

Religious Causation of War

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Abstract

The concept of war implies the deliberate use of force by one group to impose its will upon another group. Historically, religious disputes have been a potent cause of war. While some religious organizations have imposed their doctrines by force on outsiders, others do not even recognize the principle of religious liberty. The focus of this paper is to examine the attitude of religious people to war. It is the thesis of this paper that religion as a social institution cannot be neutral in social conflict and the situation is even worst when sectarian interest is pursued on the cloak of religion.

Keywords: War, just-war, *Jihad*, holy war, conquest,

Introduction

Religious causation of war is an historical fact all over the world. When the European wars of religion ended in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, many philosophers and social thinkers concluded that humanity from the point of view of the Enlightenment and humanistic vision has outgrown religious hostility, but that was not correct. All over the world, wars of religion are being fought. There is no gainsaying the fact that there is a religious dimension of the ongoing Middle East crises. The Arab-Israeli conflict is clearly between Palestinian Muslims versus Israeli Jews. In Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, Sunnis are in a hot battle against Shiites, and Islamic sectarianism and fundamentalism is at the root of Syrian war. There is a great antagonism between Orthodox Greeks and Muslim Turks. The dispute over Kashmir is between Hindu Indians and Pakistani Muslims. The Catholics and Protestants are still fighting in Ireland. Not even western nations have any form of immunity from religious causation of war. The plight of religious minorities like Muslim Rohingya in Myanmar is still causing sectarian strife that may culminate in genocide.

Religious wars are often viewed as a sacred duty, it may be motivated by doctrines that encourage the defense, or recapture of sacred places or war may be aimed at the conversion of infidels. War can be motivated by the need to gather victims for ritual sacrifice. The Christian and Muslim conquests at various times and places were motivated by religious commitment to convert the heathen. The objective of the Crusades was to secure Jerusalem and the Holy Land as the sacred space for Christianity and Judaism. Today Muslims are fighting to reclaim Jerusalem as the third sacred site of Islam. War can be distinguished from other kinds of violence like fighting, rebellion and riot. War is not only a recurring and painful human experience; it is also the source of untold suffering, destruction and social disequilibrium. Theodore Caplow and Louis Hicks (1995:1) have defined war “as social conflict between organizations that possess trained and disciplined combat forces equipped with deadly weapons”. War is the aggravation of the culture of violence. Charles Louis of Austria (1771-1847) described war as “the greatest evil which a state or a nation can experience” (qtd. in Nef 1963:404). For Chairman Mao Tse-Tung, “Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun” (qtd. in Hengel 1977: 1), and “War can only be abolished through war, and in order to get rid of the gun it is necessary to take up the gun” (qtd. in Hengel 1977: 1).

The German general, Karl von Clausewitz (1780-1831), described war as a great exercise, in which the intellectual and moral qualities of man is given a unique opportunity for fulfillment (qtd. in Nef 1963: 404). Majority of scholars have rejected the views of Mao Tse-Tung and Clausewitz. There is nothing good in war. Everything about war is bad and anti-human.

In the preamble of the document forming the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, it is stated that “wars begin in the minds of men” (qtd. in Nef 1963:381). Human destiny is highly influenced by what goes on in the psyche. This is the dimension where religious causation of armed conflict is inescapable. If religious people are convinced that killing the non-believer is the will of God, then war will be pursued as a religious obligation with the hope of eschatological compensation. Religious causation of war is not a new idea, what is new is the insistence of the international community that war must be regulated by civilized standards. The purpose of international humanitarian law is to regulate hostilities and reduce hardship in battle fields. International humanitarian law is inspired by the consensus of civilized humanity that war must not be allowed to destroy the created universe.

War in Human History

Archaeological findings have shown that the history of warfare is as old as the history of the human race. There are indications from cave pictures that the primitive man was involved in warfare. Like religion and politics, warfare has been one of the powerful forces shaping human societies. Stanislav Andreski (1964:194) has defined war as: “...organized fighting between groups that occupy distinct territories; it is always directed by leaders on each side, and it is guided by ideas of military strategy (i.e., the systematic movement of men and materials designed to contain or overcome the enemy)”.

