

JUST WAR as CHRISTIAN
Discipleship

By
Daniel M. Bell, Jr.

Wipf and Stock Publishers
199 West 8th Ave., Suite 3, Eugene, OR 97401
2005

Just War as Christian Discipleship

By Daniel M. Bell, Jr.

Pamphlet 14 in the *Renewing Radical Discipleship* series of Ekklesia Pamphlets, edited by Dan Bell and Joel Shuman

Copyright 2005 by The Ekklesia Project

Printed by Wipf and Stock Publishers

199 W. 8th Ave., Suite 3, Eugene, OR 97401

All Rights Reserved.

*To become involved in The Ekklesia Project,
or for more information, please contact:*

The Ekklesia Project
Brent Laytham, Coordinator
North Park Theological Seminary
3225 West Foster Avenue
Chicago, IL 60625-4895
laytham@ekkleksiaproject.org
(773) 244-6221

The Ekklesia Project maintains a web page that includes resources, announcements and news regarding our activities and work. You may find it at <http://www.ekkleksiaproject.org> This site includes printable versions of earlier pamphlets, and two online pamphlets in the *Studies in Radical Discipleship* series.

Talk of just war abounds. On the editorial pages, over the airways, in church statements, during meals, around the water-cooler, in Sunday school classes and from pulpits we hear “just war” invoked either in support of or to discredit various wars and rumors of war. What exactly is a just war? What are its principles and practices? How does just war relate to the Christian life, to discipleship?

In what follows, I introduce the just war tradition suggest how that tradition might be lived out as a form of Christian discipleship. I do not argue for the just war tradition against those Christians who are persuaded that faithful discipleship is a matter of nonviolence or pacifism. Instead, I argue against those pressures and forces that tempt us to wage war unjustly and the underlying question is: What kind of people would we have to be to embody this tradition faithfully? Said differently, how would our churches have to be organized that we might be formed into the kind of people who support *only* just wars? How does our worship, preaching and pastoring, teaching, youth activities, outreach, daily and weekly interaction, etc. contribute to making us the kind of people who can abide by the just war discipline? What virtues -- what habits and practices -- are necessary if we are to be a people who support and wage wars in a manner disciplined by the just war tradition?

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF DISCIPLINED REFLECTION

The *quantity* of just war talk frequently surpasses the *quality* of discussion. For all the talk about just war – whether by advocates or critics of a particular war – the level of actual engagement with the tradition has tended to be rather superficial. For example, try this test. Do you consider yourself an advocate of just war? Or do you consider yourself a critic of modern wars on just war

grounds? If you answered “yes” to either of these questions, then take a moment and write down the principles and criteria of the just war tradition. It is rare to find people – be they pastors, politicians, laity, vets or soldiers – who can name more than a few of the criteria. This, of course, suggests that something is wrong with our claim to be just warriors. At best we are exposed as hypocrites; at worst, we are susceptible to being manipulated into endorsing less disciplined forms of warfare, just because just war language is used. In the absence of disciplined reflection on and serious engagement with the tradition, “just war” becomes a thin veneer of righteousness spread over forms of warfare that otherwise find little justification in Christianity.

For example, at times Christian support for war has amounted to a “blank check,” whereby we have simply affirmed without question whatever the governing authority has said and commanded. At other times, we have approached warfare in terms of what is called an “aggressor / defender” model. According to this model, we will not shoot first – we will not be the aggressor – but once we are attacked, anything goes. We will respond to aggression with little restraint, with any and all means necessary. Finally, another common approach is that of the “crusade.” The crusade mentality casts war in terms of pure good versus pure evil, the enemy tends to be demonized and stripped of all rights, and war is waged without limits or restraint, often for unconditional surrender.

Hence, the first challenge: If we claim to be just warriors then we should learn and teach the tradition, the discipline and virtues it entails, and we should hold one another accountable to it. Only then do we stand a chance of resisting the lure of other, less-than-faithful forms of fighting. Only then can we make the case that Christian fighting can be a form of faithful discipleship.

