

OpenTheo

The Just War Tradition

March 20, 2024



Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

Have you ever wondered if King Arthur was justified in cutting off all four limbs of Monty Python's Black Knight when he refused the king passage? If so, then you'll want to listen to this episode of LBE with Eric Patterson. Eric is an author, an important leader in Washington, D.C. and an expert in the theology and history of the Just War Tradition. What are the right reasons for going to war? How should a just war be fought? Was the American Revolution a just war (or even a revolution)? What about the firebombing of Dresden in World War II? Join Kevin and Eric and they try to apply the insights of the Just War Tradition to military conflicts past and present.

Chapters:

0:00 Introductions

7:45 A Basic Guide to the Just War Tradition

15:45 What Makes a War Just?

29:45 Sponsor Break | Crossway

30:28 "It's Only a Flesh Wound."

35:25 A Just American Revolution?

46:39 MLK's Just Cause

51:15 Sponsor Break | Desiring God

52:00 Current Events

Books & Everything:

Basic Guide to the Just War Tradition: Christian Foundations and Practices

Just War and Christian Traditions

Humility: The Joy of Self-Forgetfulness

Ask Pastor John: 750 Bible Answers to Life's Most Important Questions

Transcript

Greetings and salutations. Welcome back to Life and Books and Everything. I'm Kevin D. Young, senior pastor at Christ Covenant Church in Matthews, North Carolina.

Today I am joined by my special guest, Eric Patterson. Eric, you have such a long bio here on Wikipedia. So somebody's doing a good job that I won't be able to do that.

I won't be able to get to all of it, but Eric is an American political scientist. Work focuses on international relations. Just War Theory.

That's what we're going to be talking about today. Just War Theory and his book on that topic. He has advanced degrees from University of California, Santa Barbara, University of Wales.

And as of very recently, you now serve as the president and CEO of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation in Washington, D.C. These worked at the Religious Freedom Institute in D.C. and taught and has written in a number of academic journals and other places. So Eric, thank you for being on Life and Books and Everything. Kevin, you're welcome.

It's a pleasure to be here with you today. So just tell us a little bit more. That's the important stuff, but tell us the other important stuff.

Tell us about your family. Tell us about how you became a Christian. Just give us a little more introduction and then work your way into this new job, the victim of Communism Memorial Foundation.

What is that all about? Well, I had the pleasure. I mean, really the blessing I should say of growing up in a Christian home. And so a lot of credit goes to my parents for modeling literally to this day what a godly marriage looks like and the importance of being grounded in the Bible and being grounded in church.

And being honest about limitations, even in their own lives and things that we live in a fallen world and that it's really Christ that brings us not just eternal redemption, but as a redeeming force in this world as well. And I went to Evangelion University, Christian College in Springfield, Missouri. And from our early age, I was interested in this intersection between what does it mean to be a Christian and to be involved in politics, statecraft and national security.

And so my work over the years, both as a scholar and then time working at the State

Department and elsewhere has come back time and time again to thinking about how does a Christian act as a statesman. So Daniel, Joshua and others in the Bible, all the way to say William Wilberforce or people in the 20th century, Ronald Reagan and others who are trying to bring a strong moral determination in favor of reality and human freedom into how we do statecraft. I've just taken over as president CEO of the victims of communism Memorial Foundation.

And you can see we but we have a role to play in terms of educating and remembering that about the past as well as advocating on behalf of today's 1.5 billion people who are still caught in communist regimes. And so once again, this idea of how values of the worth of the human and freedom tied directly to the kinds of policies that we'd like to see from the U.S. government. So when you tell people about this new job, and you've just had it, but this foundation has been around, do any Christians say, oh, well, that sounds interesting.

But communism? Didn't we conquer that? Wasn't that like in Cold War, 80s, 90s thing? Hey, is this still going on? Does anyone sound sort of incredulous? Like, do we still need this? Yeah, both in this job and in my previous job, I would get that question quite often. So in this job, people will often say, yeah, we won the Cold War, isn't it over? And the answer is no. In fact, the world is less free today than it was 15 years ago.

China is less free than it was, say, around 2005. We've had a spate of hard left regimes take over in Latin America. The worst right now being Nicaragua, especially Cuba, Venezuela, and they attack evangelicals, they attack the Catholic Church.

And that's true in other places like North Korea and whatnot. So we have a lot of work to do to advocate for the men and women on the ground, the citizens of those countries, particularly the religious and ethnic minorities who are under the thumb of true communist oppression. And how did you get interested in this work? So I think I've been long interested in how a robust foreign policy can be one that's a common good foreign policy.