In ancient history and prehistory, the Eskimos were the only human group who has never fought any war. The reason for this is attributed to the fact that the Eskimos live in scattered family units, and have never gathered in large numbers to warrant any dispute that could have culminated into warfare. On the contrary, the Scandinavian Norsemen engages in war as a hobby. To them, heaven is a place of eternal warfare, where wounds heal fast and the “dead” resiliently rose to fight again. The Plain Indians of North America have notoriety for regular fighting. But for the Pueblo, Indians of Colorado and California there is a peaceful disposition and a culturally induced reluctance to engage in any form of fighting. In 17th century Europe, kings and princess used their armies to disrupt normal social life. John Davies (1985:241) writes: “During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the nation-states of Europe developed well-disciplined professional armies, and as a result the great mass of the population was not often directly involved in the conflicts of this period”.

Technological developments that followed the Industrial Revolution altered the nature of warfare. Modern means of communication and transportation has made it possible for the deployment of massive troops to any place within the shortest possible time. World War I was the first display of modern total war with nations forming an alliance against one another. Between nine and ten million soldiers died in the First World War, with over thirty million civilian casualties. The Second World War was even more devastating with the dead of seventeen million soldiers along with thirty four million civilian casualties (Davis 1985: 241).

We have the witness of history that many great nations of the world came into existence through war and conquest. Tribal societies have often organized themselves into voluntary confederations for the purpose of waging war. Such groups include the League of the Iroquois Indians. The thirteen colonies of America came together as the “United States” to fight the War of Independence against Britain. In African monarchical societies, small stateless tribes were fused together into kingdoms through military conquest.

The kingdoms of Buganda and Ruanda emerged after the victory of wandering nomads over settled tribes of agriculturalists “The cattle farmers became the nobility, their war leaders became kings, and the agriculturalists were turned into serfs. Again the fusion of smaller kingdoms into larger nation-states takes place through war. A chain of conquests played an essential part in uniting each of the territories now called Egypt, China, France, Britain and the Soviet Union” (Andreski 1964: 200). It was through the defeat of the Austrians by Sardinia in 1859, that Lombardy was annexed to the Sardinian Kingdom. Venetia was ceded to Italy in 1866, after the war between Prussia and Austria. In 1870, French-held Rome, was conquered by the Italian army, which led to the creation of modern Italy.

Positively, war stimulates creativity, invention, resilience and spirit of adventurism. The adventurous spirit of the Second World War produced new knowledge of ways to co-ordinate large numbers of people into a single goal. The Allied air-sea operation of June 6, 1944 was executed by over four million soldiers. It was after witnessing the Solferino battle in 1859, that Henri Dunant decided to form the Red Cross Society.

The progress which the Japanese have recorded in scientific and technological development can be traced to the fear of America's military supremacy. The Japanese were compelled in the 19th century to adopt a reasonable part of western technology and social values, "war, or the threat of war, has therefore had a direct and encouraging effect on the process of turning small tribes into kingdoms, and kingdoms into large nation-states. Those people who could not adapt their cultures to the new ways have always been conquered eventually." (Andreski 1964:201).

Religion and War

When we look at the causes of war, we easily discover that they may be magical or religious reasons. Religious causation is glaring in the blood revenge and war among the Jibaro Indians. Rafael Karsten (1987:310, 311) has reported that among the Jibaro Indians blood revenge and vengeance is not only a moral and ethical obligation, but a compelling religious duty which the living owes the dead. In a situation where relatives of the murdered person refuse to avenge his death, the spirit of the dead person will visit his family "in the dream, and, weeping, conjures them not to let the slayer escape but to wreak vengeance upon him for the life he has taken. If they omit to fulfill this duty the anger of the vengeful spirit may turn against them. To avenge the blood of a murdered father, brother, or son is therefore looked upon as one of the most sacred duties of a Jibaro Indian".

