

“We Came in Peace for All Mankind”

Worship Service
Channing Memorial Church
Newport, Rhode Island

Thomas R. Beall

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Call to Worship

Perhaps...space exploration safely absorbs man's aggressive and competitive instincts, and in applauding the astronauts' exploits, we are grasping at a hope of preserving peace on earth. Those noble qualities of man – heroism, self-sacrifice, dedication, comradeship in a common cause – which are tragically brought out in war are evoked in many places of the space development. And these qualities must continue to be aroused in some fashion, or man will cease to be all that man can be...

Anne Morrow Lindbergh

Chalice Lighting:

We, the members and friends of Channing Memorial Church, commit
to use our diverse gifts in shared ministry as a catalyst for...
peace, justice, and respect for all people and our planet,
and positive change within our community and the world.

**Excerpt from “Thoughts on the 125th Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg”
Carl Sagan**

The world today spends \$1 trillion a year on military preparations, most of it on conventional arms. The United States and the Soviet Union are the leading arms merchants. Much of that money is spent only because the nations of the world are unable to take the unbearable step of reconciliation with their adversaries. That trillion dollars a year takes food from the mouths of poor people. It cripples potentially effective economies. It is a scandalous waste, and we should not countenance it.

It is time to learn from those who fell here. And it is time to act.

In part the American Civil War was about freedom; about extending the benefits of the American Revolution to all Americans, to make valid for everyone that tragically unfulfilled promise of ‘liberty and justice for all.’ I’m concerned about a lack of historical pattern recognition. Today the fighters for freedom do not wear three cornered hats and play the fife and drum. They come in other costumes. They make speak other languages. They may adhere to other religions. The color of their skin may be different. But the creed of liberty means nothing if it is only our own liberty that excites us. People elsewhere are crying, ‘No taxation without representation,’ and in Southern Africa, or the West Bank of the Jordan River, or Eastern Europe, or Central America they are shouting in increasing numbers, ‘Give me liberty or give me death.’ Why are we unable to hear most of them? We Americans have powerful nonviolent means of persuasion available to us. Why are we not using these means?

The Civil War was mainly about union; union in the face of differences. A million years ago, there were no nations on the planet. There were no tribes. The humans who were here were divided into small family groups of a few dozen people each. They wandered. That was the

horizon of our identification, an itinerant family group. Since then, the horizons have expanded. From a handful of hunter gatherers, to a tribe, to a horde, to a small city state, to a nation, and today to immense nation states. The average person on the Earth today owes his or her primary allegiance to a group of something like 100 million people. It seems very clear that if we do not destroy ourselves first, the unit of primary identification of most human beings will before long be the planet Earth and the human species. To my mind, this raises the key question: whether the fundamental unit of identification will expand to embrace the planet and the species, or whether we will destroy ourselves first. I'm afraid it's going to be very close.

The identification horizons were broadened in this place 125 years ago, and at great cost to North and South, to blacks and whites. But we recognize that expansion of identification horizons as just. Today there is an urgent, practical necessity to work together on arms control, on the world economy, on the global environment. It is clear that the nations of the world now can only rise and fall together. It is not a question of one nation winning at the expense of another. We must all help one another or all perish together.

We Came in Peace for All Mankind

Thomas R. Beall

“We Came in Peace for All Mankind.” These are the words inscribed on the plaque left on the Moon by the crew of Apollo XI forty years ago tomorrow. As I was reflecting on how to honor and commemorate the first successful voyage to another world, it struck me that the words themselves pointed the way. As we remember how we came together not just as a nation but as a human race when Neil Armstrong took that first step on the lunar surface, we might ask ourselves how can we begin to realize the dream of peace for all mankind.