A warning is in order, however. Living the just war tradition as a form of discipleship is not easy and it is not likely to be popular. This is particularly true in a time of terror and fear. Many will say that in such a situation we cannot afford to stick by just war principles and discipline. Yet the just war discipline, no less than the Christian life as a whole, calls for the courage and endurance to stand by our convictions, even when violating the criteria might lead to quicker or less costly victory. Just warriors only fight within the parameters of the tradition. As a result, fighting a just war may take longer and cost more (in terms of resources and lives) than fighting unjustly. Furthermore, if a war cannot be fought justly, then a people formed by the just war tradition will not fight; instead, they will seek other ways to resist injustice and to love their neighbor. Just warriors will suffer defeat or surrender before they will fight unjustly, which means that the just war tradition as a form of Christian discipleship may come to resemble the sacrifice and suffering that is nothing less than a taking up of the cross.

That just war is a difficult and costly discipline suggests a multitude of challenges to the church, involving forming people in the virtues of courage and faith and hope that make it possible for us to abide faithfully by the convictions and disciplines of the Christian life, even when such a path leads to the cross.

2. DISCIPLESHIP VS. PUBLIC-POLICY CHECK-LIST

Early Christians adopted and developed the just war tradition from the ancient Romans and it has continued to develop ever since. It is important to note that it is not a set-in-stone doctrine, a theory that has been defined once and for all. Instead, it is a living tradition that more closely resembles an on-going conversation about what it means to

love and seek justice for our neighbors in warfare. Accordingly, there is no single, universally accepted account of just war. Each of the criteria, and even exactly what the criteria are, is subject to debate and a range of interpretations.

In what follows, two different, if overlapping, forms of the just war tradition will be considered. On one hand, the just war tradition will be set forth as a form of Christian discipleship. The focus here will be on how just war is an expression of the character of the Christian community and its consistent, day-to-day life and work on behalf of justice and love of neighbor (even our enemies). Just as we are concerned with justice and loving others as we raise families, interact with friends, encounter strangers, serve the poor and needy, work and worship, so too we are concerned to love and seek justice and peace for our more distant neighbors.

On the other hand, we will consider the just war tradition as a public-policy check-list. This version has as its starting point not the Christian community but modern nation-states and international law. It casts just war as a public policy tool, a check-list of criteria, for politicians and rulers. Moreover, according to this version, character - - whether you typically and usually care about justice and your neighbor or not - is largely irrelevant. A people or government could be thoroughly vicious and unjust, usually displaying little regard for its neighbors, but as long as it can check-off each of the criteria, it can wage a just war.

The point of contrasting these two forms of the tradition is to recognize that how the just war tradition functions - the kinds of demands it makes and the kind of people it requires - depends a great deal on whether it is rooted in the faith at home in the discipleship of the Christian community or in policy decisions of modern nation-states and international law.

3. THE CRITERIA: JUSTICE PRIOR TO WAR

The just war criteria have been divided into those criteria that apply prior to the war beginning and those that govern the conduct of warfare. We begin with the criteria governing justice before war.

1. *Legitimate Authority*

This criterion can be broken down into the question of who *wages* war and who *determines* if a particular war is just. With regard to who may *wage* war, Christianity holds that God alone has authority over life and death and the just war tradition asserts, on the basis of Scripture such as Romans 13:1-7, that God has shared that authority with the government. Likewise, the modern, public-policy checklist version of the tradition holds that the right to wage war is lodged in the hands of states and heads of state. Note that the tradition does *not* insist that wars may only be waged by international coalitions or under the authority of international bodies; although as a living tradition that is still developing, there is a push in the direction of requiring international authorization.

With regard to who *determines* if a particular war is just or unjust, the modern, public-policy version again defers to states. As it has developed in Christianity, the matter is a bit more complex. Judgments of justice within the Christian tradition have involved three components. First, the prince, with wise advisors, is expected to make such a determination. Notice that the assumption that the prince would be surrounded by wise advisors suggests that what is at stake here is more than the claim that the prince has more information than the ordinary person on the street. The authority to determine justice is as much about formation as it is about information. The presence of virtuous advisors suggests that princes are authorized to determine justice because it is expected that they will be

formed in sound moral judgment for the common good. Just as warfare is taken out of the hands of private individuals in order to prevent vindictive feuds, so authority is lodged in the hands of the prince because it is assumed that a prince will be constrained from vengeance by wise advisors and a commitment to the common good. Second, individual soldiers are expected to give the prince the benefit of a doubt with regard to the justice of a war . . . but only the benefit of a doubt. In other words, the soldier is to defer to the judgment of the prince unless (s)he is certain that the war is unjust, in which case the soldier should refuse to fight. Third, as it developed within Christianity, determinations of the justice of a war were subject to the oversight of the Church, particularly through the interventions of bishops in the affairs of princes and the practice of confession, where princes and soldiers were guided in the examination of conscience.