In small-scale societies, people may go to war to show loyalty to their gods, who may demand human sacrifice of prisoners of war. Among the Ashanti people of Ghana, prisoners of war are often kept for sacrifices to the gods. The Aztecs people of Mesoamerica had blood-thirsty religion which demanded thousands of prisoners of war for sacrifice. Whitehouse and Wilkins (1986:33) informs us that Aztec religion was regulated and dominated by immolation, "A special occasion, such as the dedication of a temple, required huge numbers of sacrifices: an incredible 20,000 victims were allegedly sacrificed over four days at the dedication of the Great Temple of Huitzilopochtli at Tenochtitlan; the need for sacrificial victims led to wars solely to provide captives for this purpose, such as the so-called, "Flowery Wars of the mid-fourteenth century".

War in the Bible

War in the Hebrew Bible meant armed struggle between nations. Israel, though a theocracy under Yahweh encountered military struggles from neighboring countries. As a chosen nation and a treasured possession (Duet. 14:2), Yahweh had a covenanted obligation to fight for Israel and defeat their enemies (Duet. 9: 4-6). Yahweh is a man of war (Ex. 15:3). As a small nation with powerful and hostile neighbors, Israelites were expected to trust God to give them victory in war. War, both in Israel and in the ancient Near-East, was a religious phenomenon. Warlords in Old Testament Israel were spirit-filled and highly anointed for warfare (Judges 6:34). The Jews offered sacrifice to Yahweh- their national deity as a way to sanctify the war and defeat their enemies (1 Sam. 7: 8-10). "The camp was a holy place where God himself was present (Duet. 20: 4; 23:14), Therefore, there was to be nothing unclean (e.g. a nocturnal emission or human excrement (Duet. 23: 10, 13). The warrior refrained from sexual intercourse (1 Sam. 21: 4-5)... The priest gave counsel and encouragement" (Duet. 20: 2) (Lasor 1993:791).

In the Old Testament, warfare was a legitimate activity for the Jew. Abraham showed the example in organizing and leading a military expedition to rescue his nephew, Lot (Gen. 14: 13-16). Other Jewish leaders like Moses, Joshua, the judges and David led their people into war fronts through the approval or command of God. The picture of their bravery and gallantry is painted in Heb. 11: 33-34 - "Through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice... became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight". Commenting on Heb. 11: 33-34, Davis (1985:249) posits thus: "They are set before the New Testament church as positive examples of faith, and their faith in this case was exhibited in their military valor. God clearly approved their "putting foreign armies to flight" and their use of arms in the enforcement of justice". Davis argued further that the Hebrew text is a New Testament endorsement of armed aggression against the enemy, thus "the use of armed force is not inconsistent with true faith in God, and that in the divine scale of values, the enforcement of justice has higher priority than nonviolence when these two values conflict" (1985:249).

The first military expedition of Israel was war of conquest. It was through the force of arms and divine support that the Israelites took possession of the Promised Land. The victory of the Jewish army over Sihon, king of Heshbon, and Og, king of Bashan (Num. 21: 21-35), and the defeat of the Midians (Num. 31: 1-12), fetched territories for Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh.

Roland Vaux (1961:247) has pointed out that the book of Joshua has given the picture of the conquest and occupation of Palestine west of the Jordan in three sweeping military operations which started with the crossing of the Jordan (Josh. 1-9), followed by the overthrow and subjugation of a coalition of five Canaanite kings from the south (Josh. 10); “finally, the northern kings are defeated at Merom and their cities fall into the hands of the Israelites (Josh. 11)... It is also true that the Israelites infiltrated in a peaceful manner wherever they could but they did meet opposition, which they had to overcome by force of arms” (Vaux 1961:247).

Jewish wars in the period of the Judges were defensive. It was necessary for the Jews to resist the counter-attacks of Canaanites, before confronting the Philistines who were penetrating from the coast. The tenure of David was a period of reconquest and territorial expansion. David declared wars on the Ammonites, Arameans, Moab, Edom (2 Sam. 10: 1-5; 2 Sam. 10: 6-19; 2 Sam. 8: 2; 2 Sam. 8: 13). The commitment which the Arameans showed in moving fast to defend the Ammonites against Israel is clear evidence that the neighboring states were becoming worried about the increasing military power of Israel. The Ammonites regained their independence after the death of David. Solomon did nothing when part of Edom and Aram declared their independence. We have it on sound historical authority that Solomon did not fight any war. The most formidable enemies of Israel were Philistines and Assyrians. Vaux posits thus: “...the military history of Israel under the monarchy clearly shows that the era of wars of conquest begins and ends under David. After David, all the wars were defensive wars, rarely and by way of exception to bring a vassal back to obedience or to keep a trade route open” (1961:250).