I am a master of the science and art of war – literally. In addition to a career in military service, I have a Bachelor of Arts degree in military history, a Master of Science degree in military operations research and a Master of Arts degree in national security and strategic studies. I have studied the history of warfare, the science of battle, and the politics of the national security state. I have read the great military theorists, including von Clausewitz and Sun Tzu, written about Alfred Thayer Mahan, and have had published my own research on the mathematical modeling of naval combat. I am grounded in the theory of war and, as a naval commander, skilled in its practice. I am, therefore, both a scholar and master practitioner of death and destruction. This may not have been the most uplifting education but it has prepared me to question a paradigm virtually unchallenged in history – that theory of human affairs which states:

1. War, if practiced in accordance with certain broadly accepted rules, can be a just, even a noble endeavor.
2. War is practiced by just nations in self-defense and, therefore, is a necessary evil.
3. War is inevitable.

4. True peace, among all men and nations, founded on love, compassion, respect, and a profound sense of community is impractical and only embraced by un-pragmatic and foolish dreamers.

I have come to believe that this theory is false and that mankind *can* embrace a different path – one on which we put aside the myth of war as a force that gives us meaning, build the beloved community on earth, and bring it to the stars. This sounds awfully idealistic but, just as human history is littered with the folly of war, so it is also filled with examples of humanity’s efforts to seek a better, more just community – literally peace for all mankind. In fact, human history is a struggle between these conflicting views of man’s destiny. Perhaps this is the true battle between good and evil. How that battle is finally resolved has been and always will be up to us.

Those who would call me a foolish dreamer would do well to read Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The Homeric epics, the literary foundations of Western Civilization, speak to us across the centuries of the utter folly and futility of war and the promise of peace. Achilles, the hero of the *Iliad*, is motivated by a vain lust for glory, booty, and vengeance – and by nothing else. The opening lines of the poem say it all (1:1 – 5):

*Rage – Goddess, sing the rage of Peleus’ son Achilles,
murderous, doomed, that cost the Achaeans countless losses,
hurling down to the House of Death so many sturdy souls,
greater fighters’ souls, but made their bodies carrion,
feasts for the dogs and birds...ⁱ*

Achilles and his fellow Greeks brutally kill their enemies and ultimately destroy the City of Troy, the archetype of the Greek city-state. In other words, they destroy human civilization as they know it – all for a lust for glory, revenge, and booty.

The *Odyssey*, on the other hand, bloody as it is, offers a promise of peace. Odysseus, whose Trojan Horse led to the downfall of Troy, is condemned to years of wandering and many trials before he can truly come home. As theologian and journalist Chris Hedges writes, his odyssey is a metaphor for the personal journey all soldiers must take to transform themselves from warriors into civilized men once their wars are over.ⁱⁱ Odysseus' goal is not glory but a peaceful death among those he loves (11: 153 – 156):

*And at last your own death will steal upon you...
a gentle, painless death, far from the sea it comes
to take you down, borne down with the years in ripe old age
with all your people there in blessed peace around you.ⁱⁱⁱ*

Having portrayed the reality of war in the *Iliad*, Homer offers us the promise of peace in the *Odyssey*. Together, his stories set the stage for competing visions of mankind's destiny, one of war and the other of peace, that occupy us to this day.

Unfortunately, our civilization has often disregarded Homer's cautionary tales mainly because, over the centuries, we have convinced ourselves that wars, particularly so-called just wars conducted ostensibly in self defense, are an inevitable part of the human condition and even necessary to human development. Rather than work actively for the eradication of war and the establishment of a just peace on Earth, we have institutionalized war in our laws, in our communities, and in our lives. To prove this to yourself, all you need do is examine employment statistics for Rhode Island. Defense and defense-related jobs account for over 7% of employment in the state's manufacturing sector and as much as 50% of the state's manufacturing wage base.^{iv} Like most regions of our country, loss of the defense industry would have a very detrimental economic impact on our state and its citizens – in other words, you and me. We

can't do without the defense industry because it has become an integral and essential part of our livelihoods and, hence, our lives and our society. We are addicted to the industry and infrastructure of war and, hence, to war itself.