This criterion presents a host of challenges to a community that would embody the tradition. To begin with, it suggests that the kind of leaders we have has everything to do with whether we will be able to wage war justly. What kinds of political leaders do we support? Do we expect our political leaders to surround themselves with wise advisors and heed their advice? Do we encourage them to pursue the common good, rather than national interest, narrowly conceived? Do we teach the tradition to our soldiers and those who may become soldiers and do we assure them of our spiritual and material support as they abide by the tradition, whether that takes the form of refusing to fight in an unjust war or fighting in a war, but only justly? Are we actively working for the recognition of selective conscientious objection? Do we lead the congregation in embracing those who have waged war justly and, just as important, do we offer returning soldiers the gift of confession and penance as needed?

Does the division of the church undermine its ability to faithfully exercise oversight, thereby weakening the just war discipline? Embodying the just war tradition as a form of discipleship entails working to heal the divisions of the church such that it can speak an authoritative word to the rulers of this world. This criterion also raises questions of authority within the church. For example, for the church to exercise its proper oversight, it might be necessary for select leaders to be granted security clearances in order to be privy to information and deliberations of state. But do we have churches that would actually trust and obey such leaders and their judgments? Do we have leaders who are worthy of such trust? How are church leaders selected? Are the qualities of character commensurate with these kinds of judgments significant factors in their selection? How we answer these questions and pursue these tasks will have much to do with the possibility of living the just war tradition as a form of discipleship.

2. *Just Cause*

Here a significant difference between the modern checklist and just war as Christian discipleship appears. International law has effectively reduced just cause to national self-defense. This, in part, accounts for the difficulties the international community has had in recent years with armed interventions that are clearly not instances of *self*-defense. In contrast, the Christian tradition considers just cause from a very different, other-regarding perspective. Just cause is about the defense of an innocent third party in the face of unjust aggression, which means that interventions find more support in Christianity than international law. In other words, for Christians just cause is not first and foremost a matter of self-defense. Indeed, as the just war tradition was adapted and developed by Christianity, the advocates of just war were clear that self-defense did *not* constitute legitimate grounds for a violent

response to injustice. After all, Christians, following Christ who accepted the cross instead of simply slaying sinners and who told us to turn the other cheek and take up the cross, would rather be killed than kill an enemy-neighbor. This logic, however, does not leave societies defenseless. Rather, it means that government officials and Christians serving in a society's armed forces are to understand themselves not to be engaged in self-defense but in the defense of their neighbors who make up the society they are defending. Traditionally, this has meant repelling an attack underway, recovering that which has been unjustly taken, and punishment in the sense of restoring a just order.

It is worth noting as well that just cause has typically meant that war was considered a legitimate response to an offense or injustice that was *actually*, not merely *possibly*, suffered. Here we touch upon the issue of preemptive and preventative war. The bulk of the tradition has held that preemptive war was never justified. However, there is a minority strand within the tradition that has justified a preemptive strike against a threat that is both *grave* (a society's very survival is at stake) and *imminent* (the attacking forces are amassing). The tradition has universally condemned *preventative* wars – wars based either on speculative threats or real threats that are not both grave and imminent. In the face of a possible threat we are to rely on the providential care of God.

