Render Unto Caesar
Unless He Taxes Your Tea

Secession, Just War, and the Spiritual Integrity of the Church

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Why This Book?

What happens when Christians confuse kingdom loyalty with national allegiance? When pulpits rally for war, when fear replaces faith, and when resistance is waged with fists instead of prayer—what, exactly, are we rendering unto Caesar?

This book was born out of dissonance. As I prepared my Blog *Render & Resist*, I kept asking:

> *What does it mean to follow Jesus in an age where political identities often eclipse spiritual ones?*

To answer that, I had to go backward into Acts and martyrdom, through centuries of Christian pacifism, into the rise of just war theory, the fires of revolution, and all the way forward to today's culture wars. The result isn't just a history of Christian thought on violence and secession. It's an invitation to return to the cruciform shape of Christian witness.

This book is for:

- The believer suspicious of both holy wars *and* passive silence
- The citizen of heaven wrestling with civic loyalty
- The peacemaker who wonders when to resist—and how
- The pastor or student who knows Scripture doesn't endorse apathy, but isn't sure what faithful engagement looks like

If the Church is to be salt and light, we must recover the ability to stand firm without striking back, to contend for justice without losing our soul, and to love our enemies in a world that demands we defeat them.

We need more than reactions. We need resources. We need vision.

This book hopes to offer both.

For Melissa *You prayed when I doubted, listened when I wrestled, and reminded me who I was writing for. This belongs to you as much as it does to me.*

A Foreword

What is just in war? I have seen its destructive power and know that little if any good can come of it. War is not foreign to Scripture. We know that God at times called for the complete destruction of civilizations. Yet we also see that He understood the corrupting power of war when He warned Israel against appointing a king, saying such a ruler would take their sons for his chariots and send them into battle.

Theologians and great minds throughout history have wrestled with this tension, seeking to develop a framework for discerning when war might be morally justified—when it might be "just." Many Christians today believe that our nation was founded on such principles, and that America has consistently fought "just wars."

My purpose in writing this is not to offer easy answers, but to invite you to examine the concept of just war in light of Scripture. I hope to challenge assumptions and encourage a sober reflection on the brutality of war and the moral weight it carries for those who follow Christ.

"...he will take your sons and put them in his chariots..."

Whose Kingdom, Whose Fight?

The waters of Boston Harbor were still, sharp with winter air. The crowd moved in quiet order, boarding the three ships laden with tea: the Dartmouth, Eleanor, and Beaver. Onshore, a large gathering watched in hushed solidarity as colonists disguised as Mohawk Indians tossed chest after chest into the dark water. The harbor was so calm that the crates floated for a moment before slipping beneath the surface. No blood was shed. No other cargo was touched. The ships were left unharmed. When the work was done, the men even cleaned up after themselves.

The colonial church was divided. Many pastors viewed British taxation as a violation of God-given liberty, drawing from Exodus and the story of Moses confronting Pharaoh. Jonathan Mayhew famously declared that "resistance to tyrants is obedience to God," while John Witherspoon preached that liberty was a sacred trust and that civil government must be held accountable to divine justice. For these leaders, the Boston Tea Party and broader acts of resistance were not merely political—they were moral imperatives.

Other ministers, however, urged submission to authority and warned against violent rebellion. Anglicans loyal to the Church of England viewed the Boston Tea Party as lawless and un-Christian. Some were forced to flee the colonies; others faced persecution during the Revolution. Quakers condemned both the unjust taxation and the destruction of property, remaining steadfast in their commitment to nonviolence. Moravian missionaries, concerned for their gospel witness, feared that rebellion would bring unnecessary suffering and compromise their mission.

While colonial pulpits rang with calls for liberty, the Church of England viewed the colonists' actions as rebellion against God-ordained authority. Sermons delivered from London pulpits emphasized Romans 13, underscoring submission to the king as a divine command. Some clergy went so far as to denounce the Boston Tea Party as "sacrilege against the Crown," equating it with sedition. Still, a few dissenting

voices—particularly among Methodists and Baptists expressed sympathy for the colonists' grievances, though they stopped short of endorsing rebellion.

