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## WAR

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### WAR

by Tolbert Fanning (b. 1810; d. 1874)[\[1\]](#)

Attentive Reader,—Will you agree to set aside your previous beliefs and stifle your prejudices while we examine, by the light of the Scriptures, a theme most dear to the interests of Messiah's kingdom?

At no period in the world's history has a discussion of the subject of war been more urgently demanded than at the present. Nations and individuals still settle their difficulties by mortal combat—not at all questioning the divine right of slaying their fellows.

These remarks are not just intended for savages or infidels, but for the civilized nations of the earth, and for such professed Christians as feel authorized by God and their country to take the life of their fellow man.

We are aware that very few people are prepared to examine this sensitive matter, and so we give our views with considerable hesitation. We do not intend to start a lengthy debate on the subject at this present time, but only wish to offer it up in a reasonable and coherent manner for our reader's consideration, and to provide enough support for our position that we believe will be convincing to those who are able to hear.

1<sup>st</sup>. War is defined by *Mr. Webster*, to be “A contest between nations, or states, carried on by force; either for defense, or revenging insults, and redressing wrongs,—for the extension of commerce, or acquisition of territory; or for obtaining and establishing the dominion of one over the other. These objects are accomplished by the slaughter and capture of troops, and the capture and destruction of ships, towns, and property.”

The reader will observe that war is not the punishment inflicted by a state upon a subject, or the chastisement of a parent upon a child; but it involves states and nations, with their sovereigns. Civil wars are such as are prosecuted between the subjects of the same state for the purpose of settling controversies.

Writers speak of “just wars,” “offensive,” and “defensive wars,” but whether such distinctions are strictly correct remains a matter of some uncertainty. Mr. Paley says: “Every just war is a defensive war;” from which we might infer that all others are unjust wars.

Shall we concede the distinction between “offensive” and “defensive wars” as being valid? Very few people, in the history of warfare, have ever acknowledged themselves to be the offending party. Almost every group that goes to war claims that they are justified in doing so because of aggressions

from an enemy. Again: There is scarcely, in the annals of Time, an account of an important war, in which both parties did not operate, both offensively and defensively. The doctrine of attack, advantage taking, and punishing to gratify feelings of revenge, is adopted by all parties engaged in war; and it is universally the case, that as soon as war is declared, the technicalities (i.e. of offensive and defensive war) are forgotten. You can select any definition of war that you want to—definitions written by the most popular writers—and the great question to be determined is this: *Are Christians authorized, by the New Testament, to engage in war?* There is no philanthropist or Christian who is not deeply interested in the solution of this subject.

2<sup>nd</sup>. *The origin and causes of war*, are issues that should not be slighted. We assume that no one would ever argue that man was created to make a sport or an amusement out of spilling the life's blood of his fellow man. Moses informs us that man was made "to till the ground" (Gen 2:5).

When we view the beautiful order and perfect harmony in the heavenly bodies, and the fitness of everything earthly to accomplish wise designs, we instinctively listen for Nature's voice to cry: "Peace, peace." Even the brute creatures make mournful lamentations over the slain of their species, and thereby give undeniable evidence of the love of life in all the animal race, and the extreme pain experienced when it is taken away. This tenacious clinging to life in the animal kingdom gives indubitable evidence that God has given instinctive laws to brutes, as well as written laws to men. The least sparrow, or even insect, is shocked at death and often weeps out its life at the loss of its mate.

But what shall we say for mankind? Has not the All-wise God implanted in our nature a love for life, for mere existence, and directed us to instinctively respect it in all our fellow humans? The person who acts from the dictates of Nature does not wish the destruction of the poorest worm that crawls.

The point that we are seeking to establish is that so long as man remained in a state of innocence, there was no spirit of destruction in his heart; he could not slay the flesh of his flesh and the bone of his bone, so long as he had respect for the image of God as seen in his fellow creature. But when the Creator's works became mutilated, defaced and corrupted, the Almighty (for His own wise purposes) destroyed the whole race of man by a flood, with the exception of eight souls. After repopulating the earth, men soon corrupted themselves again, and the Deity permitted one part of mankind to take the life of the other—"but from the beginning, it was not so." To say any more, here and now, about the origin of war would be useless.

