

Opening the gates of war was relatively easy. Closing them again, even part way, was to prove more difficult. In the history of Christian Europe, the first was the work of moralists and theologians and the second was a task eventually left to lawyers. It should not come to anyone's surprise that the dogs of war, once loosed, did not and do not take readily to the leash.

As we have already seen, for Augustine and later for Aquinas—the two founding fathers of the just war doctrine—the question at hand was simple and straightforward: Is war so essentially evil that a Christian cannot go there without grave sin? The specific sin that most concerned them was the violation of love, the love of God and neighbor. In his *Summa Theologica*, Thomas Aquinas situated his brief treatise on war broadly within his discussion of the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and love, and more specifically in that part focused on love and the vices or evils opposed to it. “If I have faith, so as to remove mountains,” sang Paul in his hymn to love penned to the Corinthians, “but do not have love, I am nothing . . . And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.” To sin against love is no light matter and, if war is such a sin, then it cannot be condoned.

The would-be solution that Augustine found and that Aquinas confirmed to permit war and to preserve love was to wage the former with the latter, to love and do what must be done. The tough paternal love of God the Father and of the heads of every Christian household—punitive, corrective, and caring—provided the needed paradigm for a Christian love that could be carried into battle rather than trampled underfoot there.

Both Augustine and Aquinas focused on the just initiation of war—*ius ad bellum*—the just or virtuous way of *going to war*, and agreed on its ingredients: sovereign authority (*auctoritas principis*), just cause (*iusta causa*), and right intention (*recta intentio*). Like the three designated settings of a combination lock, they served to open the way to war without sin, war without guilt, even war with merit. In all fairness, there is ample evidence in their writings that both Augustine and Aquinas shared a moral presumption against war and killing and saw these as a last and unfortunate resort. Regrettably, such a presumption was not their legacy. Their prescription for just war was a formula for enablement, not deterrence. Each element, however, begged for clarification. Who qualified as a sovereign authority? Who was to say whether a cause was just? And how could anyone judge my or anyone else's intentions when they reside—or should we say hide—so far beyond public scrutiny that they are truly for “me to know and for you (unless you are God) to find out.”