To grapple with the legitimacy of secession and the morality of war, we must return not only to our founding, but to the Scriptures that shaped it. Let us compare the Rule of Nero to that of King George III.

	Roman Empire (c.58AD)	**British Crown (c. 1770s)**
Ruler	Emperor Nero	King George III
Political System	Autocracy; emperor seen as divine	Constitutional Monarchy with Parliament
Religious Freedom	Christians persecuted; emperor worship expected	Colonists had religious liberty
Taxation	Heavy, often corrupt	Tea Act, Stamp Act, Unjust but not ruinous
Use of Force	Crucifixion, public execution, suppression of dissent	Standing Armies, no mass executions
Public Morality	Emperor's infamous for cruelty and excess	King was seen as aloof not sadistic

"Every person is to be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God."
-Romans 13:1

From our vantage point it appears Nero was far worse than King George and it was at this time that Paul wrote Romans. The Anglican church (which was loyal to the crown) emphasized this at the time. John Wesley the founder of the Methodist church

stated, “The rebellion of the Americans is a sin of the deepest dye.” Does Romans 13 make no exceptions for unjust rulers?

When do we as Christians apply Acts 5:29 to our lives, “...We must obey God rather than men”? Is this where the colonists stood or were they driven by economics and their pocket book? If liberty is worth defending, must there be rules for how we fight for it? *Before we return to Lexington and Concord, we must first examine the theology of conflict itself.*

A Peaceable Kingdom: From Acts to Constantine

The hall of the Sanhedrin echoed with tension. Peter and the apostles stood before the high priests not as warriors, but as witnesses. They had already been jailed for preaching Jesus. Now, defying a direct order, they had returned to the streets, unarmed but unshaken. The penalty for defying religious and civil authority could be severe: public beating, permanent exile, even death by stoning. Yet they did not bargain, retreat, or lash out. Peter's words cut through the silence: "We must obey God rather than men." In that moment, the apostles modeled a resistance not forged in force but in fidelity, a refusal to compromise the gospel, even when obedience might mean the end of their lives.

For nearly three centuries after Pentecost, Christians lived as a peaceable minority in a hostile empire. They interpreted Jesus' teachings not as metaphors, but as mandates: "Love your enemies," "Do not repay evil for evil," "Blessed are the peacemakers." Violence, they believed, was incompatible with the way of Christ. They let Scripture not survival shape their instincts, choosing to suffer rather than strike, to pray rather than protest, and to follow the Lamb even when it led to slaughter.

This theology of peace didn't vanish when the Church gained power, nor was it confined to the ancient world. From the early martyrs to Anabaptists and Quakers who refused to bear arms during the American Revolution, the thread of nonviolent witness has run quietly, but persistently, through the Church's story. Early Christians weren't naive idealists. They understood violence. Many had seen the brutality of Rome firsthand. Despite the great cost, they chose to live by an ethic that seemed upside down to the world, one shaped by the cross, not the sword.

When soldiers come to John the Baptist in Luke 3:14, he tells them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be content with your wages." That's a call to integrity, not resignation. Similarly, Jesus praises the faith of the centurion in Matthew 8 without rebuking his profession. And Cornelius, the Roman centurion in Acts 10, becomes the first Gentile convert—again, with no recorded command to abandon his post.

Yet despite these examples, the early Church believed that Christian discipleship was incompatible with killing.

Their reasons were as much theological as practical. Roman soldiers were often required to offer sacrifices to Caesar or swear oaths to pagan gods, making military service spiritually compromised from the start. More fundamentally, early Christians took Jesus' command to "love your enemies" (Matt. 5:44) at face value—as a rejection of killing, even in war. The Church saw martyrdom, not militancy, as the highest form of faithfulness. To kill, even for a cause deemed just, was seen as a betrayal of the cross-shaped life.

