

# The Just War Tradition in the Present Crisis

*Is it ever right to go to war? Dr. Lawrence Terlizzese provides understanding of just war tradition from a biblical perspective.*

## Searching for Answers

Recent events have prompted Christians to ask moral questions concerning the legitimacy of war. How far should we go in punishing evil? Can torture ever be justified? On what basis are these actions premised? These problems remain especially acute for those who claim the Christian faith. Fortunately, we are not the first generation to face these questions. The use of force and violence has always troubled the Christian conscience. Jesus Christ gave his life freely without resisting. But does Christ's nonviolent approach deny government the prerogative to maintain order and establish peace through some measure of force? All government action operates on the premise of force. To deny all force, to be a dedicated pacifist, leads no less to a condition of anarchy than if one were a religious fascist. Extremes have the tendency to meet. In the past, Christians attempted to negotiate through the extremes and seek a limited and prescribed use of force in what has been called the Just War Tradition.



The Just War Tradition finds its source in several streams of Western thought: biblical teaching, law, theology, philosophy, military strategy, and common sense. Just War thinking integrates this wide variety of thought through

providing Christians with a general orientation on the issues of war and peace. This tradition transcends denominational barriers and attempts to supply workable answers and solutions to very difficult moral problems. Just War has its origins in Greco-Roman thinking as well as Christian theology: Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin have all contributed to its development.[\[1\]](#)

Just War thinking does not provide sure-fire ways of fighting guilt-free wars, or offer blanket acceptance of government action. It often condemns acts of war as well as condones. Just War presents critical criteria malleable enough to address a wide assortment of circumstances. It does not give easy answers to difficult questions; instead, it provides a broad moral consensus concerning problems of justifying and controlling war. It presents a living tradition that furnishes a stock of wisdom consisting of doctrines, theories, and philosophies. Mechanical application in following Just War teachings cannot replace critical thinking, genius, and moral circumspection in ever changing circumstances. Just War attempts to approximate justice in the temporal realm in order to achieve a temporal but lasting peace. It does not make pretensions in claiming infinite or absolute justice, which remain ephemeral and unattainable goals. Only God provides infinite justice and judgment in eternity through his own means. “‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Deut. 32:35; Heb. 10:30).

## **The Clash of Civilizations**

To apply Just War criteria we must first have a reasonable assessment of current circumstances. The Cold War era witnessed a bipolar world consisting of two colossal opponents. The end of the Cold War has brought the demise of strict ideological battles and has propelled the advent of cultural divisions in a multi-polar world. Present and future conflicts exist across cultural lines. The “Clash of

Civilizations” paradigm replaces the old model of East vs. West.<sup>{2}</sup> People are more inclined to identify with their religious and ethnic heritage than the old ideology. The West has emerged as the global leader, leaving the rest of the world to struggle either to free itself from the West or to catch it economically and technologically. The triumph of the West—or modernized, secular, and materialist society—has created a backlash in Islamic Fundamentalism.

Fundamentalism does not represent ancient living traditions but a modern recreation of ancient beliefs with a particular emphasis on political conquest. Fundamentalists do not hesitate to enter into battle or holy war (jihad) with the enemies of God at a political and military level. The tragic events of 9/11 and the continual struggle against terrorism traces back to the hostility Islamic fundamentalists feel towards the triumph of the West. They perceive Western global hegemony [ed. note: leadership or predominant influence] as a threat and challenge to their religious beliefs and traditions, as most Christian fundamentalists and evangelicals feel threatened by the invincible advance of modern secular society. The error of fundamentalism lies in thinking it can recreate the past and enforce those beliefs and conditions on the modern world. Coercion remains at the heart of fundamentalist practice, constituting a threat potentially worse than modern secular society.

This cultural divide causes Christians to reconsider the basis of warfare premised on the responsibilities of the state to defend civil society against the encroachments of religious extremism that fights in the name of God and for a holy cause or crusade.