The Just-War Tradition

Close to pacifism is the theory of “Just War”. This doctrine attempted to set the minimal conditions that must be obtained to permit a Christian to participate in war. It was never intended to glorify violence in the name of war but rather to qualify war as a “necessary evil” which may be tolerated in preference to some greater evil of injustice, that is oppressive or destructive that can take place if not confronted by war. Malcom Shaw (1977:777) has traced the origin of the doctrine of the just war to the Christianization of the Roman Empire and the abandonment of pacifism by the early church. The idea was lifted from Greek and Roman philosophy as the ultimate sanction for preservation of peace and security within the social order. It implies the idea that under some circumstances the Christian may participate in war as a personal sacrifice to achieve collective survival and justice.

With the conversion of Emperor Constantine to Christianity, Roman society passed through progressive Christianization in the 4th and 5th centuries. Christians were no longer seen as a minority in the society. The rapid increase in church’s membership arising from the endorsement of the state led the church to review the doctrine of pacifism. J. Cater Swaim (1983:104) has reported that from A.D. 312 when Emperor Constantine embraced Christianity and declared it legitimate and lawful religion in his domain, “Constantine’s emblem became not a cross but a spear overlaid with gold, a traverse bar forming a semblance of the cross. Allegiance to the state, carrying with it military obligation, was now deemed to surmount all other loyalties...”. There was also a persistent state of insecurity and danger posed by the Barbarian invasions, which led the church to reconsider military defensive action as a necessary option. The church was left in a dilemma, either to continue with the official policy of pacifism, or take a difficult decision which may involve endorsement of Christians to participate in armed conflict, at least in the defensive.

A survey of historical documents on earliest Christianity shows that Christians in the early church refused to join the Roman army because it was considered as a contravention of Christian teachings. Until the time of Marcus Aurelius (121-180), no Christian accepted involvement in military service after baptism. The early church affirmed the incompatibility of military service with Christianity. Origen (185-254) stated confidently that “the Christian church cannot engage in war against any nation...” (qtd. in Aid to Bible Understanding 1971:132). Tertullian also wrote on the refusal of early Christians to participate in armed conflict and the impossibility of Christian military opposition against the Roman government: “For what war should we not have been fit and ready even if unequal in forces-we who are so glad to be butchered – were it not, of course, that in our doctrine we are given ampler liberty to be killed than to kill?” (qtd. in Hengel 1977:47).

Writing in the same vein, Robert Brown (1973: 18) avers thus: “The early Christians, who took very seriously the injunction that they were not to take up the sword, refused to serve in Roman armies for several centuries. Early literature gives ample evidence of the pacifist position of the Christian church”.

Brown also observes a change of attitude of the early church to armed conflict, “when the peace and stability of the Roman Empire was threatened by the invasion of barbarians from the north, Christians began to argue that there might be times when they could be justified in waging war, if certain specified criteria were met” (1973:18). The church is not one of the nations of the world; the church on earth is transnational. Christian warfare is not against “flesh and blood”, but against demonic forces in high places. Contemporary Christianity cannot derive any inspiration, or support for involvement in war from either the words or deeds of Jesus. William Lasor (1993: 792) has observed that: “Jesus is not reported to have commanded his followers to use warfare as a means of conquest... He rebuked the disciples who use the sword against those who had come to arrest him (Mathew 26: 51-53); he pointedly told Pilate that, if his kingdom “were from this world”, his soldiers would be fighting to defend him (John 18: 36)”.