This wasn't abstract theology—it was embodied. Across the first three centuries, key Christian thinkers put their convictions into writing, shaping how the Church understood faithfulness in the face of violence. Among the most prominent were Tertullian, a bold apologist from North Africa known for drawing sharp lines between the Church and the empire; Origen, a brilliant Alexandrian theologian who cast the Christian life as one of spiritual resistance rather than physical retaliation; and Justin Martyr, a philosopher turned Christian whose writings offered a striking contrast between Rome's violence and the Church's transformation. Their voices, differing in style but united in message, bear witness to a Church that chose peace, not as a strategy, but as the way of the cross.

The early Church not only lived out its commitment to nonviolence, but also articulated it. Prominent voices across centuries and regions reinforced the conviction that following Christ meant laying down the sword. For instance, Tertullian (c. 200) insisted that Christian loyalty to Christ is incompatible with military allegiance, writing, "Only without the sword can the Christian wage war." Origen (c. 248) argued that Christians serve the empire best through prayer, not violence, stating, "We do not go forth as soldiers… but we fight on his behalf by offering our prayers to God." Justin Martyr (c. 160) testified to the transformation, not mere abstention, saying, "We who formerly used to murder one another now refrain even from making war upon our enemies."

For over 300 years, the Church grew under persecution. Its power was not in armies or emperors, but in its witness, its refusal to retaliate, its embrace of

suffering, and its unwavering allegiance to Christ over Caesar. Despite persecution, the Church not only survived but grew, thanks to martyrdom, radical forgiveness, and its refusal to mirror the empire's violence.

In 312 AD, Constantine claimed to see a vision before battle: a cross of light in the sky with the words “In this sign, conquer.” He ordered his soldiers to mark their shields with the Christian symbol and won a decisive victory at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. The following year, he and Licinius issued the Edict of Milan, granting Christians legal status and ending centuries of state-sponsored persecution.

Although this was not the establishment of Christianity as the state religion, which would occur later in 380 AD, it marked a significant shift. The Church was no longer an underground movement. It now had imperial favor, public buildings, and political access.

This was the end of the early Church’s unified pacifism. While some Christians still held to nonviolence, others began to argue that force could be used justly, if wielded by legitimate authority and for righteous ends. The seeds of Just War Theory were being sown.

> “The soldier, indeed, is not guilty of murder if he has carried out the orders of his ruler.” — *Augustine*, *Contra Faustum*, 22.74

When the Church Took the Sword: Augustine & Just War

The early Church knew how to suffer. It knew how to bear injustice with courage, how to love enemies, how to refuse the sword. But after Constantine, a new question emerged—one the martyrs never had to ask: *How should a Christian govern?* What does faithfulness look like not under the empire's boot, but with the empire's power in hand? If Christians must love their enemies, can they also lead armies? If they bear the sword, can they do so without betraying the cross? These were no longer hypothetical questions. They were questions of policy, of theology, of conscience. And no one wrestled with them more profoundly than Augustine.

Born in 354 AD in North Africa, Aurelius Augustinus later known as *Augustine of Hippo* was a man of contradictions: brilliant and restless, ambitious and broken. He pursued pleasure and prestige as a young man, drawn to philosophy, rhetoric, and the dualistic religion of Manichaeism. But his mother Monica's prayers and the preaching of Ambrose in Milan eventually led him to Christ. His dramatic conversion in 386, which he later recounted in *Confessions*, marked a turning point not just for his life, but for Christian theology.

Augustine became bishop of Hippo in 395 AD, stepping into leadership during a time of profound upheaval. The Church, once persecuted, was now enmeshed in the very empire that had oppressed it. As Rome crumbled and barbarians advanced, Augustine faced a new question: How should Christians wield power in a fallen world?

He did not retreat from the world's tensions, he entered them. Some believers saw withdrawal as holiness, but Augustine embraced responsibility. In response to those who blamed Christianity for Rome's decline, he penned *The City of God*, a sweeping vision of two cities: one built on the love of self, the other on the love of God. These cities are not tied to borders; they rise from the heart and stretch across history, coexisting, clashing, and often becoming entangled.

Augustine's masterpiece was more than an apologetic, it was a theological mirror. It warned that when the Church confuses Christ's kingdom with imperial power, it risks becoming the very empire it once resisted.