So for instance, my last job, I spent five years first as executive vice president and then president of the Religious Freedom Institute. And again, we were advocating for the human rights of everybody around the globe. So Christian minorities, but people of other faiths or ethnic religious groups in India and China and elsewhere.

And this is a common good approach. It's good for our foreign policy. It's good for Americans to live in a freer world.

But it's also good for people who are behind the bamboo curtain or who are, say, Christians, religious minorities in India. We're going to have a stable, more prosperous world if we see freedom for everybody. And I've interacted a little bit before with your wife, Jennifer Marshall Patterson.

Tell us, give her a good shout out because she does a lot of important things in her own right, of course. Well, Jennifer is truly a great Christian leader. She's been many years as a vice president at a think tank in Washington, D.C. She's now affiliated with the Reform Theological Seminary's campus in Washington, D.C. where she directs the Institute for Theology and Public Life, which brings scholars in to provide teaching and resources on some of the issues of our day from a theological perspective, things like bioethics, just war and other things.

And she has a couple of degrees already, but she's in the A.B.D. phase, finishing her dissertation at a university in Washington, D.C. and she's doing it on issues of human nature and grace in the amount of day. Wow, sounds impressive. And we haven't met before, so this is really fun for me.

I know we have a lot of mutual friends, but Andrew Walker. That's right. Yeah, and so Andrew Walker raves about you.

And if you know Andrew, if he likes somebody, that's pretty high praise. That means a lot to me. I think he's a rising or a true rising evangelical thought leader for us.

Yeah, yeah, I really appreciate Andrew. Know what somebody pointed out to me, though? Back in 2001, you and I both entered an act in essay contest. Do you remember this? And I'm just somebody sent me this link that we both were.

I remember that we that I did it and I published a little volume. Yeah, yeah, same. So I mean, I had forgotten all about that.

That was some 20 years ago. So we intersected both of our essays on, I don't even remember what I wrote on something about probably religious, I think the freedom of religion is what I wrote on. I don't know if Acton still does that, but that was a good little thing as a as a student to enter into.

And who would have known 23 years later that there would be a thing called a podcast and we may be doing it. So, so thank you. Eric, we're going to talk about this book, which this come out.

Baker published this, I think last year or 2022. Yeah, 2023, a basic guide to the Just War tradition Christian foundations and practices. This is an excellent book that Baker academic did.

You also have along with Daryl Charles, this book by University of Notre Dame Press, anyone's watching, you can see just war and Christian traditions. So this is a series of academic scholarly essays. And this is also well worth reading, but we're going to talk about this more layman's guide.

It's just 150 pages, but it's really rich and thoughtful. And, as I was saying before we

came on, you use a lot of contemporary illustrations and also historical examples to try to think through this Just War tradition. And I want to start with something you say toward the beginning, you're giving this 1940 Oxford lectures that CS Lewis is giving, talking about war and pacifism.

And I just wrote here on the margin of my book, and this is Thomas Sol's language, constrained versus unconstrained vision, which is what I think really CS Lewis in this quote that you give him, Lewis says, I think the best results are obtained by people who work quietly, away at limited objectives, such as the abolition of the slave trade or prison reform or tuberculosis, not by those who think they can achieve universal justice or health or peace. I think the art of life consists of tackling each immediate evil as well as we can. So say a little bit more about that quotation from Lewis, and if you think that's a fair description, constrained versus unconstrained vision, and what that has to do with this Just War tradition.

So when Lewis is writing that, what he's talking about, that the unconstrained vision, he's critical of utopianism. He's critical of people who are sitting at you often in comfort at a university or somewhere, people working perhaps at an international organization. And this is one of those times where the perfect can be the enemy of the good.

And if they can't fit, if they can't on a whiteboard trace the perfect way to do international relations, that they will be literally self prohibiting of action. Lewis is talking about the doctor who would fearize about surgery, but not go in and practice the surgery that saves the patient's life. And so Lewis, like many other Just War scholars, most notably James, Turner Johnson, and others, is emphasizing we live in a fallen world and we have to take practical steps that will that will ameliorate suffering that will fight evil that will deter the wrong that will punish wrongdoers.

And it's going to be imperfect, but that's how you do real action. That's how you get things done. And that's particularly true in times of injustice and the need for force.

So what sort of response would you give or Lewis or others in the tradition? And I'm certainly, you know, would want to put myself in the same Just War tradition. The person who says the Christian is says, well, that sounds like consequentialism or that sounds like the ends justifies the means and shouldn't we be willing to suffer and have our rights violated for the cause of Christ. And we shouldn't take up arms because Jesus did turn the other cheek.