This criterion presents several challenges to the church. Are we willing to risk our lives and the lives of our loved ones for the sake of others, even when our immediate interests are not at stake? Is the church a place where we hear a Word of justice that invites us beyond ourselves or are we taught pious irrelevancies and assorted self-help nostrums? In this regard, when we lift up before the congregation the lives of the saints who gave themselves for others and when we encourage service to those in need around us (e.g., the works of mercy) we are contributing to

the formation of the kind of people on whom the just war tradition as a form of discipleship depends. After all, if we do not desire justice, if we do not care about our immediate neighbors who are unemployed, uninsured, homeless, battered, etc., it should come as no surprise when the plight of Croatians, Sudanese, Haitians, or Timorese fails to move us.

In a related vein, the call to risk ourselves for others challenges us to confront the pervasive sense of fear and inordinate concern for security that threatens to envelop us. This criterion reminds us of the importance of proclaiming the gospel – that Christ has defeated sin and death, that we need not be consumed by fear, that there are worse things than dying, that we are free to live in holy insecurity, free even to die in service to our neighbor. A people who lack courage in the face of death, whether on neighborhood streets or in the hospital bed, will be hard pressed to resist the temptation to abandon the neighbor or to discard the just war discipline, say, by engaging in preventative strikes against an uncertain threat.

3. Right Intention

Here, too, there is a significant difference between just war as discipleship and the modern check-list approach. Right intention in the modern world has been reduced to an unreflective peace and a simple disavowal of revenge. This is to say, the public-policy check-list considers the criterion satisfied if the stated goal of a war is peace and revenge is foresworn.

As a matter of discipleship, the criterion of right intention is more substantial. First, it is a matter of a “just peace.” As Augustine noted long ago, everyone desires peace; wars are always fought for a peace that better suits the aggressor. It is not sufficient, then, merely to be for peace. One must intend a peace that is truly just, and not merely self-serving. Second, right intent entails that even

in warfare we love our enemy. While anger is permitted, hatred is not. In a just war we are not exempt from loving our enemy neighbor (Matthew 5:44). Indeed, in waging war, the right intent is not to destroy the enemy but to bring them the benefits of a just peace. Even in war, our hope is that the enemy will turn and embrace the order of peace and justice. As Augustine said, “Therefore it ought to be necessity and not your will that destroys the enemy who is fighting you.” Thus, the proper response to a war’s conclusion is not celebration (although we are, of course, glad that the bloodshed has ceased), but grieving and repentance. In other words, the just war tradition at its best is about the formation of sad, reluctant killers. Again, as St Augustine said, “Wars and conquests may rejoice unprincipled men, but are a sad necessity in the eyes of men of principle.”

Third, right intent entails what can be called “complete justice.” This gets to the issue of character. Recall that just war as discipleship reflects the character of the people of God who love and pursue justice in the whole of their life. Unlike the modern check-list, which assumes anyone – saint or scoundrel – can wage a just war, just war as discipleship understands war can only be just if it arises out of the life of a community that is deeply and constantly committed to love and justice for the neighbor. Right intent highlights character as it considers the consistency and completeness of our desire for justice. Right intention rules out the selective enforcement or appeal to the tradition – the kind of use of the tradition that is concerned only about select injustices and select neighbors, while ignoring others. It entails the self-examination that is willing to confess and make amends for complicity with injustice in the past (cf. Matthew 7:3-5). And it includes a commitment to carry through on the desire for justice after the shooting stops – that, for example, neither abandons the defeated enemy nor replaces one tyrant with another.

The challenges and opportunities presented by this criterion to the church are manifold. We might ask ourselves, how seriously do we take the Gospel call to love our enemies? Do we lead our congregations regularly in prayers for our enemies, or do we only pray for our side and our own? Do we model and encourage within the life of the congregation (not to mention, the wider world) ways of dealing with conflict, with enemies, that neither shy away from addressing problems forthrightly nor simply cut off or separate those with whom we disagree? This is to say, do we model the desire for and pursuit of a just peace between enemies, or do we perpetuate a harsher politics where the winner takes all and the loser is silenced or encouraged to leave?

Right intent also presents us with the challenge of confession. Many churches have lost sight of the gift of confession, practicing it either infrequently or only in the most vague and abstract manner. However, if just war is premised on the intention of justice and yet we know we are not pure in our intentions for justice, examination and confession become central to the practice of just war. Only then can we avoid the charge of hypocrisy and injustice in our pursuit of justice.