This was no abstract theory. Augustine warned that when the Church forgets which city it belongs to, when it trades the humility of Christ for the prestige of power, it risks becoming the very thing it once resisted. Empire, cloaked in piety, is still an empire.

That tension didn't die with Rome.

In every age, the temptation remains: to confuse our highest loyalty with national identity, to baptize our politics in the name of Christ, to imagine that God's kingdom needs the help of ours. *The City of God* is not just Augustine's answer to a crumbling empire, it's a mirror held up to every age where faith and flag are blurred.

But Augustine didn't stop at diagnosis. He sought a framework for how Christians should think about power, justice, and violence. What if the sword wasn't pointed at them but held in their own hands?

Augustine's Just War Principles

To restrain violence, not unleash it, Augustine gave moral boundaries for warfare:

- **Just Cause:** War must be a response to grave injustice, not ambition or retaliation.
- **Legitimate Authority:** Only public officials entrusted with the common good may declare war.
- **Right Intention:** The goal must be peace and restoration, not vengeance or dominance.
- **Moral Restraint:** Even in war, cruelty and excessive force are forbidden. Soldiers must act with mercy and justice.

For Augustine, war was never holy. It was tragic, but sometimes necessary to limit greater evils in a world marred by sin.

As I've argued in another context, when state power is wielded in the name of Christ, it too easily becomes a sword in the wrong hands, endorsing violence rather than embodying the cross.

Killing with Conscience: Aquinas and Moral Combat

Our next stop in history brings us to Thomas Aquinas Born around 1225 in Roccasecca, Italy, a Dominican friar, philosopher, and theologian whose intellect would shape Christian thought for centuries. Raised in a noble family, Thomas was sent to the Benedictine monastery at Monte Cassino as a child, likely destined for high ecclesial office. But his encounter with the newly formed Dominican Order and with the works of Aristotle set him on a different path: one of rigorous study, radical humility, and theological synthesis.

Despite fierce opposition from his family (including a year-long captivity and an attempted seduction to dissuade him from joining the Dominicans), Thomas remained steadfast. He studied under Albertus Magnus, taught at the University of Paris, and wrote prolifically. His most famous work, the Summa Theologiae, remains a cornerstone of not just Catholic but Christian theology.

Aquinas lived in a world of crusades, papal politics, and feudal conflict. The Church was a dominant force in European life. In this context, Thomas asked a pressing question: How can Christians think rightly about war in a fallen world?

Building on Augustine, Aquinas developed a more structured and philosophically grounded just war theory. His framework centered on just cause, legitimate authority, right intention, and moral restraint sought not to glorify war, but to limit its use and humanize its conduct.

As I've written elsewhere, when war becomes a cause for celebration rather than lament, we've already lost something essential. Aquinas gave us a framework to restrain violence—but when that framework is ignored or twisted, the sword no longer serves justice. It serves pride[1]

[1] Hadley, R. T. (2025, April 14). *The True Signal Controversy*. Libertarian Christian Institute. https://libertarianchristians.com/2025/04/14/the-true-signal-controversy/

What's striking is that his framework endured beyond Catholicism. Though Martin Luther often criticized scholasticism, he still affirmed the need for just war principles rooted in divine justice and public order. John Calvin, too, echoed Aquinas's emphasis on legitimate authority and moral restraint, arguing that rulers are ordained by God to punish evil—but must do so justly.

Where Augustine spoke pastorally, Aquinas spoke systematically. He asked: What makes a war just? Who decides? How should it be fought? He responded by employing the tools of scholastic logic, defining terms, drawing distinctions, and grounding everything in the pursuit of the common good.

Aquinas's Expansion of Just War Theory

Aquinas distilled just war into three essential conditions in *Summa Theologiae* (II-II, Q.40), but his broader writings and influence expanded the tradition in key ways:

- **Legitimate Authority:** Only rulers entrusted with the care of the common good may declare war—not private individuals or mobs.
- **Just Cause:** War must be waged to correct a grave injustice—such as defending the innocent, recovering stolen property, or punishing wrongdoing.
- **Right Intention:** The aim must be peace and justice—not revenge, conquest, or hatred.
- **Proportionality:** *(implied and later developed)* The harm caused by war must not outweigh the good it seeks to achieve.
- **Discrimination:** *(developed by later thinkers building on Aquinas)* Combatants must distinguish between soldiers and civilians; noncombatants must not be targeted.
- **Moral Disposition:** Even in war, the Christian must act with charity. Aquinas warned against "the passion for inflicting harm, the cruel thirst for vengeance… the lust of power."