*The causes of war* are numerous, but a few of them must be mentioned. National honor is assigned as the first cause of war. Nations do not wish to be considered cowardly, and they think it disgraceful to take an insult. Hence, they are constantly reacting to offenses whenever one has been imagined or perceived.

The love of conquest is a fruitful source of war, but the love of territory and plunder has always had a most powerful influence on the minds of men. The glory and fame that is often achieved by military leaders plays a powerful role in instilling the love of war into youthful hearts and minds. An inspired writer says, "*wars and fights come from...desires for pleasure*" (James 4:1). All the causes of war are fleshly. Hence, the idea of "holy wars" is utterly inadmissible.

A few years ago, a society in the east made a report upon the *causes of war* amongst nominal Christians, from Constantine to the present time.<sup>[2]</sup> According to that report, there have been a total

of 286 ‘important wars,’ that have taken place among professing Christians. The report then divided these wars into the following eleven classes: 44 wars of ambition (to obtain extent of country); 22 for plunder or tribute; 24 of retaliation or revenge; 8 to settle some question of honor or prerogative; 6 from disputed claims to territory; 41 from disputed titles to crowns; 20 under the pretence of assisting an ally; 23 originating from jealousy of rival greatness; 5 have grown out of commerce; 55 civil wars; and 28 on account of religion.<sup>[3]</sup>

3<sup>rd</sup>. That we may better see the influence of war, as well as its causes, we will notice something of its history. The first war of which we have any account was that of Arioach, king of Ellassar; Chedorlaomer, king of Elam; and Tidal, king of nations, with Bera, king of Sodom (Gen 14:1-2). The second war was fourteen years later, when Lot—Abraham’s nephew—was taken prisoner; whereupon, Abraham “armed his trained servants, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan,” and discomfited the five kings. For this deed, “Melchizedek...priest of God Most High” blessed Abraham and “gave him a tithe of all” (Gen 14:18-20)

When Joshua crossed the Jordan with the hosts of Israel, the seven nations of Canaan manifested such total depravity that the Lord thought them unfit to live; and, hence, wars of extermination were commenced, and carried on till the nations were destroyed. These were called “the wars of the Lord” (Num 21:14).

For fifteen hundred years, the Lord—for a very special purpose—supported the family of Abraham, both in peace and in war. The promise was: “In your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”<sup>[4]</sup> But after the coming of Messiah, God gave over the Christ-rejecting Jews to hardness of heart and to a reprobate mind. Their depravity was such that they were only fit to be slain. They were once a brave and mighty people striking terror into the hearts of surrounding nations. However, according to prediction, their valor left them as soon as the Lord withdrew his hand: “And among those nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place; but there the Lord will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul. Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life. In the morning you shall say, ‘Oh, that it were evening!’ And at evening you shall say, ‘Oh, that it were morning!’ because of the fear which terrifies your heart, and because of the sight which your eyes see” (Deut 28:65-67). And at this present time [in 1847], they have no powers of resistance, but are a proverb for cowardice and degradation, throughout the world. “How the mighty have fallen!”<sup>[5]</sup>

Concerning the objectives of “the wars of the Lord” or those wars which God sustained through the Israelites against other various people groups, a few comments are in order.

First: As already mentioned, great corruption existed before such wars were tolerated.

Secondly: It must not be forgotten that no nation could appreciate a pure system of religion prior to the coming of the Messiah.

Lastly, it must be kept in mind that in all circumstances, war has been regarded by God and man as a sore calamity. As it is written (in Num 35:33): “blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it.” And the land of Israel had indeed been defiled by the shedding of blood.

It is also very remarkable that although many of the wars were the Lord's, and He chose good men for His agents, the shedding of blood still disqualified them for many important duties. David, who, while in the innocence of his youth, following his father Jesse's flock, was "A man after God's own heart;" was disqualified for even building the temple, in consequence of the amount of blood he had shed. When he was old, and about to be gathered to his fathers, he said to Solomon: "My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build a house to the name of the Lord my God; but the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'You have shed much blood and have made great wars; you shall not build a house for My name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight. Behold, a son shall be born to you, who shall be a man of rest [the Hebrew, *menuchah*, may, with great propriety, be translated *peace*];<sup>[6]</sup> and I will give him rest from all his enemies all around. His name shall be Solomon [the Hebrew *Shelomoh*, means *peace*],<sup>[7]</sup> for I will give peace and quietness to Israel in his days. He shall build a house for My name'" (1 Chron 22:7-10).