St. Augustine guided the early church in reviewing Christian attitudes toward violence and war and in permitting Christians to fight for the empire. He attempted to develop criteria for distinguishing justifiable and unjustifiable wars. In his *City of God*, which was written after the Barbarian conquest of Rome, in AD 410, Augustine responded intelligently to pagan criticism that the Christians, by their indifference to civic responsibility, were collectively displaying unpatriotic disposition. It was widely rumored that the refusal of Christians to fight for the empire in armed conflict was helping to undermine the security of the empire and values of civilization. Augustine came up with strong arguments to defend the legitimacy of Christian participation in just wars. He defined the just-war as minimal attempt to avenge injuries inflicted where the enemy has refused to correct himself. The purpose of war was to punish acts of injustice and restoration of the peaceful status quo.

Augustine integrated Old Testament views with the ideas of Aristotle, Plato and Cicero and insisted that war must be sanctioned by the authority of a legitimate ruler, and conducted in a just manner which included upholding the covenant with the enemy and avoiding looting, massacre, burning and protection of non-combatants from injury or death. Augustine differentiated ‘personally motivated’ and ‘divinely sanctioned’ killings. Personally motivated killings, like Moses killing of the Egyptian (Exodus 2: 12) was morally unjustifiable because it was not commanded by God. The destruction of Egyptians (Exodus 7-14), as a direct order of Yahweh was ethically justifiable. Augustine writes: “When war is undertaken in obedience to God, who would rebuke or humble or crush the pride of man (sic), it must be allowed to be a righteous war” (qtd. in Gill 1995: 312).

Moral justification of anything entails objective judgment on the ‘rightness’ or ‘goodness’ of that thing. Augustine also stipulated that monks and priests should be exempted from military service. R. G. Clouse (1988:715) observed that: “Despite his grudging acceptance of war, there was a genuine respect for pacifism in Augustine’s view. His statements on military life are characterized by the same gloom and resignation that parades his whole outlook on civil government. It was left to the medieval church to reject pacifism completely”. St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologica* expanded the definition of just-war by emphasizing that it was the subjective guilt of the wrongdoer that had to be punished rather than the objectively wrong activity. Aquinas concluded that war *per se* is not a sinful act. For a war to be justified, it must be declared by a legitimate authority, secondly, there must be a just cause and a good intention for the advancement of good and elimination of evil. The doctrines of Aquinas on just-war were further elaborated by the great Spanish writers of the sixteenth century, Francisco de Vitoria (1493-1546) and Francisco Suarez (1548-1617). Shaw (1977: 777) has said that the just-war was also implied in immunity of innocent persons from direct attack and the proportional use of force to overcome the opposition.

The Protestant reformers endorsed the doctrine of the just-war. Luther posited that “without armaments peace cannot be kept; wars are waged not only to repel injustice but also to establish a firm peace” (qtd. in Plass 1959:1428). John Calvin (1949: iv, xx, II) in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* argued for the legitimacy of a just-war: “Both natural equity and the nature of the office dictate that princess must be armed not only to restrain the misdeeds of private individuals by judicial punishment, but also to defend by war the dominions entrusted to their safekeeping, if at any time they are under enemy attack”. Contemporary discussions of just war criteria distinguish between *jus ad bellum*, that is the criteria that determine the decision whether or not a given war is justified and *jus in bello*, the criteria that evaluate lines of conduct in the battle field. Davis (1985:248) writes: “The *jus ad bellum* criteria include competent authority, just cause, proportionality of proposed means and the probable costs in the light of the probability of success, exhaustion of peaceful means of resolution, and right intent”. *jus in bello* criteria insists that the use of force and violence must be limited in terms of legitimate military necessity and that direct and deliberate attacks on non-combatants are prohibited.

Donald Wells (1969:819) has also commented on the criteria of the just-war: "In operation the criteria of the just war established the rules by which states ought to defend themselves. These rules aimed to curb excessively inhumane war practices,... to reduce the number of reasons that could justify a war, to assure that the means of war bore some proportional relation to the ends of war, and generally to reduce the numbers of wars that actually occurred".

Criteria to Justify Just-War

There are at least seven criteria to justify "a just war".