Aquinas sought to restrain violence, to keep the sword in check beneath the authority of reason and virtue. But history rarely leaves its tools in the hands of saints. Initially created to limit destruction, just war theory has, over the centuries, been stretched, blurred, and co-opted to serve the interests of power. Crusades against heretics, inquisitions cloaked in theological rigor, and colonial wars disguised as mission have sometimes enabled injustice under the guise of preserving justice. Just war became not a boundary, but a banner.

And yet, it endured. Not because it was flawless, but because the questions it raises about authority, justice, and conscience are perennial. As empires gave way to nations, and kings to constitutions, Christian communities brought these questions with them. By the 18th century, a young colony on the edge of the British empire saw a new set of Christians emerge, who would confront them again, but this time not in defense of Rome or Christendom, rather in rebellion against the Crown.

A Sacred Rebellion? The American Revolution and the Church

Let's return to the story of our rebellious forefathers. After the Boston Tea Party in December 1773, Parliament responded with the Coercive Acts (or Intolerable Acts). They closed the Boston harbor, revoked the Massachusetts charter, and placed the colony under military rule.They pushed the colonies from protest to preparation. Militias began to drill. Ammunition was stockpiled. British troops marched on Concord in April 1775 to seize those supplies; they were met at Lexington by armed colonists.

History is uncertain about who fired first. British officers insisted they gave strict orders not to fire and that the colonists fired first from behind a hedge or wall. American witnesses, including Captain John Parker and members of the Lexington militia, swore under oath that they were dispersing when the British opened fire without provocation. Modern historians generally agree that the first shot was likely accidental or unauthorized, possibly a misfire, a nervous soldier, or even a bystander. But once it rang out, both sides fired, and the British volley killed eight colonists.

The first shots at Lexington were not a declaration of war; they were a collision of fear, confusion, and unresolved tension. Regardless of whether the British or the colonists fired first, the outcome was the same: blood had been spilled, and a moral question asked that still resonates today. If just war requires clarity of cause and intention, then the Revolution began in a fog.

The fog wasn’t just on the battlefield; it was also in the pulpits. As the colonies edged toward war, the American Church found itself torn between submission and resistance, loyalty and liberty. Some ministers, like Jonathan Mayhew, thundered that resistance to tyranny was a Christian duty. Others, like John Wesley, warned that rebellion against the Crown was rebellion against God. The Revolution didn’t just divide a nation; it fractured the Body of Christ.

In 1750, our journey takes us to Boston's West Church, where Pastor Jonathan Mayhew, a Harvard-educated man from Martha's Vineyard, delivers a sermon. According to John Adams, this sermon, 'A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance to the Higher Powers,' was the spark that ignited the American Revolution. Preached on the anniversary of King Charles I's execution, it argued that Romans 13 does not require obedience to tyrants, and that resistance to unjust rulers is not only permitted but a Christian duty.

Mayhew's bold claim was that Romans 13:4 limits the scope of obedience. He argued that rulers are only "God's servants" when they fulfill their God-ordained role: promoting good and restraining evil. If they do the opposite, if they punish the righteous and reward the wicked they cease to be ministers of God and become, in his words, "the devil's."

> *"How is this an argument for obedience to such rulers as do not perform the pleasure of God, by doing good; but the pleasure of the devil, by doing evil?" — A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance to the Higher Powers* (1750)

He applied this directly to King George III by implication: if the king was violating the natural rights of the colonists, suppressing liberty, and acting contrary to justice, then he had forfeited his divine legitimacy. In that case, resistance wasn't rebellion, it was obedience to God. Mayhew's sermon was radical not because it rejected Romans 13, but because it reinterpreted it through a moral lens. He insisted that submission to government is not absolute; it's conditional on the government's alignment with justice and the public good.