Lastly, right intent amounts to a call for the patient endurance of the saints. To see justice through and not abandon either the victims or the defeated enemy requires patient endurance in the face of the hardship and costs of war and its aftermath. To this end, we might lift up the disciplines of the Christian life – such as prayer, fasting, and fidelity – that run against the grain of an impatient and suffering-averse culture.

4. Last Resort

This criterion legitimates the resort to arms after other feasible means of addressing the injustice in question (mediation, negotiation, arbitration, international tribunals,

etc. but not compromise or appeasement) have failed. Implicit is a commitment to diplomacy in good faith, even if one's opponent apparently is not engaged in good faith diplomacy. Sanctions may or may not be part of the effort to forestall war; after all, some forms of sanctions may themselves violate justice in their indiscriminate and disproportional character.

The point at which this criterion has been met is a judgment call. It requires the virtue of prudence, of sound judgment, which returns us to some of the issues raised under “legitimate authority” concerning the kinds of leaders we nurture and support. Are they persons who regularly display sound judgment? Likewise, this criterion asks of us the patience and hope and commitment to pursue other avenues short of warfare to address injustices. In this regard, a just war people will devote time and energy between wars to developing nonviolent and non-lethal means of addressing injustice. The criterion asks us to avoid the dual temptations of either resorting to military resources too quickly, especially when such a path may appear easier and more savory than negotiating with certain perpetrators of injustice, or of delaying indefinitely, thereby effectively abandoning the unjustly attacked neighbor. The challenges to the church are similar to those noted previously, involving patience and loving both the victim and enemy neighbor.

5. Reasonable Chance of Success

This criterion states that the goals of a just war should be attainable. This means that even if one has met the other criteria, one nevertheless is not justified in engaging in warfare if there is little chance of succeeding. Just wars are limited wars. Their aim is to address or rectify a particular injustice, not to rid the world of evil, wipe out an ideology (idea), or attain absolute security. Such grand and wide-sweeping goals are not likely to be achieved and in their

scope they more closely resemble a crusade. Also part of the limited nature of a just war is the refusal to insist upon unconditional surrender from the enemy. Rather, it includes a clear declaration of the conditions under which the unjust enemy can bring the hostilities to an end.

Questions concerning the cost of waging war, traditionally identified as “proportionality,” may also be included here. Proportionality means that if the harm likely caused by a war (in terms of lives and resources, regional or global destabilization, curtailment of liberties, etc.) exceeds the harm suffered by absorbing or resisting the injustice in another form, then one may be obliged to forego the resort to arms.

Like the previous criterion, this is a judgment call which elicits similar challenges and requires similar virtues. But it brings to the fore others as well. That a just war is a limited war entails a people not given to overreaching, who display a certain modesty or humility in their pursuit of the good. Such a trait might be named “meekness” or temperance and is opposed to a certain arrogant or self-righteous championing of the good. How might we ponder the formation of a people whose pursuit of the good is modest, but not to the point of appeasement or relativistic surrender of the good? Again, the practice of confession might be a good place to start. Such a practice reminds us of the limits of our pursuit of the good with regard to our enemy as well as of the persistence of injustice in our own life.

That this criterion implies the possibility of the obligation to surrender presents particular challenges as well. Such a possibility points again to a people schooled in patient endurance, who are devoted to pursuing nonmilitary means of confronting injustice, and who, when all is said and done, will follow the saints and martyrs in taking up the cross rather than shed their convictions.

4. THE CRITERIA: JUSTICE IN WAR

We now turn to consider the just conduct of warfare, spelled out in two criteria.

1. Non-combatant Immunity / Discrimination

Put simply, this criterion states that civilians may not be intentionally and directly targeted and killed. For example, one may not legitimately target cities in order to undercut enemy morale, nor may one target civilians in order to reduce the number of combatant casualties. Again, fighting justly may mean accepting more combatant risk and casualties. This criterion, however, does not mean that a just war prohibits all civilian deaths. Rather, it states that civilian deaths must be the unintended, secondary effect of an attack on a legitimate military target.

