

war is not at all lawful

extract from Proposition XV § xiv

§ xiv. Because some people transgress this command of Christ, perhaps through thoughtlessness or through the force of custom and tradition, I shall briefly show how much war contradicts this precept, and how inconsistent it is with that command, and I shall prove that war is not at all lawful for those who want to be disciples of Christ.

First, Christ commands that we should “love our enemies”¹ but war, on the contrary, teaches us to hate and destroy them.

Secondly, the apostle says that “we do not war according to the flesh” and that “we do not fight with flesh and blood.”² But outward war is according to the flesh, and against flesh and blood, for the shedding of the one and the destroying of the other.

Thirdly, the apostle says that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual.”³ But the weapons of outward warfare are carnal, such as cannon, muskets, spears, swords, etc., things that are not mentioned in the armor described by Paul.

Fourthly, James testifies that wars and strifes come from the passions, which wage war in the bodies of carnal men.⁴ But Christians, that is, those who are truly saints, “have crucified the flesh, with its affections and passions.”⁵ Therefore the saints cannot indulge the passions by waging war.

¹ Matthew 5:43 RB.

² Ephesians 6:12 RB.

³ 2 Corinthians 10:4 RB.

⁴ James 4:1 RB.

⁵ Galatians 5:24 RB.

Fifthly, the prophets Isaiah and Micah explicitly prophesied that in the mountain of the house of the Lord, Christ shall judge the nations, and then “they shall beat their swords into plowshares,” etc.⁶ The ancient Fathers of the first three hundred years after Christ affirmed that these prophecies were fulfilled in the Christians of their times, who were firmly opposed to war; Justin Martyr, Tertullian and others speak of this. This need not seem strange to anyone, since Philo Judaeus testifies about the Essenes that “there was none found among them that would make instruments of war.” And how much more did Jesus come, *to keep his followers from fighting, and to bring them to patience and charity.*

Sixthly, the prophet foretold that “no one would hurt or kill in all the Holy Mountain” of the Lord.⁷ But the purpose of outward war is to kill and destroy.

Seventhly, Christ said that “his Kingdom is not of this world,” and therefore that his servants shall not fight.⁸ Therefore people who fight are not his disciples nor servants.

Eighthly, Christ reproved Peter for the use of the sword, saying “Put your sword away into its place, for all those that take the sword shall perish by the sword.”⁹ Tertullian speaks well on this [*On Idolatry*]: “how can he fight in peace without a sword, which the Lord took away? For although soldiers came to John and received a form of respectful attention,¹⁰ and although the centurion believed afterwards,¹¹ Jesus disarmed every soldier when he disarmed Peter.” Tertullian [*On the Military Garland*] asks,

⁶ Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3 RB.

⁷ Isaiah 65:25 RB.

⁸ John 18:36 RB.

⁹ Matthew 26:52 RB.

¹⁰ Luke 3:14.

¹¹ Luke 23:47.

“shall it be lawful to use the sword, when the Lord said that he who uses the sword shall perish by the sword?”

Ninthly, the apostle tells Christians not to defend themselves, nor take revenge by rendering evil for evil, but rather to leave room for God’s wrath because vengeance is the Lord’s. “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink.”¹² But war always teaches and commands quite the contrary.

Tenthly, Christ calls his children to bear his cross,¹³ not to crucify or kill others; to patience not to revenge; to Truth and simplicity, not to fraudulent stratagems of war, nor to play the sycophant, which John himself forbids; to flee from the glory of this world, not to acquire it by warlike endeavors. Therefore war is completely contrary to the Law and Spirit of Christ.

Sources: Robert Barclay, *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, Proposition XV § xiv (Glenside PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002) pp. 469-471 and Roberti Barclaii, *Teologiae verè Christianae apologia*, facsimile (Amsterdam: Jacob Claus, 1676) pp. 364-366.

¹² Romans 12:20-21 RB.

¹³ Mark 8:34 RB.