Not every pulpit rang with the cry of liberty! For many Loyalist clergy, the Revolution was not a righteous cause; it was a rebellion against God's ordained authority. Where Mayhew saw tyranny, they saw providence. Where Patriots invoked Romans 13 to justify resistance, Loyalists read it as a divine command to submit.

Rev. Jonathan Boucher, a prominent Loyalist voice and Anglican priest, preached that the American cause was not God's cause, but rather one of ambition, avarice, resentment, riot, and rebellion against the best of kings.

Boucher, along with other Loyalist ministers like Charles Inglis, Samuel Seabury, and John Joachim Zubly, argued that:

- **Romans 13 is unconditional**: Even unjust rulers like Nero were to be obeyed, because all authority is from God.
- **Rebellion is sin**: Resistance to government is resistance to God's order, regardless of grievances.
- **Liberty is spiritual, not political**: True freedom is freedom from sin, not from taxes or Parliament.
- **War is judgment**: The suffering of the colonies was seen as divine punishment for disobedience and pride.

> *"If even the most vile tyrants like Nero deserved obedience, how could it be just to resist George III?"* — Loyalist interpretation of Romans 13[2]

These ministers weren't blind apologists for British policy. Many, like Zubly, criticized Parliament's overreach. But they believed that reform must come through lawful means, not revolution. To them, the Continental Congress was an illegal usurpation, and the war a civil conflict that would unleash chaos and sin. Both sides claimed Scripture to their cause. Both sides claimed justice on their side. However, Paul's letter to the Romans doesn't end with swords and taxes. It ends with love. And perhaps that's where the Church veered from its ordained path, not in how it read Romans 13:1, but in how it forgot Romans 13:8.

> *"Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law."* — Romans 13:8

[2] *The loyalist arguments*. The Russell Kirk Center. (n.d.). https://kirkcenter.org/reviews/the-loyalist-arguments/

Paul's crescendo in Romans 13 doesn't call the Church to vengeance, nor even merely to order—but to **love**. This verse reminds us that submission to government is not the final word for Christians—**love is**. When Mayhew and Boucher invoked the early verses of this chapter, they were debating swords and sovereignty. But Paul ends with a far more radical vision: that the law is fulfilled not by obedience or rebellion, but by the love of Christ!

This is the verse that reveals the heart of God, and cuts through both patriot fervor and loyalist fear. It asks: Did either side love their neighbor, their British neighbor, their Loyalist neighbor, their Native neighbor, their enslaved neighbor?

And more uncomfortably: *Do we?*

If we take just war theory seriously, not as a postscript to patriotism, but as a moral framework rooted in justice and Scripture. Then the American Revolution must be held to its standard. What follows isn't a verdict but an examination: a faithful attempt to steel man the arguments of both sides. The truth, as always, is not found in which side shouted louder, but in which side more closely resembled the love and justice of Christ.

Principle	Patriot Argument	Loyalist Argument
Just Cause	Britain violated natural rights: taxation without representation, military occupation, denied liberties.	Grievances were political, not moral; colonists remained protected under British law and refused compromise.
Legitimate Authority	Continental Congress represented the will of the people; authority arises from consent.	Congress lacked legal standing; rebellion was against a divinely sanctioned monarchy and lawful authority.
Right Intention	Sought liberty, not conquest; aimed to secure justice and self-determination.	Motivations included economic gain, land, and power; true intention blurred by violence and rhetoric.
Last Resort	Appeals had been made (e.g., Olive Branch Petition); Britain refused redress and escalated tensions.	Many avenues of negotiation remained; war was chosen prematurely by radicals.

Probability of Success	Victory unlikely, but achievable with divine favor and foreign aid (e.g., France).	Success was improbable; igniting war would devastate lives and endanger the common good.
Proportionality	The harm of continued tyranny outweighed the cost of war.	War caused widespread suffering, Loyalist persecution, and Native displacement—disproportionate to colonial grievances.
Discrimination	Regular armies aimed to avoid civilian targeting; war governed by emerging codes of engagement.	Civilians—including Loyalists and Native tribes—were mistreated, exiled, or ignored; lines between combatants blurred.
Moral Disposition	Revolutionaries sought peace with honor; invoked divine guidance and prayed for restraint.	Celebrations of violence, persecution of dissenters, and self-interest revealed a lack of charity and Christian love.