As part of the public-policy check-list, the force of this criterion remains negative. As long as one did not intentionally target them, civilian deaths do not run afoul of this criterion. However, as part of discipleship, the criterion has a more positive thrust. It is not sufficient that one did not intentionally target civilians. Because we are called to love our neighbors, we actively seek to avoid their deaths. Thus, lack of intention is insufficient, for it would excuse civilian deaths by neglect or gross incompetence. This difference – between the criterion as a merely negative force and a positive, protective force – is displayed in terms of what constitutes legitimate targets, weapons, and the location of military installations.

With regard to targets, the modern check-list tends to grant the benefit of a doubt to the military. This is to say, with regard to what is ordinarily civilian infrastructure (roads, bridges, rail and communication lines, energy sources, etc.) the check-list approach permits their targeting if they are also used by the military. We might say that *dual* use is legitimate grounds for targeting. In contrast, just war

as discipleship tends to give the benefit of a doubt to civilians, in the sense that if the *primary* use is civilian, the object or site in question may not be legitimately targeted unless it becomes the site of an attack.

With regard to weapons and tactics, the question is, are some intrinsically indiscriminate? Types of weapons that may be regarded as such include cluster bombs and landmines (unless they can deactivate), chemical, biological and nuclear weapons (Can the fallout from these weapons be restricted to the time and space of battle, or will they carry over indiscriminately into civilian time and space?). Likewise, certain tactics are subject to prohibition on grounds of non-combatant immunity, such as counter-population targeting, free-fire zones, area/carpet bombing, and so forth. Some weapons and tactics may be unjust in certain settings (think of the difference between fighting an enemy in an unpopulated wood and fighting in an urban setting). The difference here between just war as discipleship and as modern check-list is that whereas discipleship entails abiding by our convictions and the criterion, the check-list approach tends to water down the criterion so that it means in effect, “use the most discriminating weapon you have or that you can spare.”

Finally, we may think of non-combatant immunity in terms of the location of military installations. Just as the criterion insists that care be taken to distinguish between military and civilian targets, a just war people – particularly those who live the tradition as form of discipleship – will not locate their own military installations in or around civilian populations. The difference between discipleship and the check-list is again a matter of rigor. Whereas Christians committed to the tradition as an embodiment of our love of neighbor – even our enemy neighbors – will abide by this criterion even if our enemy does not, the modern approach to the criterion has tended to water it down by shifting responsibility for respecting the criterion

to the enemy, as in the argument that I will abide by the criterion only as long as my enemy does not use human (civilian) shields, at which time I will ignore the criterion and blame resulting civilian deaths on my enemy.

The immediate challenge to the church is to instill in its soldiers a certain temperance, the courage to abide by this restraint when the temptation to ignore it will be great. But the challenge extends to the whole congregation as well insofar as we must be willing to put the lives of our loved ones at greater risk so that enemy civilians face less risk. Here the other directed character of the Christian life rises again to the fore. Do we preach and teach and model a Gospel of exorbitant self-giving for others? Does our life reflect the conviction that in such giving, though we and our loved ones may die, we will not perish? And do we let the governing authorities know that we are indeed willing to bear such costs for the sake of waging war justly?

2. Proportionality

This criterion evaluates the means used in war in light of the end sought. This is to say, it asks if the death and destruction contemplated in a particular engagement (in terms of both unintended civilian casualties and combatant deaths) advances the end sought in a just war. For example, hand grenades filled with glass are regarded as illicit because the additional harm caused by the glass (it is invisible to x-ray) is disproportionate (overkill, if you will) to the end of the combat, which is to incapacitate the enemy soldier. Likewise, proportionality might ask if the decision to destroy an enemy battalion was vindictive, simply a manifestation of one's superior firepower, or was in fact necessary to attain the just end of the war.

Here the challenges presented echo those identified previously. As a matter of judgment, this criterion calls for prudence. As a matter of restraint, it calls for temperance and refraining from vengeance. The challenge for the

church is to be intentional in fostering these virtues through the practices and disciplines of the Christian life.

5. FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

I conclude with a summary of the challenges that living the just war tradition as a form of Christian discipleship may present to the church. These challenges are related to the questions already raised: What kind of people would we have to be? How would our churches have to be organized that we might be formed into the kind of people who as civilians and soldiers support just wars? What virtues, habits and practices are necessary if we are to be a people who support and wage wars in a manner disciplined by the just war tradition and who will be capable of saying “no” when wars are unjust?