This may sound strange at first to theological ears, but an absolute principle of Just War states that Christians never fight for “God and Country,” but only for “Country.” There is only a secular and civil but necessary task to be accomplished in war, never a higher mandate to inaugurate God’s kingdom. In

this sense Just War thinking attempts to secularize war by which it hopes to limit its horrendous effects.

## Holy War or Just War

An essential distinction divides Just War from holy war. Just War does not claim to fight in the name of God or even for eternal causes. It strictly concerns temporal and political reasons. Roland Bainton sums up this position: "War is more humane when God is left out of it." [\[3\]](#) This does not embrace atheism but a Christian recognition concerning the value, place, and responsibilities of government. The state is not God or absolute, but plays a vital role in maintaining order and peace (Matt. 22:21). The Epistles repeat this sentiment (Rom.13; 1 Peter 2: 13-17; 1 Tim.2; Titus 3:1). Government does not act as the organ or defender through which God establishes his kingdom (John 18: 36).

Government does not have the authority to enforce God's will on unwilling subjects except within a prescribed and restricted civil realm that maintains the minimum civil order for the purpose of peace. Government protects the good and punishes the evil. Government serves strictly temporal purposes "in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity" (2 Tim. 2:2). God establishes civil authorities for humanity's sake, not his own. Therefore, holy war that claims to fight in the name of God and for eternal truths constitutes demonic corruption of divinely sanctioned civil authority.

The following distinctions separate holy war and Just War beliefs. Holy war fights for divine causes in Crusades and Jihads to punish infidels and heretics and promote a particular faith; Just War fights for political causes to defend liberty and religious freedom. Holy war fights by divine command issuing from clerics and religious leaders; Just War fights through moral sanction. Holy war employs a

heavenly mandate, Just War a state mandate. Holy war is unlimited or total; anything goes, and the enemy must be eradicated in genocide or brought to submission. The Holy War slogan is “kill ‘em all and let God sort them out!” Holy war accepts one group’s claim to absolute justice and goodness, which causes them to regard the other as absolutely evil. Just War practices limited war; it seeks to achieve limited temporal objectives and uses only necessary force to accomplish its task. Just War rejects genocide as a legitimate goal. Holy war fights out of unconditional obedience to faith. Just War fights out of obedience to the state, which is never incontestable. Holy war fights offensive wars of conquest; Just War fights defensive wars, generally responding to provocation. Holy war battles for God to enforce belief and compel submission. Just War defends humanity in protecting civil society, which despite its transitory and mundane role in the eternal scheme of things plays an essential part in preserving humanity from barbarism and allows for everything else in history to exist.

## **Why Go to War?**

Just War thinking uses two major categories to measure the legitimacy of war. The first is called *jus ad bellum* [Latin for “justice to war”]: the proper recourse to war or judging the reasons for war. This category asks questions to be answered before going to war. It has three major criteria: just authority, just cause, and just intent.

*Just authority* serves as the presupposition for the rest of the criteria. It requires that only recognized state authorities use force to punish evil (Rom. 13:4; 1 Pet. 2). Just War thinking does not validate individual actions against opponents, which would be terrorism, nor does it allow for paramilitary groups to take matters in their own hands. Just authority requires a formal declaration. War must be declared by a legitimate governmental authority. In the USA, Congress

holds the right of formal declaration, but the President executes the war. Congressional authorization in the last sixty years has substituted for formal declaration.

*Just cause* is the most difficult standard to determine in a pluralistic society. Whose justice do we serve? Just War asserts the notion of comparative or limited justice. No one party has claim to absolute justice; there exists either more or less just cause on each side. Therefore, Just War thinking maintains the right to dissent. Those who believe a war immoral must not be compelled against their wills to participate. Just War thinking recognizes individual conscientious objection.

Just cause breaks down to four other considerations. First, it requires that the state *perform all its duties*. Its first duty requires self-defense and defense of the innocent. A second duty entails recovery of lost land or property, and the third is to punish criminals and evil doers.