These arguments do not cancel each other out, they reveal the complexity of war in a fallen world. If Aquinas was right, that justice must govern not only why we fight but how, then we must confess: the American Revolution may have been politically necessary, but it was morally conflicted. Perhaps no war is ever purely just. But every war is worthy of moral scrutiny.

We must also be ideologically honest. If secession was celebrated when it birthed a republic of slaveholding colonies, why was it condemned when the South sought the same? We hail the courage that saved Jews in WWII, yet we turn quiet in the face of genocide, in Cambodia, in China, in Gaza. The inconsistency is not just political. It is moral.

I speak not as a theorist but as someone who has walked the edges of war. During my time in the U.S. Air Force, I glimpsed its ruin. Others have seen more—felt more. And like many who've served under that shadow, I often find myself asking as I did at the start of this work: *What is just in war?*

But I would fail as a writer, and more, as a disciple, if I ended here. Because the final word is not war. It is witness!

Christ remains our only hope. And to those who follow Him, He entrusts a stranger kind of power: not the power to conquer nations, but to outlast them. Not the power to subdue our enemies, but to love them. Not to build empires, but to embody the Kingdom that cannot be shaken.

The Church was never called to wield Caesar's sword. It was called to wage peace: on its knees, with its arms open, and with lives so marked by love that even hell shudders.

So now, we turn. From muskets and manifestos to the battleground we were born for. This final chapter isn't about history. It's about calling. And you, dear reader, are not exempt from its summons.

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Waging Peace: The Spiritual Battle in a Political Age

We've traced the forging of America's birth in fires of war, not as a patriotic parade, but as a moral pilgrimage. We've visited the first church and tried to identify with their call to pacifism. We've explored the origins and refinements of just war theory. We've returned to the Revolution to examine it, not as myth, but as a moment of profound theological tension.

Along the way, we've seen how faith was often conscripted into political service. Scripture was used to both justify and condemn rebellion. The language of liberty became so intertwined with the language of God that it was often difficult to distinguish between the two. Churches became echo chambers for the cause, and spiritual authority was wielded in the name of national destiny.

And it didn't end with independence. From war to war, from election to election, the temptation has endured: to confuse God's Kingdom with our own nation, to believe that power and righteousness walk hand in hand, that victory proves virtue.

Scripture tells a different story. The true war is not fought with muskets or ballots. It is waged in the unseen places, within our hearts, against principalities and powers, through the weapons of the Spirit. In that battle, the Church is not a voting bloc or a cultural militia. It is a temple, a bride, a people marked by love.

God tells us that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers (Eph. 6:12). That truth remains unchanged, unaffected by revolutions, constitutions, or culture wars. If anything, the deeper battle has only intensified. The Church's first calling is not to preserve a nation, but to proclaim a Kingdom! Our purpose is not to win earthly power, but to stand in spiritual armor! Not to rage fecklessly at the darkness, but to be light! We weren't saved to conquer this world, but to help redeem it! Through truth, through mercy, and most of all, through love.

Prayer! My dear brothers and sisters, is where our responsibility and duty lie!

"The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds." — 2 Corinthians 10:4

According to God, true war is spiritual, and therefore the Church must engage in spiritual combat. And the first of these is prayer. Not as a last resort, but as our first line of engagement. It's not about performing a ritual or fulfilling a duty, but about wielding power as a weapon of rebellion against the darkness.

Prayer is not passive. It is not a retreat. This is holy resistance: against despair, against deception, and against the powers that distort truth and shatter peace. When the Church prays, it does what no empire can: it touches eternity.

To pray is to join the Spirit in His groaning (Romans 8:26), to stand in the gap (Ezekiel 22:30), to bind and loose (Matthew 18:18), to intercede like Christ Himself (Hebrews 7:25). It is not a retreat from the world, it is the Church's most important and radical act within it.