1. It must be waged by constituted or legitimate authority. It must not be an expression of personal grudges.
2. The cause must be "just" with the right intention and the predetermined objective must be promotion of lasting peace.
3. The war must be undertaken only as a last resort. All avenues of arbitration must have been exhausted before military action.
4. The war must be waged on the basis of the principle of proportionality, that is, the good to be accomplished must outweigh the evil means that will be used in bringing about the good.
5. There must be no wanton or indiscriminate destruction. War is to be directed against enemy combatants and military targets. There must be total immunity for civilians. All intentional killing of civilians is outlawed. "The principle of non-combatant immunity was implicit in the Hague conventions (1899 and 1907) became explicit in the Geneva conventions and their Additional protocol (1949 and 1977) and has been emphatically reaffirmed by the General Assembly of the United Nations (1970)" (Stott 1984:85).
6. The war must have a reasonable chance of success; the outcome must be predictable, and there must be a calculated prospect of victory.
7. The war must be waged with all possible moderation. All internationally accepted rules of warfare endorsed by the Hague and Geneva Convention must be adhered to strictly. The terms of ending war must be embodied by charity and justice rather than vengeance. No victor, no vanquished must be the slogan.

Warfare in Islam (Jihad)

Jihad is derived from the Arabic word '*Jahada*', which means "he strove or exerted himself against anything which is evil" (Doi 1981:74). Doi argued authoritatively that the etymology of *jihad* does not connote "... resorting to the use of sword and the shedding of blood to achieve it" (1981: 74). *Jihad* is a holy war waged in self-defence against all forms of ungodliness, oppression, inhumanity, tyranny and dictatorship. Doi (1981: 74) writes: "... to raise one's voice against manifest wrong is one of the foremost duties of a Muslim, and particularly so when the wrongdoer is the established authority... to speak up for truth even to the tyrant ruler, in which apparently there is a great danger of losing one's life is the best '*jihad*'".

Prophet Muhammad divided *jihad* into two main categories; the major *jihad*, which is *jihad* against oneself, and the minor *jihad*, which is war against enemies of Islam. The major *jihad*, which is internal spiritual cleansing, self denial, mortification, suppression and psychic annihilation of man's lower nature and sinful instinct is more relevant than the minor *jihad*. The declaration of minor *jihad* means collective armed violence against enemies of Islam. Islamic concept of society is interpreted in a fundamental doctrinal dualism. The human society is geographically divided into two: *Dar al-Islam*, meaning, abode of Islam or abode of peace, and *Dar al-harb*, meaning, enemy territory, abode of war, or land of unbelief.

It is the religious duty of Muslim rulers to wage holy war (by all permissible and practical means), against the enemy territory. The goal of the incessant combat attack is to compel conversion into Islam. *Jihad* is a condition of permanent warfare. Even when military hostilities are suspended for overriding strategic and logistic considerations, *jihad* must continue through psychological and political means (Smaldone 1977:69).

As a prelude to full scale armed confrontation, Muslim rulers are enjoined to apply persuasion as the first step to win the non-believers. It is obligatory for *Dar al-Islam* to negotiate with *Dar al-harb*. Political negotiation and concessions should aim at peaceful co-existence. It must be pointed out that the involvement of the *Ummah* in such dialogue is only possible when victory against the enemy is in sight. Muslims are not likely to accept anything less than *Dar al-harb* being transformed into *Dar al-Islam*. As representatives of *Allah* in the negotiation, the *Ummah* cannot afford to betray the creator to please infidels.

Negotiation is only a forum to persuade the enemy, explain the Islamic viewpoint, and then intimate the infidels on the consequences of disobedience.

Another option given to the non-Muslim is the status of *AI-dhimi* (meaning tolerated non-Muslim). It entails unconditional loyalty and political submission to a Moslem government. The tolerated non-Muslims are disenfranchised, without citizenship rights. Kenneth Cragg (1985:205) comments on the plight of Christians in Dar al-Islam: "Traditional tolerance allowed only a freedom to remain, to teach the faith only within the family, so that adherence become a circumstance of birth and continuity that of a closed community. There was no freedom to express faith, still less to recruit to it, outside that circle of one's origin". If persuasion fails, and the option of *AI-dhimi* is rejected by the non-Muslim, the *Ummah* is left with no alternative than to defend the rights of God through armed violence. The primary purpose of the minor *jihad* according to Omar Jah (1993:180), is "... to spread the teachings of Islam by calling all human beings to the will of *Allah* and, therefore conduct their socio-economic and spiritual life according to the teachings of *Allah*".