Second, just cause requires *proportionality*. This means that the positive results of war must outweigh its probable destructive effects. The force applied should not create greater evil than that resisted.

Third, one judges the *probability of success*. It asks, is the war winnable? Some expectation of reasonable success should exist before engaging in war. Open-ended campaigns are suspect. Clear objectives and goals must be outlined from the beginning. Warfare in the latter twentieth century abandoned objectives in favor of police action and attrition, which leads to interminable warfare.

Fourth, *last resort* means all alternative measures for resolving conflict must be exhausted before using force. However, preemptive strikes are justified if the current climate suggests an imminent attack or invasion. Last resort does not have to wait for the opponent to draw "first blood."

*Just intent* judges the motives and ends of war. It asks, why go to war? and, what is the end result? Motives must originate from love or at least some minimum concern for others with the end result of peace. This rules out all revenge. The goals of war aim at establishing peace and reconciliation.

## The Means of War

The proper conduct in war or judging the means of war is *jus in bello* [Latin for "justice in war"], the second category used to measure conflict. It has two primary standards: proportionality and discrimination.

*Proportionality* maintains that the employed necessary force not outweigh its objectives. It measures the means according to the ends and condemns all overkill. One should not use a bomb where a bullet will do.

*Discrimination* basically means non-combatant immunity. A "combatant" is anyone who by reasonable standard is actively engaged in an attempt to destroy you. POW's, civilians, chaplains, medics, and children are all non-combatants and therefore exempt from targeting. Buildings such as hospitals, museums, places of worship and landmarks share the same status. However, those previously thought to be non-combatants may forfeit immunity if they participate in fighting. If a place of worship becomes a stash for weapons and a safe-house for opponents, it loses its non-combatant status.

A proper understanding of discrimination does not mean that non-combatants may never be killed, but only that they are never intentionally targeted. The tragic reality of every war is that non-combatants will be killed. Discrimination attempts to minimize these incidents so they become the exception rather than the rule.

Killing innocent lives in war may be justified under the principle of *double effect*. This rule allows for the death of

non-combatants if they were unintended and accidental. Their deaths equal the collateral effects of just intent. Double effect states that each action has more than one effect, even though only one effect was intentional, the other accidental. Self-defense therefore intends to save one's life or that of another but has the accidental effect of the death of the third party.

The double effect principle is the most controversial aspect of the Just War criteria and will be subject to abuse. Therefore, it must adhere to its own criteria. Certain conditions apply before invoking double effect. First, the act should be good. It should qualify as a legitimate act of war. Second, a good effect must be intended. Third, the evil effect cannot act as an end in itself, and must be minimized with risk to the acting party. Lastly, the good effect always outweighs the evil effect.

Given the ferocity of war, it is understandable that many will scoff at the notion of Just War. However, Just War thinking accepts war and force as part of the human condition (Matt. 24:6) and hopes to arrive at the goal of peace through realistic yet morally appropriate methods. It does not promote war but seeks to mitigate its dreadful effects. Just War thinking morally informs Western culture to limit its acts of war and not to exploit its full technological capability, which could only result in genocide and total war.

## **Notes**

1. The following books are helpful sources on Just War thinking: Robert G. Clouse, ed. *War: Four Christian Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991); Paul Ramsey, *War and the Christian Conscience: How Shall the Modern War be Conducted Justly?* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1961); Lawrence J. Terlizzese, "The Just War Tradition and Nuclear Weapons in the Post Cold War Era" (Master's Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1994).



2. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

3. Roland H. Bainton, *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace: A Historical Survey and Critical Evaluation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), 49.

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## Islam and Terrorism

*Kerby Anderson provides various perspectives on the link between Islam and terrorism, including how Americans and Christians can think about its encroachment on our culture.*

### Clash of Civilizations

In this article we will be looking at Islam and terrorism. Before we look at the rise of Muslim terrorism in our world, we need to understand the worldview conflict between Islam and western values. The Muslim religion is a seventh-century religion. Think about that statement for a moment. Most people would not consider Christianity a first century religion. While it began in the first century, it has taken the timeless message of the Bible and communicated it in contemporary ways.