How did this happen? How did we turn away from Homer's portrayal of the reality and consequences of war? How did we institutionalize human conflict to such an extent that we are addicted to it? And how can we break the cycle of addiction?

It happened because we fooled ourselves into thinking that war is necessary, inevitable, and, when practiced by a just people, is a just act. This myth of necessary, inevitable, and even just war goes back to ancient times, almost to Homer's day. The ancient Athenians fought wars of imperial conquest under the pretext of enhancing their security by spreading democratic ideals (sound familiar?). Alexander the Great justified his war of choice on the Persian Empire by old arguments of Greek self-defense and by dreams of a peaceful world kingdom founded on Greek civilization. Finally, the great Roman emperor Caesar Augustus, who is justly credited with establishing the centuries-long *Pax Romana*, did so only as an afterthought, justifying a war that was little more than a naked power grab as necessary to bring peace and reestablish civil order. In this he succeeded but at the cost of a civil war that ravaged the ancient Roman aristocracy, laid waste to large portions of the civilized world, and nearly destroyed the fabric of ancient society.

While in the ancient world, wars were often justified as the means to spread or sustain civilization, Christian theorists developed a more insidious justification founded on their reading of early Christian theologians such as Saint Augustine of Hippo. According to these theorists, what matters is not so much the act but the motivation behind the act. Even though Christ enjoined his followers to "turn the other cheek" in response to being struck, Christians need not

take this literally. Killing, when commanded by God or by a legitimate ruler who is carrying out God's intent to restrain evil on Earth, is justified.^v

Some have argued that this is not what Augustine was saying at all. For example, the Rev. Neil Elliot states:

I can find no passage in the City of God wherein Augustine describes, even theoretically, Christian participation in war, let alone a Christian obligation to wage war. To the contrary, he presents the logic of so-called "just-war thinking" as an inferior and unworthy logic, a failure on the part of his pagan contemporaries to think through the true nature of human striving for the good. Of the supreme good, which Christians know as the true peace of the City of God, the so-called peace that is trumpeted as the goal of every war is only a dim approximation.^{vi}

Nevertheless, just war sanctioned by God is a very convenient theory which gained even more traction as justification for the Christian crusades to the Holy Land in the High Middle Ages. At that time, Gratian of Bologna theorized that:

The subordination of the individual to God allows (one) to resolve the apparent contradiction between war service and the precepts of the gospel, because to him this subordination appears in man's intent rather than in his deeds. The demands of the gospel which apparently tell against war service relate to the 'preparation of the heart'...Wrongful individual conduct makes war service into sin: for example, a wrong motive such as hatred, or selfish behavior arising from greed for booty. Conversely, war service which seeks not personal advantage, but the good of the political community, is deserving of the highest praise.^{vii}

This concept that fighting for a just, God-sanctioned cause is praiseworthy was further refined by St. Thomas Aquinas into the Theory of Just War that is currently enshrined in international law and the United Nations Charter. The concept of just war is a logical theory embraced by people of good will and righteous conviction for centuries. I have embraced it and so have many of you.

And yet, I think you can guess where the logic of the theory breaks down. Since God very seldom offers guidance or direction on which wars we should fight and which we should not, it is left to men to make these decisions. Oliver Cromwell, Louis XIV, Frederick the Great,

Napoleon, Hitler – our history is littered with leaders who spoke of a mandate from God to wage war, acting with justice to eradicate an evil they stated was offensive to God. Their peoples were convinced too – else they would not have kept their leaders in power. As David Hume said in 1740:

When our own nation is at war with any other, we detest them under the character of cruel, perfidious, unjust and violent: But always esteem ourselves and allies equitable, moderate, and merciful. If the general of our enemies be successful, 'tis with difficulty we allow him the figure and character of a man. He is a sorcerer: He has a communication with daemons; as is reported of Oliver Cromwell, and the Duke of Luxembourg: He is bloody-minded, and takes a pleasure in death and destruction. But if the success be on our side, our commander has all the opposite good qualities, and is a pattern of virtue, as well as of courage and conduct. His treachery we call policy: His cruelty is an evil inseparable from war. In short, every one of his faults we either endeavor to extenuate, or dignify it with the name of that virtue, which approaches it.^{viii}

Or, in a more modern context, we easily convinced ourselves that the 9/11 bombings in New York and Washington were evil but “shock and awe” perpetrated on the people of Baghdad was an act of justice.