From these facts, we conclude that extreme wickedness called for the shedding of blood to rid the earth of some of its curses. Yet, the persons appointed by God Himself to be the agents of His judgment of destruction were not themselves *entirely* free from the stain. We desire it to be clearly understood that under the dispensation of Moses there was no system of religion to cleanse the soul of man from sin and point him to immortality and eternal life. God was only preparing our race for better things. In these circumstances, when nations and individuals became too corrupt to live, they were slain by Heaven's appointment. The act of killing even the vile, however, was of no moral advantage to him who did the deed. Hence, as a general rule, "The wicked are the sword of the Lord" (Prov 17:13). The conclusion of the matter is that wars were barely tolerated in consequence of the corruptions of the times, but the people who were considered worthy to approach the divine presence (as priests, for instance) were not allowed to shed blood.

It is pleasant to think that although the Almighty allows people to follow their own inclinations, He always recommends them to walk in wisdom's path. But when His creatures have become depraved and utterly lacking in moral restraint, God has often permitted their destruction. He brought a nation "of fierce countenance, from afar," against the Jews, till he broke up their nationality. Jehovah is still the God of nations, and doubtless, most of the remarkable revolutions of Time, can be traced to prophecy. He not only raised up Pharaoh to show His power and majesty, but He also used Cyrus, Julius Caesar, Hannibal, and Napoleon as instruments to scourge His enemies and rid the earth of its burdens.

The question, with us, is not whether war is ever admissible, but rather, who are God's chosen agents to conduct war? Thus far, in our discussion, we have addressed some of the related issues of this subject plainly enough, but we must now address the chief point in the discussion:

#### 4<sup>th</sup>. DOES THE CHRISTIAN INSTITUTION PERMIT ITS SUBJECTS TO ENGAGE IN WAR?

Settling this point should put an end to all contentions, so far as Christians are concerned, and so we will put forth arguments that we believe will convince all intellectually honest, sincere followers of Jesus that Christians—as a holy nation, church, or as individuals—have no divine authority for engaging in war, whether offensive or defensive, whether for fame, plunder, revenge, or for the benefit of themselves or their enemies. Under this head, we shall adopt the following order:

5<sup>th</sup>. The prophecies, in reference to Christ and His kingdom, clearly teach that the whole tendency of the new institution, was to put an end to war. Isaiah said, when speaking of the gospel age (as all the world agrees): “They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isa 2:4). Again, he says: “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Isa 11:9). To the same effect, he says: “Violence shall no longer be heard in your land, neither wasting nor destruction within your borders” (Isa 60:18).

Ezekiel writes: “I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them—My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the Lord have spoken. I will make a covenant of peace with them, and cause wild beasts to cease from the land; and they will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods” (Ez 34:23-26). Jeremiah writes: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jer 31:31-34).

In Isaiah, 35<sup>th</sup> chapter, it is written: “A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast go up on it; it shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk there, and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (v. 8-10). Supplying more prophecies than this would be unneeded and superfluous.

We have been asked the question: “Why are Christians not authorized to go to war just as did Joshua, David, &c.”? Our answer is that the times have changed. God has established a new dispensation in which only the subdued in heart will have an inheritance. The road to bliss is now “*a highway*,” and no one except the ransomed or the “redeemed shall walk there.” And “no lion,” or no man of lion’s heart “shall be there,” and nor shall any “ravenous beast go up on it.” As for the unclean, they “shall not pass over it,” but the redeemed alone shall dwell in Zion. Swords and spears were not to be the weapons of the citizens of this new dispensation. “They shall not hurt, nor destroy, in all my holy mountain,” saith the Lord.

We would now, most respectfully, ask the lovers of truth if these plain and pointed declarations do not fully establish the point that the reign of Messiah was to be one of universal peace? We believe all that is necessary to convince the world of the truth that Christians are not permitted to engage in the bloody conflicts of the infidel nations is to let these scriptures have their usual influence upon the mind.