In many ways, Islam is still stuck in the century in which it developed. One of the great questions is whether it will adapt to the modern world. The rise of Muslim terrorism and the desire to implement sharia law illustrate this clash of civilizations.

In the summer of 1993, Samuel Huntington published an article

entitled "The Clash of Civilizations?" in the journal *Foreign Affairs*.<sup>{1}</sup> Three years later Samuel Huntington published a book using a similar title: *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. It became a bestseller, once again stirring controversy. It seems worthy to revisit his comments and predictions because they have turned out to be remarkably accurate.

His thesis was fairly simple. World history will be marked by conflicts between three principal groups: western universalism, Muslim militancy, and Chinese assertion.

Huntington says that in the post-Cold War world, "Global politics has become multipolar and multicivilizational."<sup>{2}</sup> During most of human history, major civilizations were separated from one another and contact was intermittent or nonexistent. Then for over 400 years, the nation states of the West (Britain, France, Spain, Austria, Prussia, Germany, and the United States) constituted a multipolar international system that interacted, competed, and fought wars with each other. During that same period of time, these nations also expanded, conquered, and colonized nearly every other civilization.

During the Cold War, global politics became bipolar, and the world was divided into three parts. Western democracies led by the United States engaged in ideological, political, economic, and even military competition with communist countries led by the Soviet Union. Much of this conflict occurred in the Third World outside these two camps and was composed mostly of nonaligned nations.

Huntington argued that in the post-Cold War world, the principal actors are still the nation states, but they are influenced by more than just power and wealth. Other factors like cultural preferences, commonalities, and differences are also influential. The most important groupings are not the three blocs of the Cold War, but rather the major world

civilizations. Most significant in discussion in this article is the conflict between the Western world and Muslim militancy.

## **Other Perspectives on Radical Islam**

In the previous section, we talked about the thesis by Samuel Huntington that this is a clash of civilizations.

Bernard Lewis sees this conflict as a phase that Islam is currently experiencing in which many Muslim leaders are attempting to resist the influences of the modern world (and in particular the Western world) on their communities and countries. This is what he had to say about Islam and the modern world:

Islam has brought comfort and peace of mind to countless millions of men and women. It has given dignity and meaning to drab and impoverished lives. It has taught people of different races to live in brotherhood and people of different creeds to live side by side in reasonable tolerance. It inspired a great civilization in which others besides Muslims lived creative and useful lives and which, by its achievement, enriched the whole world. But Islam, like other religions, has also known periods when it inspired in some of its followers a mood of hatred and violence. It is our misfortune that part, though by no means all or even most, of the Muslim world is now going through such a period, and that much, though again not all, of that hatred is directed against us.[\[3\]](#)

This does not mean that all Muslims want to engage in jihad warfare against America and the West. But it does mean that there is a growing clash of civilizations.

William Tucker believes that the actual conflict results from what he calls the Muslim intelligensia. He says "that we are not facing a clash of civilizations so much as a conflict with

an educated segment of a civilization that produces some very weird, sexually disoriented men. Poverty has nothing to do with it. It is stunning to meet the al Qaeda roster—one highly accomplished scholar after another with advanced degrees in chemistry, biology, medicine, engineering, a large percentage of them educated in the United States.”[\[4\]](#)

His analysis is contrary to the many statements that have been made in the past that poverty breeds terrorism. While it is certainly true that many recruits for jihad come from impoverished situations, it is also true that the leadership comes from those who are well-educated and highly accomplished.