I can hear because I've heard a lot of well-meaning Christians quickly jump to those sort of explanations or rebuffs if somebody talks about war ever being the Christian answer to some international conflict. How do you respond in brief to that kind of argument, which you've surely heard a thousand times. Yeah, there's a couple of pieces there to get at.

One, simply as this, this individual is right if what they're talking about is that they are being attacked for their faith. So the consistent teaching of Christians who have passed 2000 years has been, if you are you the individual are identified as a Christian and you are told that you must give up your faith or die, essentially, that that's the time to not fight back. That is the one time to say, I will not give up my faith.

I will not publicly denounce Christ. But Lewis talks very specifically about the turn the other cheek and he says, did any of our Lord's hearers think that when he said that what he meant is that I'm a step aside and let a homicidal maniac murder a child, those are Lewis's words. Lewis goes on to say that when Jesus said turn the other cheek in the context of the beatitudes that he was talking to local Jewish villagers about the frictions of daily life.

In other words, you know, I might call having someone step on your toes. And we know that there was a high level of honor and shame type of culture there for the Jewish people at the time that we know from things like when a disciple says, oh Lord, should I forgive seven times? Or a disciple says, let's bring down fire from heaven. You know, these are indicative of a culture that took offense very easily, kind of like Scottish highlanders or something.

And Jesus is saying, in this specific instance, listen, turn the other cheek means throttle down your own ego, throttle down your own pride. Don't respond kind for kind in these interactions of people. And you can see how that is totally different from war, and we can talk about war next, if you like.

Yeah, I think there's, I was just looking for, I couldn't find the exact quotation, but GK Chesterton, always good for equips. It's something like, you know, Jesus didn't say a whole lot about war except he showed a great affinity for Roman soldiers. And it's true, the centurion is the hero in some ways of Mark's Gospel, because he's the one in Mark 15 who finally gets it right that truly, this is the Son of God.

And when soldiers would come to Jesus or they would come to John the Baptist, and they would want to know, well, what do I do? And they would say repent, but it's interesting that repentance involved not extorting people, not cheating, not defrauding. The same kinds of things he would tell the tax collectors, it didn't say, and you must now hand in your commission as a Roman soldier. And surely the Roman apparatus was not always doing things that were the good, the true, and the beautiful.

And so there must have been a way, even as a soldier in the Roman Empire, that you could serve honorably in a regime and in a system that was going to ask you. Now you still had to think about what you were doing, it wasn't a blank check to just kill indiscriminately. But I always think that when people, Christians are quick to, or even now there can be, you know, memorial day comes around, and some Christians just want to kind of wring their hands at the United States, and as if there's a moral equivalency,

because of course the United States has committed atrocities and sins every nation has.

And yet Jesus shows us that there must be a way to honorably serve even in war and follow him. So say a little bit about, you've given a good segue to talk about the just war, the classic distinctions, the use ad bellum and the use in bellow, so the morality of going to war and the morality of fighting in war, and then less familiar, but you talk about the morality of how war ends. So let's just walk through these and you can go through just some, or you can tick off all of them, but let's talk about the morality of going to war, the use or the just ad bellum.

What in the tradition are those requirements for going to war, to make a war a just war? Kevin, I want to pick up as we do this what you said, I just want to affirm what you said about those Roman soldiers, because John the Baptist said, just like you said, be content with your wages, don't oppress people. Jesus never told a Roman soldier or a public official that they had to drop their public service vocation. Peter and Paul tell us to pray for people in authority, and at the end of Paul's letters he sends warm greetings to people who are obviously working in the imperial administration, members of Caesar's household, Zenis the lawyer, and others.

So we have no new testament teaching that says that people who have a public service vocation, a magistrate, a judge, a elected official, a public official, a law enforcement official, a soldier that they necessarily can't be in those vocations as Christians. And so that's something that's largely been lost. We haven't had enough teaching on the idea of vocations in the church, the vision for society that God calls people, gives them gifts and talents to do a variety of different roles, and that we need those public service vocations, the Joshua's, the Daniels, the Hezekiah's, the David's, the Centurians, remember Jesus said the Centurion had more faith than anyone in Israel.

So we need those people, God has created a world where we need people serving in those roles for society to be healthy. So, and that brings us to how to govern those types of roles. So the Joshua tradition, as you said, really has three questions, three big questions.

The first is, when is it morally right to consider the use of force? And there are three big principles that have been around for a long time and then some secondary prudential criteria. So first, we're talking about proper or legitimate authorities acting on a just cause with right intention. So what we're talking about with the use of force in this case, whether it's law enforcement or the military, is public authorities, what we would call government or civil authorities.