The New Testament teachings will next be considered. To clearly address the main point, it will be necessary to briefly notice again, the Jewish government. It was a national and worldly institution that was meant to serve—“*Till the seed should come*,” and then it was to be rolled up, as a vesture, and

laid aside. “The law of commandments,” which tolerated war, was “*the enmity*” between Jews and Gentiles; but Christ took it “out of the way, having nailed it to the cross”<sup>[8]</sup> and, according to Apostolic teaching, there was “*a change of the law.*”<sup>[9]</sup>

Again, we wish it clearly understood that Christ’s kingdom was not to be spread or propagated by flesh and blood relations (i.e., by reproduction through sexual intercourse). Men were permitted to become the “sons of God,” not because they were “born of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13).<sup>[10]</sup> Those who were drawn by hearing and learning of the Father were the only ones who came to Christ (see John 6:45).

The kingdom of Christ then, it will appear, was to differ very widely from the bloody church of Moses. Now it remains to be shown that the differences are so great in the two institutions, that war could be tolerated under the old dispensation, but not in the new. Before, however, offering our arguments, we wish to remind those who desire to find fault with us that we are NOT saying that war is never justifiable among the nations of the earth. Indeed, we do not doubt that it is often Heaven’s policy to regulate nations by the sword. But we wish our readers to understand us to say, that the Almighty acknowledges no earthly nation as being peculiarly His, at this point in history. Yet, He does have “*a peculiar people,*” that has been selected from the nations, who spends the time of their earthly sojourn living “*as strangers and pilgrims in the nations;*” but who have nothing to do with the national policy and revolutions of this world.

Our remarks, then, upon war, we wish to extend no further than the boundaries of Christianity.

We may be told that it is nowhere written that war was to be abrogated by the gospel. True: but we find hundreds of practices amongst the Jews of which it is nowhere written: “They shall not exist in the Christian economy.” Yet, when we find Christianity standing just in the place of them, we know that it was its tendency to abrogate them. It was not Christ’s intention to attack civil institutions, but rather to impress upon His disciples the importance of respecting them. This silence regarding the particulars of worldly governments does not mean that He considered them the very best for men; but rather, that His religion could exist regardless of particular forms of civil governments.

His servants were to “pay tribute” to governments and “pray for rulers,” not because the governments and rulers existed by any special appointment of Heaven, but in order that the disciples might “lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence” (1 Tim 2:2). So Christians are required to support civil governments at least in this manner. They should support them, in so far as they do not interfere with their duties to God. But if a civil government should interfere with a person’s religious scruples, then Christians should make peace with the idea of suffering at the hands of the government, just as their brethren did under the administration of the bloody Nero.

The servants of the Lord are to keep in mind that worldly laws are “not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,” &c. (1 Tim. 1:9).

But if some still argue that the law of Moses tolerated war, and we can find no direct abrogation of it, then we might reply that the *whole* law was done away in Christ. Even that on tables of stone, which is called by some, “*moral law,*” was a “*ministry of death*” and was blotted out to make room for the “*ministry of the Spirit*” (2 Cor 3:6-12). The conclusion, then, is that Christianity is a new institution, a spiri-

tual edifice, not depending upon the “strong arm of the law” or “red armed war” for its existence. It was designed to flourish under every form of human government and even without the form of human legislation.

We believe that there is not a learned man on earth who would argue that either civil government or war would be necessary for the happiness of our race, if all men were Christians.

With these suggestions, we proceed to give a few reasons, drawn directly from the gospel, for believing that Christians have no right to engage in war.

1. If the spirit of war had existed in the government of Christ, we might reasonably suppose He would have appealed to arms to establish it. But this is so far from being the case that the Apostle Matthew applies the language of the Prophet Isaiah to Jesus: “He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench, till He sends forth justice to victory” (Matt 12:19-20). His laws were to be rendered triumphant and glorious without the aid of earthly weapons. Not so much as a tender reed was to be disturbed or the smoking flax quenched for His cause to be victorious. The exhortation to the Apostles was to “be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.”<sup>[11]</sup> The whole doctrine of Messiah was to conquer the world by love. This was contrary to the experience and philosophy of mankind, and it is the exact opposite of the sentiments of the world, and even to nine-tenths of the religionists at the present day.

Christ’s religion has extended to every nook and corner of the earth where human beings have been capable of receiving it, and in His transcendent love and matchless kindness, He has done everything without an appeal to arms.