- *Challenge of Ignorance.* Ignorance of the tradition leaves us vulnerable to manipulation, with the result that we support things we should not support, and do not support things we should. The opportunity is to learn and teach the tradition as part of our commitment to peace and justice and love of neighbor (including enemies). Do we teach the tradition? To those considering enlistment? To those already enlisted? Are we committed to supporting those who abide by the just war discipline at significant personal risk? Do we, how might we, hold political leaders accountable?

- *Challenge of Justice.* The neglect of love of neighbor and justice in our daily life, and complicity with injustice, renders appeals to the just war tradition suspect. The opportunity is to engage in self-examination and confession, to take up the works of mercy in service to our neighbor and for the just peace of all, so that appealing to the tradition will not appear self-serving and selective. Does our life reflect a commitment to the well being of our neighbors, even our enemies? Do we pray for them? Are

we a people formed not to hate our enemies? Do we truly desire justice, seek the common good, or are we satisfied to secure our own interests? What do we ask of politicians and worldly leaders?

- *Challenge of Fear:* The heart of the gospel is Christ's victory over sin and death, such that we need not fear sin and death any more (1 Cor. 15; Luke 12:4; Heb. 2:15). A people who fear death will be hard pressed to sustain just war as discipleship -- for it may require facing death on behalf of our neighbor (both the victim and enemy), when fighting unjustly may offer the appearance of avoiding death. The opportunity is to recover the courage of faith, the gift of living in holy insecurity. Then we will be able to take up the cross, serving our neighbors (including our enemies) fearlessly in pursuit of a just peace. Do we preach and teach the gospel of freedom from the fear of death? Do we lift up the saints and martyrs who served their neighbors without fearing death and without betraying their convictions?

- *Challenge of Patience Endurance:* A culture that teaches instant gratification, that can make little sense of the patient endurance of hardship, that cannot sustain fidelity cannot sustain just war, which requires fidelity to principle and the endurance of much (even defeat!) in the name of those principles. The opportunity is to engage the disciplines of Christian life (prayer, fasting, etc) so that we might learn to be a patient people, a people who will courageously endure much and doggedly abide by our commitment to the pursuit of peace and justice and love of neighbor (including our enemies). How do we lift up the cross? What do we teach is worth dying for? How do we support those who suffer for righteousness' sake? Do we have the courage to resist unjust demands? How do we support just warriors? Do we support those warriors who would say "no" to an unjust war (selective conscientious objection) or unjust order?

- *Challenge of Terror*: Some declare that terrorism renders just war obsolete; some advocate a new kind of warfare that mimics terror. The opportunity is to imagine and embody our commitment to peace and justice in ways that do not dismiss but rather continue to develop and embody just war discipline in a new situation. In an age of terror, when in particular the distinction between combatant and civilian is much harder to see (terrorists don't wear uniforms and are rarely openly associated with a state or traditional army) abiding by the just war criteria may be even more costly than in the past. What price are we willing to pay to be faithful? To what lengths are we willing to go to protect civilians in the midst of fighting terrorists in their midst?

- *Challenge of Faithful Witness*: The final challenge considered here is that of endurance, of being a faithful witness in the midst of a world that at times appears to have little interest a word from the Christian church. Because some of us may have a difficult time imagining even one nation actually embracing the just war tradition in more than an opportunistic and superficial manner, we may be tempted to despair and dismiss the just war tradition as unrealistic. The opportunity is to reflect on what it might mean for Christians to live as a self-conscious minority that no longer holds power and exercises the influence it once did, but instead depends upon the sustaining power of God for its life and witness (2 Cor. 12:9). What would it mean for us to live the just war tradition as a "leaven" in our society, as salt or light to the wider world (Matt. 5:13f.)? How might we nurture the patience and courage to accept this position of weakness or foolishness in the eyes of the world (1 Cor. 1:25f) as a form of faithful witness to the One who loves and seeks justice for all?

Daniel M. Bell, Jr. is an elder in The United Methodist Church and associate professor of theological ethics at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, SC.