are being attacked till they are killed—this ethic is very similar to the ethics of terrorism.

In principle this Postmodern secular liberal humanist just war theory is the Pagan vengeance principle with the level of vengeance killing ratcheted-up: it is a defence obsession that generates vengeance in excess of an equitable, measured and just response, and is defined by the three principles we postulated at the beginning: strike back harder, more destructively; act, strike, pre-emptively; and colonize to convert the citizens away from the belief system that has led to the war in the first place (to this we can add a fourth principle: drone games, where the military play computer games with pilotless drones, killing at will with no discernible risk to themselves). Without God, or with false 'gods', morality is whatever is necessarily defined; without God, there are as a result no limits or constraints on human behaviour, and ethics become whatever is acceptable to an oligarchic elite at any given time: the end justifies

the means, and Machiavellian spin-doctoring defines the ends and the means. If a just war theory is humanistic and relativistic, then it is simple enough to define the criteria, to redefine, modify, rewrite, *ad infinitum*. But in relation to orthodox Christian doctrine and ethics, it cannot be justified, or justifiable, to rewrite—for short-term gain—driven by suspicion about invisible enemies in the night with non-existent weapons of mass-destruction. Or, more pertinently, given what we can read from Scripture, how can such short term aggression, such irreconcilability, be eschatologically acceptable before God in judgement in Christ?