Just War Theory, which Western leaders have used to justify aggression for centuries, which President Bush used to justify the war of choice in Iraq and even President Obama uses to justify war in Afghanistan (not directly but by relying on the United Nations Charter among other legal grounds), is, therefore, founded on a false premise – that fallible men can be trusted to make the choice between war and peace on the basis of justice and compassion. History demonstrates that, even in democratic societies, they cannot.

But, without just war theory, what are we left with? Simply war as Homer portrayed it – brutal, inhuman, and evil. President Jimmy Carter has said that war may be a necessary evil, but no matter how necessary, it is always evil. In this, I have come to disagree, at least in part. Although I agree war is always evil, I also believe it is never necessary. So, having concluded to

my satisfaction that war is never just, never necessary, and is always evil, I have asked myself is it still an inevitable part of human affairs? Heinrich von Treitschke, one of the philosophical fathers of Hitler's Third Reich thought so, stating in the late nineteenth century:

War is not just a practical necessity; it is also a theoretical necessity, an exigency of logic. The concept of the State is power...That war should ever be banished from the world is a hope not only absurd, but profoundly immoral. It would involve the atrophy of many of the essential and sublime forces of the human soul...A people which becomes attached to the... hope of perpetual peace finishes irremediably by decaying in its proud isolation...^{ix}

This idea that war is necessary to human development is not confined to totalitarian states. National security advisors in the Reagan administration believed that, "war, not peace, is the norm in international affairs," while George W. Bush's 2002 National Security Strategy advocated preemptive war and spoke of a war on terror of uncertain duration.^x Many of my students at the Naval War College firmly believed that war is inevitable. It is this sense of inevitability that has made it so easy for us to convert our republic into a national security state. It is what makes it so easy for us to justify the continued expenditure of vast resources on defense even as other important elements of our society enter into advanced decay. It is what makes our addiction to war possible. To end our addiction to war, we must convince ourselves that it is not inevitable.

The cynics will once again say that this is a pipe dream. "The world is a complex place," they will argue. "We all want peace but it is not practical. You are being too simplistic." Yet isn't it those who make the case for war who often reduce complex situations to simplistic rhetoric? Does the statement, "Over time it's going to be important for nations to know they will be held accountable for inactivity. You're either with us or against us in the fight against terror,"^{xi} adequately capture the complexities of the world as it is today or is it just political

rhetoric designed to get ignorant people emotionally engaged in a war they really don't understand?

Peace advocates on the other hand respect our intelligence and appeal to our better natures in making the argument for peace. Far from being overly idealistic, they recognize the world for what it is and appeal to us to take practical steps to make it better. President John F. Kennedy did this in his famous peace speech at American University in 1963:

First examine our attitude towards peace itself. Too many of us think it is impossible. Too many think it is unreal. But that is a dangerous, defeatist belief. It leads to the conclusion that war is inevitable, that mankind is doomed, that we are gripped by forces we cannot control. We need not accept that view. Our problems are manmade; therefore, they can be solved by man. And man can be as big as he wants. No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings. Man's reason and spirit have often solved the seemingly unsolvable, and we believe they can do it again...Let us focus instead on a more practical, more attainable peace, based not on a sudden revolution in human nature but on a gradual evolution in human institutions -- on a series of concrete actions and effective agreements which are in the interest of all concerned. There is no single, simple key to this peace; no grand or magic formula to be adopted by one or two powers. Genuine peace must be the product of many nations, the sum of many acts. It must be dynamic, not static, changing to meet the challenge of each new generation. For peace is a process -- a way of solving problems.^{xiii}