Tucker therefore concludes that we are effectively at war with a Muslim intelligentsia. These are essentially “the same people who brought us the horrors of the French Revolution and 20th century Communism. With their obsession for moral purity and their rational hatred that goes beyond all irrationality, these warrior-intellectuals are wreaking the same havoc in the Middle East as they did in Jacobin France and Mao Tse-tung’s China.”[\[5\]](#)

## **Threat from Radical Islam**

It is hard to estimate the extent of the threat of radical Islam, but there are some commentators who have tried to provide a reasonable estimate. Dennis Prager provides an overview of the extent of the threat:

Anyone else sees the contemporary reality—the genocidal Islamic regime in Sudan; the widespread Muslim theological and emotional support for the killing of a Muslim who converts to another religion; the absence of freedom in Muslim-majority countries; the widespread support for Palestinians who randomly murder Israelis; the primitive state in which women are kept in many Muslim countries;

the celebration of death; the honor killings of daughters, and so much else that is terrible in significant parts of the Muslim world—knows that civilized humanity has a new evil to fight.[{6}](#)

He argues that just as previous generations had to fight the Nazis and the communists, so this generation has to confront militant Islam. But he also notes something is dramatically different about the present Muslim threat. He says:

Far fewer people believed in Nazism or in communism than believe in Islam generally or in authoritarian Islam specifically. There are one billion Muslims in the world. If just 10 percent believe in the Islam of Hamas, the Taliban, the Sudanese regime, Saudi Arabia, Wahhabism, bin Laden, Islamic Jihad, the Finley Park Mosque in London or Hizbollah—and it is inconceivable that only one of 10 Muslims supports any of these groups' ideologies—that means a true believing enemy of at least 100 million people.[{7}](#)

This very large number of people who wish to destroy civilization poses a threat that is unprecedented. Never has civilization had to confront such large numbers of those would wish to destroy civilization.

So, what is the threat in the United States? Let's take one number and one percentage for an estimate. There are about 4 million Muslim-Americans in the U.S., and we are often told that nearly all are law-abiding citizens. So let's assume that percentage is even as high as 99 percent. That still leaves one percent who believe in jihad and could pose a threat to America. Multiply one percent by 4 million and you get a number of 40,000 individuals that Homeland Security needs to try to monitor. Even if you use a percentage of one-tenth of one percent, you still get about 4,000 potential terrorists in America.

That is why it is important to understand the potential threat we face from radical Islam.

## Islamic Tipping Point

When the Muslim population increases in a country, there are certain social changes that have been documented. Peter Hammond deals with this in his book, *Slavery, Terrorism, & Islam*. Most people have never read the book, but many have seen an email on one of the most quoted parts of the book. [\[8\]](#)

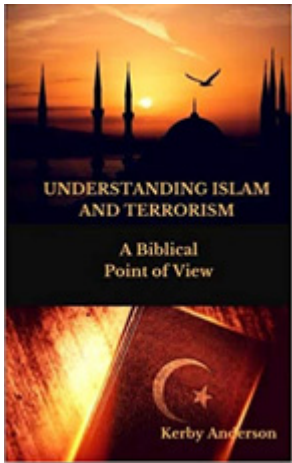
He argued that when the Muslim population is under five percent, the primary activity is proselytizing, usually from ethnic minorities and the disaffected. By the time the Muslim population reaches five percent or more, it begins to exert its influence and start pushing for Sharia law.

Peter Hammond sees a significant change when a Muslim population reaches ten percent (found in many European countries). At that point, he says you begin to see increased levels of violence and lawlessness. You also begin to hear statements of identity and the filing of various grievances.

At twenty to thirty percent, there are examples of hair-trigger rioting and jihad militias. In some countries, you even have church bombings. By forty percent to fifty percent, nations like Bosnia and Lebanon experience widespread massacres and ongoing militia warfare. When at least half the population is Muslim, you begin to see the country persecute infidels and apostates and Sharia law is implemented over all of its citizens.

After eighty percent, you see countries like Iran, Syria, and Nigeria engage in persecution and intimidation as a daily part of life. Sometimes state-run genocide develops in an attempt to purge the country of all infidels. The final goal is "Dar-es-Salaam" (the Islamic House of Peace).

Peter Hammond would probably be the first to say that these are generalizations and there are certainly exceptions to the rule. But the general trends have been validated through history. When the Muslim population is small, its leaders focus on winning converts and working to gain sympathy for Sharia law. But then their numbers increase, the radical Muslims take over and the Islamic domination begins.