The Church does not need more influence. It needs more intercession. It does not need louder voices. It needs deeper groaning. If we are to wage peace in a political age, we must begin not with strategy, but with supplication. Not with outrage, but with obedience. Not with fear, but with faith.

Unless we are a people who pray, we cannot answer impossible questions like whether any war is just or whether political entanglements are right or wrong. Perhaps this book has created more questions in your heart than it answered. I hope that at its core, it inspires a desire to better understand God's word in the context of our world, and ultimately, drives you to your knees to join the church on the spiritual battlefield to which God has called us.

We pray not merely to resist darkness, but to radiate light. For they will know we are His—not by our campaigns, our clarity, or even our convictions—but by our love (John 13:35). That is the witness we wage. That is the Kingdom we seek.

Appendix: A Christian Primer on Just War Theory

This guide explores the theological and historical foundation of Just War Theory, an ethical tradition developed to evaluate the morality of war through the lens of Scripture and reason. Its aim: to restrain violence, protect the innocent, and pursue peace even amid conflict.

A Timeline of Just War Thought

Era	**Key Thinkers & Traditions**	**Developments**
Ancient Israel	Mosaic Law (Deut. 20), Prophets	Divine guidelines for restraint in warfare and justice in conquest
Early Church (1st–4th c.)	Jesus, Paul, Early Martyrs	Nonviolence as witness to the gospel; suffering over resistance
Late Antiquity	Augustine of Hippo	War may be just if waged by legitimate authority for peace and justice
Middle Ages	Thomas Aquinas	Formalized the criteria for just war in Christian theology
Reformation	Luther, Calvin	Accepted just war, emphasized duty to civil magistrates
Modern Era	Grotius, American Founders	Legalized just war logic into frameworks of international law
Contemporary	USCCB, Michael Walzer	Reinterpreted just war for modern conflict: nuclear, cyber, humanitarian

The Three Branches of Just War Theory

1. Jus ad Bellum – When Is War Morally Justifiable?

Principle	Description	Scriptural Support
Just Cause	War must confront grave injustice or defend the innocent	Gen. 14:14–16; Prov. 24:11
Legitimate Authority	Only duly established leaders may declare war	Rom. 13:1–4; Deut. 20:1
Right Intention	The aim must be peace, not vengeance or conquest	Micah 6:8; Rom. 12:17–21
Last Resort	All peaceful avenues must be exhausted first	Matt. 18:15–17; Rom. 12:18
Probability of Success	War should not bring worse harm or be futile	Luke 14:31–32
Proportionality	The good gained must outweigh the destruction caused	Ex. 21:23–25; Isa. 2:4

2. Jus in Bello – How Should War Be Conducted?

Principle	Description	Scriptural Support
Discrimination	Civilians must be protected and noncombatants spared	Deut. 20:10–14; 2 Kings 6:21–23
Proportionality	Use only the force necessary to achieve objectives	Matt. 26:52; Deut. 20:19–20
No Malum in Se	Some acts (e.g., torture, rape, genocide) are always immoral	Amos 1:13; Isa. 10:1–2

3. Jus post Bellum – What Happens After the Fighting?

Principle	Description	Scriptural Support
Peace Restoration	Aim to rebuild and reconcile communities	Isa. 58:12; Matt. 5:9
Justice for Victims	Defend the vulnerable and uphold the wounded	Isa. 1:17; Luke 4:18
Reconciliation	Welcome former enemies and pursue healing	Rom. 12:20; 2 Cor. 5:18–19

Final Reflection

Just War Theory reminds us that even in crisis, the Church is called to moral clarity and spiritual courage. Wars may demand hard decisions, but they do not absolve us of faithful discernment.

Our allegiance is not first to the nation, nor to victory but to the Prince of Peace, who calls us to wage love in a world addicted to force.

The cross remains our pattern. Justice and mercy remain our compass. Prayer remains our power.

In every generation, the Church must ask not what the world permits, but what Christ commands.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."
— Matthew 5:9

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