Kennedy did more than just talk. He found practical ways in which we could work for peace on Earth. None, I think, did more to demonstrate to us how man's restless energies could be channeled to the cause of peace than the goal of putting a man on the Moon by the end of the 1960's. Costing \$25 billion and involving thousands upon thousands of scientists, technicians, administrators and aviators, the Apollo lunar exploration program harnessed all of the resources and energies of the American people into an activity that had very little military application. While the technologies developed from the Apollo program have been applied in many areas, including national defense, none of the spacecraft or equipment was developed with a dual military – civilian use. It was all built simply to go to the Moon, advance human knowledge, and

return safely. In a very positive way, the Apollo program helped us define ourselves as a nation. How many times have you heard someone say, “If we could send a man to the Moon, why can’t we...?” We uniquely define ourselves as the nation that went to the Moon and use that achievement to inspire ourselves to do other great things.

What else did the Apollo program achieve? According to one of the official histories of the project:

First, and probably most important, the Apollo program was successful in accomplishing the political goals for which it had been created. Kennedy had been dealing with a Cold War crisis in 1961 brought on by several separate factors...that Apollo was designed to combat. At the time of the Apollo 11 landing Mission Control in Houston flashed the words of President Kennedy announcing the Apollo commitment on its big screen. Those phrases were followed with these: "TASK ACCOMPLISHED, July 1969." No greater understatement could probably have been made. Any assessment of Apollo that does not recognize the accomplishment of landing an American on the Moon and safely returning before the end of the 1960s is incomplete and inaccurate, for that was the primary goal of the undertaking.^{xiii}

If you pause to consider that statement for a moment, you will grasp the true significance of the Apollo program. Faced with political and military crises, an American President focused on an essentially peaceful endeavor to address them, giving substance to his own words, “Let us focus instead on a more practical, more attainable peace, based not on a sudden revolution in human nature but on a gradual evolution in human institutions -- on a series of concrete actions and effective agreements which are in the interest of all concerned.” Realizing Kennedy’s vision of landing a man on the Moon within a decade showed us how we could realize his vision for a lasting peace.

So what can we do today to further Kennedy’s vision and begin working toward a lasting, practical peace? We can start by questioning those paradigms that convince us that war is just, necessary, and inevitable. For example, ask yourself:

1. Is the solution to the Israel – Palestine conflict only to be found if, first, the Palestinians completely disarm and surrender their means to fight Israel? Is the solution only to be found if the Israelis surrender territory necessary to making them feel secure?
2. Is torture ever necessary?
3. Are the men who perpetrated the 9/11 attacks, and other acts of terrorism, simply irrational people with whom there is no negotiating or are they people with a political agenda of value to them who, quite possibly, can be reasoned with from a basis of recognition of their legitimate needs and aspirations?
4. If the Iranians are building nuclear weapons, are they doing so because of an irrational religious zealotry that is not open to reason or are they acting in self-defense because, among other things, they are surrounded on all sides by American military power?
5. Is American military and diplomatic power used solely from a basis of justice and the ideals of our Founding Fathers or do we more often act selfishly without consideration of the legitimate perspectives of others?
6. Closer to home, is it possible to redirect the work of the Naval War College, Raytheon and the Naval Undersea Warfare Center to strictly peaceful study, scientific research and technological development while still maintaining a level of employment and compensation beneficial to the community?