It was mainly through armed aggression that the Islamic frontiers in the 7th century expanded from a small group of believers at Mecca and Medina and spread like wildfire covering the entire Arabian Peninsula, Persian Gulf and North Africa. Islamic military power was so successful that the Byzantines were routed at the battle of Yarmuk in 636; Antioch fell to Islamic conquerors in 637; Alexandria was conquered in 642, while Carthage fell in 698. The long and stubborn resistance of the Persian army evaporated at the battle of Qadesiya in 637 which eventually crumbled the Sassanian state (Brown 1971:189-190).

Even though *jihad* is a sacred obligation, Islam does not permit preemptive and unreasonable invasion of the enemy territory. There are acceptable conditions that should precede the waging of *jihad*. According to Usman Dan Fodio, holy war (Jihad) became obligatory under three conditions: "Firstly on the orders of the Muslim ruler, secondly, if the enemy launched a sudden counter-attack on Muslim territory... Thirdly, to rescue captured Muslims from the hands of the heathen" (Crowder 1962:73). Writing in the same vein, Joseph Smaldone (1977: 70) gave additional conditions and justifications for *jihad*: "... holy war was obligatory in defense of the frontiers (*ribat*) and against polytheists or pagans; against apostates; against dissenters; against deserters and high way robbers; and against Scripturaries (that is Christians and Jews). It was a war against non-believers as well as Muslims who dissented or apostatized".

Islam does not accept change of religion. Muslims do not have any reason to abandon their religion. The punishment prescribed in the Islamic *shariah* for apostasy is death penalty. This is clearly attested in the well known tradition of Prophet Muhammad, "The blood of a Muslim may not be legally spilt other than in one of three (instances): the married person who commits adultery; a life for a life; and one who forsakes his religion (of Islam) and abandons the community" (Reported by Bukhari no 6935). Another tradition of Prophet Muhammad reported by Bukhari quotes the prophet as saying "Whoever changes religion (of Islam) kill him" (Bukhari no 2854). The Islamic scholar Abdul-Rahman al-Sheha (1998:129-130) is of the view that "rejecting Islam as a way of life after its acceptance implies malicious propaganda against Islam and a disgrace to the immediate Muslim community where the apostate lives. Such rejection will not only discourage people from accepting Islam as a way of life, but will encourage all varieties of criminality and blasphemy". A synthesis of the views of scholars shows that since Islam does not permit change of religion there is justification for the *Ummah* to wage war against the apostate. *Jihad*, both in the offensive and defensive dimensions, is aimed at eliminating contending religions, and any form of opposition against the consolidation of pan-Islamism.

Conclusion

John Nef has rightly said that "There is little in the Gospel of Christ to encourage war" (349). Jesus of Nazareth bequeathed a legacy of peace and opposition to violence to his followers. Christianity as the historic custodian of world peace cannot endorse warfare or any form of violence. The spirit of Christ favors dialogue and peaceful resolution of conflict. But then, if circumstances should warrant military action, it is unreasonable for the followers of Jesus to adopt pacifism. What is reasonable is that the church must always opt for peace. Where that is not possible, military action should be considered. In a situation where war is inevitable, belligerents should observe the laws of war.

For Islam, there is no gainsaying the fact that the doctrinal policy that encourages the votaries to wage minor *jihad* should be discarded. Muslims should not pride themselves in any form of bloodshed. If historical circumstances at the beginning of Islam warranted the use of warfare for conversion, contemporary Islam has outgrown such experience. As a religion with global influence and tremendous potentials for human development, the doctrines of war should be expunged from all the sacred books of Islam. But in a situation where the *Ummah* is facing imminent danger of invasion, military action should be taken to protect the community from extinction.

All religions should support the full implementation and observance of the provisions of international humanitarian law in times of war. Prisoners of war should at all times be treated with humanitarian considerations. Soldiers are expected to conduct themselves as law abiding citizens of their country and the world at large. The power of gun and the victor's ego should always give way to humanitarian feelings. Those who participate in warfare should always remember that man was created in the image of God.

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