In this article we have been looking at the challenge of Islam when it comes to jihad and terrorist activity. I document all of this in my new book, *Understanding Islam and Terrorism*. The book not only deals with the threat of terrorism but also takes time to explain the theology behind Islam with helpful suggestions on how to witness to your Muslim friends. You can find [more information](#) about my book on the Probe Ministries website.

## Sharia Law and Radical Islam

A foundational practice of Islam is the implementation of Sharia into the legal structure. Sharia is a system of divine law, belief, or practice that is based upon Muslim legal interpretation. It applies to economics, politics, and society.

Sometimes the world has been able to see how extreme the interpretation of Sharia can be. Muslims have been put to death when they have been accused of adultery or homosexuality. They have been put to death for leaving the religion of Islam. And these are not isolated examples.

Sharia law is very different in many respects from the laws established through the U.S. Constitution and the laws established through English Common law. In an attempt to prevent Sharia law from being implemented in America, a number

of state legislatures have such bans on Sharia law. Voters in other states have approved a ban that has been struck down by a federal appeals court.

Although opponents argue that these Sharia law bans are unnecessary, various studies have found significant cases of Sharia law being allowed in U.S. courts. One report with the title, "Sharia Law and the American State Courts"[\[9\]](#) found 50 significant cases of Sharia law in U.S. courts just from their small sample of appellate published cases. When they looked at state courts, they found an additional 15 cases in the trial courts and 12 more in the appellate courts. Judges are making decisions deferring to Sharia law even when those decisions conflict with the U.S. Constitution and the various state constitutions.

How should we respond to the increased use of Sharia law in America? One simple way to explain your concern to legislators, family, friends, and neighbors is to remember the numbers 1-8-14. These three numbers stand for the three amendments to the U.S. Constitution that prevent the use of Sharia law.

The First Amendment says that there should be no establishment of religion. Sharia law is based on one religion's interpretation of rights. The First Amendment prohibits the establishment of any national religion (including Islam).

The Eighth Amendment prohibits "cruel and unusual punishment." Most Americans would consider the penalties handed down under Sharia law to be cruel and unusual.

The Fourteenth Amendment guarantees each citizen equal protection under the Constitution. Sharia law does not treat men and women equally, nor does it treat Muslims and non-Muslims equally. This also violates the Constitution.

These are just a few ways to argue against Sharia law. As Christians, we need discernment to understand the religion of



Islam, and boldness to address the topic of radical Islam with biblical convictions.

## Notes

1. Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993, 22-49.
2. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 21.
3. Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *Atlantic Monthly*, September 1990, [www.theatlantic.com/doc/prem/199009/muslim-rage](http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/prem/199009/muslim-rage). Accessed 7/8/2018.
4. William Tucker, "Overprivileged Children," *American Spectator*, 12 Sept. 2006, [spectator.org/46473\\_overprivileged-children/](http://spectator.org/46473_overprivileged-children/). Accessed 7/8/2018.
5. Ibid.  
Dennis Prager, "The Islamic Threat is Greater than German and Soviets Threats Were," 28 May 2006, [www.dennisprager.com/the-islamic-threat-is-greater-than-german-and-soviet-threats-were/](http://www.dennisprager.com/the-islamic-threat-is-greater-than-german-and-soviet-threats-were/). Accessed 7/8/2018.
6. Ibid.
7. Peter Hammond, *Slavery, Terrorism, & Islam: The Historical Roots and Contemporary Threat* (San Jose, CA: Frontline, 1982), 151.
8. Shariah Law and the American State Courts, Center for Security Policy, 5 January 2015. [www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org/2015/01/05/shariah-in-american-courts-the-expanding-incursion-of-islamic-law-in-the-u-s-legal-system/](http://www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org/2015/01/05/shariah-in-american-courts-the-expanding-incursion-of-islamic-law-in-the-u-s-legal-system/). Accessed 7/8/2018.