2. A distinguishing feature of Christianity is the abrogation of the *lex talionis* by the gospel. The law said, “*An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:*” but not so in Christ’s kingdom. The teaching of the New Testament religion is: “But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also” (Matt. 5:38-39). How the command, “not to resist an evil person,” is to be reconciled with the spirit or practice of war, we are not prepared to see.

3. The doctrine and practice often perceived in the law of Moses, and also amongst the ‘tribal’ partisans of the earth, is simply this: “Love your brethren, or party, and hate the rest of the world.” But Christianity says, “love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven” (Matt 5:44-45). Let us notice that Jesus clearly says that being children of the Heavenly Father is conditional upon our loving our enemies and praying for those who spitefully use us and persecute us.

No people have engaged in bloody deeds without transgressing this precept. Christianity is so unlike the religions of the age that few of its striking features can be inferred from the institutions which are said to be modeled after it. Let us appeal to those professing Christians who think it is right and a matter of obedience to the cause of God for *them* to take the life of their fellow human beings: Do you truly believe that such actions can genuinely be performed *in love* to your enemies? God has promised His protecting power to His saints, and when we take up arms to defend ourselves, we show very clearly that we lack confidence in our Father in heaven.

4. Concerning the matter of vengeance, the Apostle Paul wrote: “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Rom 12:19). From this, it appears, that the idea of revenge is wholly incompatible with the prevailing spirit and distinctive character of original Christianity. The doctrine of Christ is: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom 12:20-21). The reader will keep in mind, that these things are to be observed towards enemies.

5. We are commanded to, “Pursue peace with all *people*, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). Let us note that eternal life, according to this passage, is placed upon the condition of pursuing “peace” with all people, and “holiness” toward God.

6. The “fruit of the Spirit” that Paul writes about—the “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal 5:22-23)—which Christians are commanded to cultivate, forever precludes the spirit and practice of war. The servant of God should desire above all things the conversion of his fellow creatures; he should zealously labor to “pluck them as brands from the burning,” but this cannot be done with swords and spears.

7. Christ’s declaration that, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight”<sup>[12]</sup> is demonstrable evidence that Christian war had no support or approval from the Savior. His kingdom was unlike all others: it was spiritual, and it was to be built and defended by spiritual men and spiritual measures.

8. The first Christians universally obeyed Jesus’ teachings about not resisting evil by refusing to do so through carnal means. This is clear proof that they did not feel at liberty to fight and destroy their fellow creatures made in the image of God by a supposedly justified act of war. Jesus said that He could call “more than twelve legions of angels”<sup>[13]</sup> to help Him, but by such means Christianity could receive no assistance. Jehovah could have enabled Peter & Paul to raise up armies that would have crushed all opposition, but such a policy would have defeated the whole purpose and design of Christianity.

Nowhere in scripture or in history do we read about General Peter, Col. Paul, Capt. John, or even Ensign Luke. And if they had engaged in the conflicts of surrounding nations, Christ’s religion would have proved worse than useless to the world.

9. During the first and second centuries, Christians did not presume to take the least part in civil governments, nor did they engage in the killing of war. Even the very calm and moderate author, Doctor Paley says: “Christianity, soliciting admission into all nations of the world, abstained, as behooved it, from intermeddling with the civil institutions of any.”

The first remarkable war after Christ was that of the Romans against the Jews when Jerusalem was destroyed in the year 70. The possessions of Christians were invaded, and their property confiscated, but neither Josephus, or any other historian, mentions resistance amongst them. There were some forty thousand Christians at Jerusalem when Titus’ siege began, but they took no apparent interest in the war, and marvelous to relate, they perished not. God supported them, and in obedience to the commands of Christ, they fled “to the mountains.”<sup>[14]</sup> Upham writes that, “A great body of them, as we learn from Eusebius (Bk. III, Ch. 5),<sup>[15]</sup> resorted to a village of the name of Pella, beyond the River

Jordan, and, secured by nothing but their benevolent and pacific principles, were preserved safe amid the desolations and bloodshed around them.”<sup>[16]</sup>

Are not all men of knowledge aware that Celsus, the arch enemy of the Christian religion, accused Christians in the second century, of refusing to bear arms for the Emperor? Celsus wrote that, “If others entertained the same opinions, the empire would soon be overrun by barbarians.”

Maximilian suffered martyrdom for saying to the Proconsul Dion: “I am a Christian and cannot bear arms,” and scores of others suffered for the same reason.