They're the ones who make these decisions. It is, and that distinguishes the use of force that's legitimate from a criminal cartel, terrorists and surgeons, anyone who's undermining the rule of law is outside of that proper authority. And then second, they have to consider a just cause.

Self-defense of your neighbors is the obvious one. But as Augustine wrote in the fourth century, other just causes are preventing future wrongdoing, punishing wrongdoers or riding past wrongs. And so clearly those have to do with political order and justice.

So authority just cause and then right intention. And this is such an important part of what Christianity brings to all of this. A right intention, Augustine says at one point, what are the evils in war? And he talks about things like lust, greed, wrathful hatred of other people.

But right intention are things like neighbor love, protection, defense, the pursuit of justice. And so authorities acting on just causes, including the pursuit of justice, the pursuit of order and stability with a right intention, not hate, but in pursuit of positive or constructive ends. That's where we start when the decision about whether or not to use force is employed.

And then what is the question, okay, how do we do this? So there's those categories and then the use in bellow. How do we think about the morality of fighting in war? Because even if you say this is a just cause, all right, it was right that the allies would fight back against the Axis powers in World War II. But that didn't mean that anything they did was acceptable.

Just walk us through some of those criteria. That's right. As you mentioned earlier, there's a secondary set of decision points that we want smart statesmen to use.

Like, have we gotten to a point of last resort? Have we tried diplomacy, et cetera? But those come after those first principles. And then once that decision is made, there are three of these ethics of war criteria, or we call them use in bellow. The first one is military necessity, the second's proportionality, and the third is discrimination.

And they work together. So military necessity is this idea that on this battlefield, in this given place in time, that a military commander should use all lawful tactics and weapons to try to win. To win right here.

And that is really a stewardship principle. He's trying to steward the amount of ammunition that he uses, the amount of troops that he puts in harm's way. He's trying to win in this local battlefield to tie it to the big war aims towards the larger scope of victory, but to do it in a restrained fashion.

And the restraint comes from the idea of proportionality. That the weapons and the tactics we use here should be proportionate to the threat and the objective. So you wouldn't drop an atomic bomb on a sniper, for instance.

And the other principle that informs this is the idea of discrimination or distinction. We often will call it noncombatant immunity in international law. It's imperfect, but it's the attempt to reasonably protect things like private property, hospitals, libraries, schools,

some elements of infrastructure.

And noncombatants, we used to say women and children are civilian life. And so those three principles govern how or is fought on the battlefield. So let's talk about a few historical examples with those last categories.

And looking back in history is easy to be armchair quarterback. And so it doesn't always give easy answers. But let's take one, for example, in the Civil War and Sherman's March to the Sea.

I think from a southern perspective, then and even now would say, well, that was unnecessary destroying towns, burning fields. That was the north punishing the south. I think then and maybe even now, the north would have said, look, whatever this is what it would take to bring the war to its swiftest conclusion.

That you have to break the back and the will of the people. And until you do that, the army will keep fighting. And so this was a genuine military tactic.

Now, without wanting to reignite the fires of the Civil War, as I'm a northerner here in Charlotte, North Carolina. I don't know what you will say, but I'm curious. How do you think of a real historical occurrence like that in applying these just war stipulations? Well, I think the intent is a big part of this.

So if the intent was to bring the war to a quicker end, to knock out the support structure, the physical support, meaning the supplies for the troops, the transportation networks, the places that were sources of trade, not just across the south, but with foreign governments, for instance. So all of those strategic things, if the intent was to hit that primarily, and the demonstration effect that this war could not be won by the south because it couldn't protect their rear, all of that is perfectly legitimate. And I would note that, for instance, union troops were not told to lock up Georgians into concentration camps.

They were not told to rape, pillage, and plunder. They were supposed to not do that. Any of those types of things.

I'm sure that like in any war, there were some things that happened that should not have happened, but the policy was not to do that. So those are the types of considerations, whether Sherman's March to the Sea, or some of the campaigns that happened during the Second World War that we have to take into consideration and think very specifically about what was the commander's intent, what was the purpose of the campaign. Was it done out of vengeful wrath? Did it have a primarily military and strategic objective? And I think that much of what happened with Sherman's March to the Sea.

And remember, he turns and then he comes up, he's headed north at that point to crush any armies that are in his way in North Carolina and whatnot. All of those seem to be

strategic objectives. So you mentioned World War II, apply the same grid then to the fire bombing of Dresden, which is often would be mentioned as one of the things that US and allied troops should not have done.

And then Nagasaki and Hiroshima. How do you think about those as a political scientist and historian? So I want to start with the importance that leaders have for protecting the lives of their own civilians and their own troops. You see, in September of 1939, when Hitler unleashed World War II in Europe, the average British male was at work.

