

Doctrine of the Just War Theory

1. There is no doubt in the minds of many that the issue of war and the Christian conscience has been a long-standing problem.
2. When asked about war some would allude to the Just War Theory.
 - “What is this theory and how did it come about?”
 - “Is it still applicable with modern warfare?”
 - “What are the arguments for and against a just war?”

These are the questions that we wish to investigate.

3. Before talking about a just war, one must define what is meant by war. War may be defined “as a state of conflict between two or more sovereign nations carried on by force of arms.”
4. Looking into this definition more closely we see that war involves a state of conflict contrasted with passing conflicts such as border skirmishes or momentary conflicts.
5. Warfare involves sovereign nations, which rules out civil wars and riots.
6. Also a nation fights a nation and not a particular individual or group in a nation. Force of arms excludes for example trade embargoes and blockades. These make up the basic components of a war.
7. Most authors agree that St. Augustine was the originator of the Just War Theory.
8. When it came to individual self-defense, St. Augustine contended that one's own life or property was never a justification for killing one's neighbor. Christian charity was the motivating force behind this statement.
9. However, the rulers of nations do have an obligation to maintain peace. This obligation gives them the right to wage war. He says, “*The natural order conducive to peace among mortals demands that the power to declare and counsel war should be in the hands of those who hold the supreme authority.*”
10. Those subject to the rulers must obey unless they command something against a Divine Law. For St. Augustine the only reason for waging a war would be to defend the nation's peace against serious injury. He says, “*A just war is wont to be described as one that avenges wrongs, when a nation or state has to be punished, for refusing to make amends for the wrongs inflicted by its subjects, or to restore what it has seized unjustly.*”
11. The intention of the war is very important for St. Augustine. He says, “*The passion for inflicting harm, the cruel thirst for vengeance, an unpacific and relentless spirit, the fever of revolt, the lust of power, and such things, all these are rightly condemned in war.*”

12. St. Augustine emphasizes the idea of restoration of peace as the main motive of war. He says, *"We do not seek peace in order to be at war, but we go to war that we may have peace. Be peaceful, therefore, in warring, so that you may vanquish those whom you war against, and bring them to the prosperity of peace."* So in St. Augustine's thinking a war *"was limited by its purpose, its authority and its conduct."*
13. Further developments of the Just War Theory were given by St. Thomas Aquinas during the Middle Ages. Thomas Aquinas emphasized St. Augustine's statements about war and added a little to them. He followed a similar reasoning breaking up his argument into three necessary conditions for a just war.
- War must involve an authorized authority.
 - War must have a just cause.
 - War must have a rightful intention.
14. In speaking about who authorizes war St. Thomas emphasizes that the sovereign has the responsibility for the common good of those committed to his care. Only he can declare war. Moreover the sovereign has the lawful right of recourse to "the sword" to defend his people against internal strife by punishing those who do evil, justified by St. Paul in verse 4 of chapter 13 in the letter to the Romans. Therefore it is his duty to defend the common good against external enemies by having recourse to arms.
15. A just cause is required to wage war. St. Thomas considers such a cause to be *"that those who are attacked, should be attacked because they deserve it on account of some fault."* This would rule out pre-emptive strikes.
16. Finally St. Thomas discusses the right intention for waging war. Only two possibilities are presented: either the furthering of some good or an avoidance of some evil. The underpinnings of his arguments and most important contribution to St. Augustine's theory *"would appear to consist in his stress on the natural law."*
17. The Middle Ages were occupied with the right to wage war and restoring peace through mercy and justice.
18. Although St. Augustine introduced the idea of a just war and the Middle Ages furthered its cause, it was not until the 16th and 17th centuries that a complete theory, which included the proper waging of a war, was established. Two names of importance regarding this development are Vitoria and Suarez.
19. Hostilities are divided into two classes:
- an armed attack against a peaceful society
 - and injurious actions taken against the same (generally defined as an infringement of a right).