But time would fail me, to detail the testimony of Justin Martyr, Tatian, Clemens of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian, Lactantius, Archelaus, Chrysostom, Jerome, and Cyril, who all declared that Christians did not sanction war and could not be induced to take the least part in it. In the third century, Christians began to deflect somewhat from the purity of the faith, and a few began to conform to the belligerent world. They at least asked the aid and protection of civil powers, but it was not till the beginning of the fourth century when the Crescent and the Cross were united by Constantine the great that Christianity was wedded to the bloody codes of earth.

This, making the cause of the land support religion, and in turn, making religion uphold the frail fabrics of man, gave woeful evidence of the great apostasy, predicted by Christ and His Apostles.

From the days of Constantine (the father of the religion of Papists), to the present, Rome and her *naturally depraved daughters*<sup>[17]</sup> have lived in many countries by the power of the sword and sought aid by appeals to laws which God intended alone, “for the lawless & for manslayers” (1 Tim. 1:9).

Not only have Romanists and Protestants lived and feasted upon blood, but many of their leaders are at this moment, men who are famed for spilling the blood of their fellows. Most conquerors from Constantine to Santa Anna, professed to fight alone for God and religion. Such *sacred* missionaries were hardly of Heaven’s appointment, and the grand mistake of the world consists in the fact that men have failed to regard Christianity as possessing no affinity for the wisdom of this world or its institutions. God intended Christianity to turn the eyes of its advocates away from evil—to save their feet from the path of mischief, their hands from blood, and to direct their thoughts and highest aspirations up to the throne of His favor.

We have adduced nine arguments, any one of which (in our humble judgment), is sufficient to satisfy the thoughtful, that from the time the angels announced the birth of the “Prince of peace” to the shepherds of Judea, the servants of the Lord have been required to cultivate “Peace on earth, goodwill toward all men.”

We pretend not to say that these arguments will satisfy all professed Christians that there is no such a thing as “*Christian war*.” Indeed, we are persuaded that the education and habits of the times are such as to permit few to see the transcendent beauties of the kingdom of peace. Neither are we prepared to say that there are not some apparent arguments which might be offered against these views. We have heard many things said by the advocates of Christian wars, and if the reader will bear with us, we will notice a few *Christian* arguments in favor of them.

6<sup>th</sup>. Because Jesus said, “he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one” (Luke 22:36), some have concluded that the Lord intended to teach his Apostles to defend themselves by the sword. Let us examine the connection. Suppose we concede that Jesus intended them to defend Him or themselves in the trials that were close at hand, then wouldn’t He have had all the *eleven*, at least, carrying swords? But they said, “Here are two swords,” and He replied, “*It is enough.*” Enough for what? To defend themselves and their Master against their enemies? Not at all! But two were enough to show the use of swords so far as Christians are concerned. Shortly after, the Savior was taken prisoner, and the disciples asked: “Lord shall we strike with the sword?” And no sooner had this been spoken, than Peter had struck off the high priest’s servant’s ear. But Jesus said: “*Permit even this,*” or in other words, I have permitted you to go thus far to teach you that you must not use the sword. “And He touched his ear and healed him” (Luke 22:51). Matthew adds (in 26:52-53): “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?” Then, so far from the passage showing that the disciples were to use violence, the very reverse is most obvious.

7<sup>th</sup>. We are asked the question: “Suppose the territory of Christians were invaded, and the enemy were about to destroy their property—must they not defend themselves?” The Romans came against the Christians in Jerusalem and in obedience to the Lord, they fled “*to the mountains.*” The innocent Waldensians often forsook their homes to escape the sword of the bloodthirsty Roman Catholics, yet by this course they maintained their purity and honored their immaculate Redeemer. If Christians would cultivate peace with their fellow creatures, they would not likely have enemies, except of bloody religionists.

8<sup>th</sup>. But says another: “Suppose savages—Indians—were to attack us, what then?” The nation of innocent Quakers that settled Pennsylvania with William Penn at their head did more to tame the wild man of the forest than all the Puritans and Romanists that crossed the waters. These wild men of the forest did not have the heart to persecute a Quaker. They were a people of peaceful life. In seventy years, the savages did not invade the territories of these “Friends.” In all this time, only three of them suffered, and history relates that even these were not assaulted till they lost confidence in their God so far as to take up arms to defend themselves. At the breaking out of the revolution, the military took possession of Philadelphia, and from that date forward, the untamed Indian had his deadly hostility excited against the city of Brotherly love.