He was a civilian and they had to be pulled into the armed forces because of a war unleashed by foreign power. On December 7, 1941, the US military, the US army only had 300,000 troops in it. Now, as you know, it grew to over 5 million.

But at the time, it was a tiny army. We were neutral. And so the average American male was a farmer or a banker or a doctor.

He was not a combatant. And so one thing that's often lost in these conversations is the responsibility that Churchill or Truman or the another leader had to all of those families to try to prosecute a war as briskly and forcefully as they can and to bring those people back. And so when we think about Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we know that Truman and the people around him believed and it's historically accurate to this day.

That to invade the Japanese home islands would cost a million casualties. We also know that what's often forgotten is that there were concentration camps in the Far East where thousands of people were dying weekly. There were Americans, Australians, British, and our Chinese allies were in Japanese concentration camps that were extremely brutal.

That people were starving there and thousands and thousands were dying every single week. And in the islands, the Japanese fought to the last man. They were doing kamikaze flights.

They were killing themselves. So how do you stop a war against an adversary that absolutely will not give up? And how do you protect your own troops? All of those guys who were civilians when they woke up on December 7th, 1941. The answer in the case was the atomic bombing of those two cities with the loss of life of under a quarter of a million people.

Now it's a tragedy. It was very destructive. But the purpose was to end the war and it actually saved, it probably saved more Japanese lives and of course it saved many, many allied lives.

So again, what's the purpose? What's the intent? What's the direction? I think this is clearly for people who study this, they should come to an understanding that those bombings were just. They mentioned Dresden. We know that at least in one, remember how World War I, World War II started with the Brits, was that the bombing of London

and Coventry Cathedral and the British countryside by the Germans.

In other words, the Blitz for a whole year. So when C.S. Lewis is writing and speaking his two famous things on just war at the time, why I'm not a pacifist and learning a war time. These cities are being bombed by the Germans who are indiscriminately bombing civilian centers.

Does that mean that it's legitimate for the British to retaliate out of vengeance against German civilians? And of course, the answer to that is now. And so what you have to look at is the specific bombing campaigns, the technology at the time and the purpose. I'd say that it's pretty well established that in at least one instance, Churchill used the language of that the purpose of that bombing campaign was retribution.

It was vengeance on the German people, not on the German military, etc. And so that's where you cross that line pretty clearly, is if it's a sense of vengeful wrath, hate targeting other civilians rather than with a true military objective. Yeah, that's really helpful.

Let me, I want to come right back to that. I need to mention one of our sponsors, Crossway. And Gavin Nordland's new book Humility, the joy of self-forgetfulness.

Humility is often an underappreciated virtue in our day. And even as we're talking about just war tradition, people may think, well, humility is the farthest thing from there, but actually it's not. It has everything to do with this tradition.

That's not what Gavin's book is about, but the two do intersect. He defines humility in light of the incarnation, cast the vision for gospel-centered humble life. So you can check this out.

You can go to Crossway.org. You can get a plus account there for 30% off that Crossway's book Humility by Gavin Nordland. So we've been talking about history and how to apply this just war tradition. And I love history, so I love that you go through a number of concrete examples from the sublime to the ridiculous.

So changing gears here, you sent me on a rabbit trail, and maybe rabbit's not the right word because there's a very frightening rabbit in this movie, but Monty Python. And you use the example of King Arthur trying to cross that little bridge, and he is met there by the Black Knight who will fight him to the death. So the question is, was Arthur King of the Britons just in removing his arms and his legs in order to cross the bridge when the Black Knight would not seed his path? It was just.

All right, yes, tell us why. If you haven't seen this clip, it's easily available on YouTube, and I'm finding that some of our younger audiences haven't seen it, but it immediately resonates. And it's a hilarious, hilarious moment.

So Arthur, and you made the point, he's King of the Britons, he's not a private citizen,

sees a Black Knight fighting a Green Knight and the Black Knight wins. And one might think, okay, that's really what this is all about. But what you notice very quickly is that there is a bridge over a chasm.

And Arthur greets the Knight, greets him in peace, invites him. He actually invites him, yeah, to be a part of so good night. Yes, invites him to be a part of the roundtable.

And Arthur famously says, when he's when it's declined, you make me sad. And then he tries to travel forward, and it's then when the Black Knight says, none shall pass. The famous none shall pass moment.

And here's the thing. I've often thought about, well, should Arthur just turn the other cheek? That's kind of the idea. He should go around, he should turn and go the other way, he shouldn't confront this guy, he shouldn't be violent.

But that's erroneous. And it's erroneous because Arthur is the King, he's the proper authority. And so he has a role to play to ensure that common people, peasants, traders, commercial travelers, are not threatened by this lawless individual.