If, having answered these questions, you are still convinced that war is just, necessary, and inevitable, then I will conclude by asking you to consider the example of Robert McNamara, onetime Secretary of Defense and one of the key architects of the American war in Vietnam. McNamara was convinced that intervention in Vietnam was just, necessary, and inevitable. Of this he was certain (at least in the beginning) and, as a result, his failure to achieve his goals was

all the more profound. We don't have to repeat his mistakes. As one commentator wrote in *The Washington Post* following McNamara's recent death:

Nobody gets to do over his mistakes, least of all Robert McNamara. But perhaps the memory of this brilliant and tragic man will keep us from being too certain of our own judgment -- and encourage us to consider, even when we feel most confident, the possibility that we could be wrong.^{xiv}

When it comes to the justice, necessity, and inevitability of war, we have been consistently wrong. War is not the answer to our problems. But the path that leads to true and lasting peace will be a long one. As demonstrated by our voyages from the Earth to the Moon, however, we have discovered that by channeling mankind's abundant energies in positive directions, we can make real, practical progress on the path to peace. To take the first steps on that path, to channel our energies toward peace, we all need to convince ourselves that war is not just, is not necessary, and is not inevitable. Let's take those steps together today.

Prayer for Peace
St. Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy;

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;

to be understood as to understand;

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Benediction

In the name of Allah,

the beneficent, the merciful.

Praise be to the Lord of the

Universe who has created us and

made us into tribes and nations,

That we may know each other, not that

we may despise each other.

If the enemy incline towards peace, do
thou also incline towards peace, and
trust God, for the Lord is the one that
heareth and knoweth all things.

And the servants of God,
Most Gracious are those who walk on
the Earth in humility, and when we
address them, we say "PEACE."

ⁱ Fagles, Robert (translator, 1991). *The Iliad of Homer* (p. 1). London: The Folio Society.

ⁱⁱ Hedges, Chris (2002). *War is a force that gives us meaning* (p. 12). New York: Public Affairs.

ⁱⁱⁱ Fagles, Robert (translator, 1996). *The Odyssey of Homer* (pp. 190 – 191). London: The Folio Society.

^{iv} Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation (2006). *The defense industry in Rhode Island: Economic impact report* (pp. 12 – 13). Downloaded 06 July 2009 from http://www.riedc.com/files/DefInd_EconImpactReport_August2006_0.pdf.

^v Holmes, Robert L. (2001). A time for war? Augustine's just war theory continues to guide the West. *Christianity Today Online* (<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2001/septemberweb-only/9-17-55.0.html?start=1>), Sept. 2001.

^{vi} Elliot, Rev. Neil (2004). Revisiting Augustine & just-war theory. *The Witness Online* (<http://www.thewitness.org/article.php?id=275>), June 2004.

^{vii} Hehl, Ernst-Dieter (2004). War peace and the Christian order. In Luscombe, David and Riley-Smith, Jonathan (eds.). *The new Cambridge modern history, volume IV c. 1024 – 1198, part I* (p. 220). Cambridge University Press.

^{viii} Hume, David (1740). *A treatise on human nature*. Quoted in Hedges, Chris (2002). *War is a force that gives us meaning* (p. 1). New York: Public Affairs.

^{ix} Quoted in Shirer, William L. (1995). *The rise and fall of the Third Reich* (p. 109). London: The Folio Society.

^x Bush, President George W. (2002). The national security strategy of the United States of America. Washington: The White House, September 17th, 2002. Downloaded July 10th, 2009 from <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/>.

^{xi} Statement of President George W. Bush, November 6th, 2001. Cited in CNN article found online at <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/11/06/gen.attack.on.terror/>.

^{xii} Speech given by President John F. Kennedy at the commencement ceremonies of American University, Washington, DC, June 10th, 1963. Found at: <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jfkamericanuniversityaddress.html>.

^{xiii} History Office, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (2004). Project Apollo: A retrospective analysis. Found online at: <http://history.nasa.gov/Apollomon/Apollo.html>.

^{xiv} Commentary by Jim Hoagland, *The Washington Post*, Tuesday, July 7th, 2009. Found online at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/07/06/AR2009070602906.html?hpid=opinionsbox1>.