We express our belief firmly, when we say without doubt that the Lord has protected and will still sustain His people if they will show greater confidence in Him than in flaming swords and glittering spears. Even at this present time, it is still difficult to find people who are degraded enough that they will purposely slay other human beings that are gentle, defenseless, and peace-loving, and who refuse to cultivate a spirit of war.

But be this as it may, the whole tenor and teaching of the New Testament seems designed to impress the spirit of long suffering and forbearance upon the adherents of Christianity, and to exhort them to sacrifice property and life itself, rather than deny the Savior. And if we had the space within this publication, we would be pleased to answer all arguments upon the subject of Christian wars, but as it is, we must now bring our remarks to a close, without giving a proper summary and conclusion.

At some future time, on a suitable occasion, we would like to notice some of the evils of war upon what is called “Christian society,” such as on the education of youth &c., but we must leave the forego-

ing statements to speak for themselves. If we have taken the right view of things, then Christians are in great error and must reform. But if we are mistaken, then we would gladly be corrected.

**Notes:**

[1] This is a revised & updated version of an article by Tolbert Fanning (1810-1874) which was originally published in Franklin College's periodical called the *Christian Review* in **March of 1847** (Vol. 4, NO. 3). All italics are his. **Tolbert Fanning** was one of the most influential intellectual leaders of the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement in the South before the Civil War. Converted & baptized in 1827 by associates of Barton Stone (1772-1844), Fanning was a farmer-preacher-educator. In 1835 & 1836, Fanning traveled with Alexander Campbell (1788-1866) on extensive preaching tours. Fanning founded Franklin College in 1845 and began *The Christian Review* in 1844. Among the many influential graduates of the college that Fanning founded was David Lipscomb (1831-1917), whose work and teachings were very much like Fanning's.

[2] Whatever report this was, it sounds like it was done sometime c. 1844, since Fanning was writing in 1847.

[3] These numbers only add up to 276, so something is not quite right here.

[4] Genesis 28:14c

[5] 2 Sam 1:25a, 27a

[6] Comments in brackets are Fanning's.

[7] Comments in brackets are Fanning's.

[8] Col 2:14b

[9] Heb 7:12b

[10] Tolbert Fanning's interpretation of John 1:13 is in perfect harmony with that of the pre-Nicene Christians. He understood it to be referring to sexual intercourse, where "nor of the **will** of the flesh (sarx)" speaks of carnal, sexual desire, carnal conception, and where "nor of the **will** of man" speaks of the male. This reflects the prevailing idea of the time that the male was the only active party in procreation. Many Calvinists interpret this passage as saying that humans do not have free will, or that they are unable to believe or repent or make any movements toward God unless He has first sovereignly chosen them, and then sovereignly regenerates them at some point during their lives. But this deterministic interpretation of the Calvinists would have been considered heretical by the pre-Nicene Christians, for whom free will was a basic element of their rule of faith or rule of truth.

[11] Matt 10:16b

[12] John 18:36a

[13] Matt 26:53

[14] Matt 24:16; Luke 21:21

[15] See also Milner's Church History, Cent. I.

[16] Thomas Cogswell Upham, *The Manual of Peace: Exhibiting the Evils and Remedies of War* (Boston: American Peace Society, 1842), p. 147. [this same citation occurs on p. 139 of the 1836 edition of Upham's work]

[17] *Naturally depraved daughters*: Fanning here takes a swipe at the Protestant world of his day, the vast majority of whom were 'Reformed' Protestants, i.e. following the Gnostic, deterministic teachings that were popularized by Martin Luther and John Calvin and their disciples. They taught (and still teach) that we have no free will (see footnote #10) and are "by nature children of wrath" (Eph 2:3, giving it a deterministic interpretation). They teach that we are totally depraved and have an inbred "sinful nature" (a bad translation which, driven by theology, found its way into the NIV Bible). Because the Reformers came out of the Roman Catholic Church (which followed Augustine's teaching on "Original Sin," which is based on his faulty understanding of Romans 5:12), Fanning calls these Reformed Protestants the "naturally depraved daughters" of the Roman Catholic Church.