This guy is essentially a pirate or a brigand or a terrorist in a sense. He's using force outside of government authority for his own ends. And Arthur has a role to play to take this guy on, to defeat him, and essentially to open up this by way of commerce.

And so it's a hilarious example. But think about it as in terms of a group like Al-Qaeda or Islamic State or another terrorist group. These are groups who kind of like the Black Knight, he just doesn't give up even if he's lost an arm.

He says it's only a flesh wound. They don't give up. And there's a point to be made here about first the role that government has to play for the common good, for prosperity and for security, to thwart the bad guys, because they are a threat to the fundamental order, what we call law and order of civic life.

And you have to think really in terms of the least of these. Who are the people who are always at the most vulnerable to the terrorists, the warlord, the brigand, the pirate, the criminal cartel, the drug traffickers. It's actually average citizens.

So whether it's Arthur or government elsewhere, it's a huge service to take down the Black Knights. And I didn't think of it before you gave that example of your book, but you could also say that Arthur was committed to proportionality. He didn't want to cut off all of his limbs.

He first said, you know, what do you say? I have no ought with you, Sir Black Knight. And he wanted to go. So then he cuts off his arm and it's all, you know, very slap sticky.

And then he doesn't turn away. And so he has to cut off his other arm. And even then he

wants to go, but yet he won't.

So then he cuts off his leg. And in my distraction from your book, I started reading on this scene. And is it John Kleece, I think, who's playing the Black Knight? And he very obviously, when his arms are cut off, just has his arms, you know, in his sleeves, in his shirt, you can almost see it.

But they actually found someone in the town where they were shooting with one leg to come in and shoot the scene where he's hopping on one leg. I don't know how they pitched that to this man. Hey, we're looking for a one-legged Black Knight.

And so it's all very ridiculous. But if you're teaching this sometime to a Sunday school class or you're wanting to help a student understand it, there are worse places to start than to say, let's think about this. All right, so something more consequential, of course.

You talk about the American Revolution. And I've heard even, you know, good Christians say, well, of course, you know, thinking of Americans, they say, well, of course, you know, glad for our freedom. Glad for the results that came from it, but really, theologically speaking, it's hard to make the case that there was a just war, that there was a just rationale for the colonists to initiate this violent rebellion.

They weren't being persecuted. It had to do with taxes and other sorts of inconveniences. Now, I'm going to ask our UK listeners out there to perhaps, you know, you might want to cover your ears for a few minutes.

But I thought you did a very good job in the book of laying out why you think, well, one, that revolution maybe isn't the right term to describe what happened in 1776 to 1787 and those years surrounding that. But also why you thought the American colonists in the war for independence were just in doing so. So sketch out your argument there and anyone can just revisit this come the 4th of July and be enlightened.

So go to it. Well, thanks for catching that there's a couple of issues here. And one, an important just naming convention is although the many of the founding fathers talked about a revolution of ideas, and that's what they meant when they talked about the American Revolution, technically speaking, it's not a revolution.

Think about the difference between the American war for independence and the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution in 1917, the Chinese Revolution of 1949, the revolution in Cambodia or elsewhere. These are true revolutions. By definition, a revolution is where an elite group of revolutionaries burned down literally all of the institutions of the past.

And then using force, they impose a new utopian order. It never turns out to be utopian, by the way, but they're idealists, they're zealots, and they impose a ideological framework on a society, whether or not the society wants it, and that's a complete break

with the past. That's what happens in the French Revolution after a couple of years with Madame Guillotine and the destruction of the church private property, the monarchy, the rewriting of laws, absolute chaos.

That's what happens with the Russian Revolution. In contrast, the American War for Independence is when it finally gets to the point of being a war is the culmination of a struggle for people who are saying, listen, we just want the same rights that we've had for the past 150 years under our colonial charters, and our rights as Englishmen. And if you think at the end of that war, seven years of war between 1776 and 1783, do they burn down the institutions of the past? Do they abolish people's private property, et cetera, et cetera? And the answer is no.

The new constitution that ultimately results after the Articles of Confederation, the basic rights of trial by jury, et cetera, those are things that the colonists had in their previous colonial charters, and they embraced them. So, let's get to the heart of what the American War for Independence made, how it really began. Recall that in the years up to 1776, remember what we learned in elementary school about the sugar acts, the towns and acts, the stamp of stamp.

So, first, a set of taxes, and it's true, it's taxation without very much representation, but second was the imposition of a whole set of other rules and laws on the colonies. And these are best documented. The colonists wrote over a dozen declarations before the Declaration of Independence.

The most important one, I think, is in July of 1775, a whole year before the Declaration of Independence. It's called the Declarations of Rights and Grievances of the United Colonies. Now, why are they writing this? They're writing it in July, July 2, 1775, because in April, the so-called shot heard around the world, the killing of Americans at Lexington and Concord happened.

So, red-coated troops kill American colonists at Lexington and Concord in April 1775. That's what starts the conflict. And in the Declaration of Rights and Grievances about 90 days later, the Continental Congress writes, here are our grievances.

First, you have been putting mercenaries from Germany in our homes. In other words, you commandeer one of our homes, we have to provide the stables and we have to provide bedroom space to these 18-year-old German, their Hessians, non-English-speaking mercenaries. Now, I just have to ask you.

I have a teenage daughter. How would you feel about the imposition of foreign-speaking mercenaries sleeping under your roof and you had nothing to say about it? Taking over your store, taking over your stable. Now, they would be supposedly reimbursed for these things, but it was that the colonists in Boston else were being treated like criminals.

Second, the loss of jury trial. That people could be tried under Admiralty Courts, under a entirely different set of law, without a defense attorney. They'd be taken from town, put on a ship in the harbor.

Third, religious freedom. The colonists were very deeply concerned with good reason of the imposition of the Episcopal Church throughout the colonies as a state church in the loss of religious freedom. The list goes on and on and on about the taxes, etc., the closing of the port of Boston.

Just a number of reasons that the colonists felt like the news was getting tighter and tighter around their neck. And then both in Massachusetts and in Virginia in 1775, British warriors attacked American citizens. And so it's by that point where the colonists say, we don't want to go to war.

We're not trying to set up an independent country. We're not trying to set up an empire. It's July of 1775.

But we will defend ourselves if attacked. And that's really the genesis of the American War for Independence. What usually happens is that people who haven't read the history say, oh, the Declaration of Independence declared independence.

Why didn't they wait to last resort? Why didn't they try diplomacy? Well, those people don't realize that the war at that point had been going up. But July 4th, 1776, the war had been going on for 17 months. Yeah.

No, that's a really good outline and explanation. And I'm obligated whenever I can to mention John Witherspoon, because when you do a dissertation on someone like I did, you just have to show something for your dissertation. So John Witherspoon, and there's a connection between these last two conversations we've had.

When John Witherspoon was a pastor in Scotland, 1745, he takes over a church in Beeth, which is outside of Glasgow. And he goes and he wants to view, there's a Jacobite rebellion, which are Catholic forces coming down from the north of Scotland. And he's in favor of the Hanoverians, which is sort of ironic because later he will be against George III.

Although he wasn't really against George III, he thought he had been mismanaged it and had had bad advisers. But in 1746, Witherspoon goes out to watch this battle, and he gets a company of volunteers, and then the royal forces say we don't need you, but he goes with his armor bearer to watch it. And in the midst of it, he gets captured by the young pretenders forces, and he's a prisoner of war for about a week.

And he gets put in a castle, and it's the Castle Dune, which, D-O-U-N-E, which is the castle that was used in the filming of Monty Python in the Holy Grail. They wanted to use these English castles, and at the last minute they said, eh, I think the English

government said, you know what, you're doing this farcical thing. These castles that we have are too important, we don't want you to use.

So they went up to Scotland, and so when I try to tell people something about John Witherspoon, I say, have you seen Monty Python in the Holy Grail? They used two castles, but mainly they use the castles. So I think the Daffy English conigates when the French soldiers are there and the various things. So the castle scenes are often the very place where John Witherspoon was a POW for a week.

So he comes over to America, he famously gives maybe the most important sermon, at least on the very heels of the call for independence in May 1776, and for all of those reasons. So he was a Brit, he was a Scotsman, and for all of those reasons that you just outlined became convinced that the American colonies were just and declaring their independence, and so much so that even some correspondence and some, you know, polls in Britain said that the American colonies had run off with a Presbyterian person, and it was like 10,000 Presbyterians with Johnny Witherspoon at the head. So give credit to where credit is due, at least on the American side.

And Witherspoon's student, his most famous student, James Madison, the father of the Constitution. And Witherspoon had a lot of influence, but the most obvious one, dozens of legislators and governors and things were his students at Princeton over the years. But he has a direct tide of the thinking that undergirds the Federalist Papers and the Constitution through Madison.

Curious question, this doesn't have anything to do with your Just War book, but you mentioned taxation without representation. That's sometimes on the license plates of the district where you live. Is that appropriate? I mean, is that, is the District of Columbia have a point? What do you say about that? Here's what I would say is that the District of Columbia is a little, is a city, is not a state.

And it could be far, far better managed if the local administration would take better care. And at the same token, I would be quite happy to see Congress take its constitutional responsibilities more seriously about the District of Columbia. It's a wonderful and beautiful place, but it is a place where crime is increasing.

It's a place that has gone crazy when it comes to things like the public use of marijuana and things. I would like to see it live up to its full potential for all of its citizens. So you're not in favor of becoming a state and getting two senators? It doesn't make sense just from all of the practical reasons.

Yeah. Okay. Okay.

So we've talked about a number of specific examples, often in American history, and have defended, I think rightly so, different decisions that American leaders have made.

But certainly, it's not that American governments or Americans have always abided by these just war operations, both getting into war and in war, or even in society. So you have a good chapter about MLK.

And you might, that might seem strange. People might think, well, that's not exactly a war. And yet you talk about how MLK thought about pacifism, thought about force, thought about change, thought about unjust law.

So certainly, Jim Crow were at times unjust laws, or sometimes there were laws that were applied unjustly and unfairly. So we all look back and see that there was great evil that had been done in the United States. And tell us about how MLK thought through this and the different distinctions that he made and that others made.

And really, the difference between MLK's approach and then later Malcolm X and what that has to do with the ideas in your book. Yes. Thank you for asking this, because a common question I get from students, I was at a Divinity School just last week and someone asked this very question, aren't there nonviolent approaches to war? And the answer really is, no.

If another country attacks you, we don't have a track record that taking a nonviolent approach, say the Ukrainian saying, Oh, we're going to turn the other cheek, rape our women, burn our churches, kill our people. That's going to be a witness, but that's somehow going to work as has been observed many times, including by Martin Luther King, Jr. The release of difference between Gandhi, calling the British to live up to their own ideals within the system. It's a radical, radical, ruthless, and don't recognize human rights and the rule of law and things.

And so it's important to realize that when it comes to particularly the interstate war and the like, that a civil rights type of movement is not the way that you're going to stop violent evil. Now, Martin Luther King Jr., just like the American colonists, was making an argument that said, we're just asking to have the same rights, freedoms, and opportunities as every other citizen in America. And so the power of the civil rights movement was first calling on the law to be enacted the same for white and for black citizens.

And we can talk more about his ideas, for instance, in Letter from Birmingham Jail and other things. But it's very important to note that the type of just resistance that they were doing, note that he was not employing violence, they weren't blowing things up, they weren't attacking law enforcement. That's what terrorists do.

But if they were going to win to live up to the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the American Constitution, what they were doing is they were calling first, like you said, the unjust application of laws, such as white people can have a parade, but black people can't get a permit to walk down the street together to protest injustice, or the

unjust use of authority, such as police using police dogs to attack children, or laws that degraded the human spirit that were unjust at their root, such as Jim Crow laws that said, you can't vote black person if you can't prove that your grandfather is a citizen. Well, your grandfather was an enslaved person. He couldn't be a citizen at the time, or very, very onerous reading and writing requirements to vote that white people didn't have to have so an unjust law at its core.

He called all of these things out, and it was a very, very powerful form of resistance. That wasn't going to work in downtown Berlin against the Nazis, but it would work in the right time and place in a law abiding democratic society. Even one that had the true racial sin, first of slavery, and then of Jim Crow, like the U.S. That's really helpful.

There's so many other things I want to ask you about. I'm going to get to, I want to transition and talk about some very current events here in this last section. Before I do that, I want to mention, again, our sponsor, Desiring God, our other sponsor here for LBE, and this new book, Ask Pastor John, 750 Bible answers to life's most important questions compiled by Tony Ranky.

I did a blurb for this book. It's very well put together by Crossway, and it really is an amazing resource. The Ask Pastor John podcast has been around for many years, and these are 750 of those answers.

There's thousands of others, but if you want to know what John Piper thinks practically about 750 of life's most important questions, check out this book, Ask Pastor John. So toward the end of the podcast here, as you can tell, we had some technical difficulties. It's amazing.

With all of the advancements we have, yet the podcast, more often than not, has some technical difficulties. So the conversation with Eric got cut a little short, and there were some things that I wanted to get into with the book and current events that we weren't able to fully explore, so maybe I'll have them on again. But I recommend to all the listeners a basic guide to the Just War tradition, Christian foundations, and practices.

As you can tell, Eric is very thoughtful, very well read on this topic, but also knowledgeable about history and what's going on in the world. So good to have him as one of the good guys to help us think through these difficult issues. Thank you for listening and grateful to have our sponsors, and look forward to the remainder of the season here on LBE.

We have some great guests coming up, and so until next time, glorify God, enjoy him forever, and read a good book.