

Tertullian, *Treatise on the Crown*:

“Shall it be held lawful to make an occupation of the sword, when the Lord proclaims that *he who uses the sword shall perish by the sword*? And shall the son of peace take part in the battle when it does not become him even to sue at law? Shall he carry a flag, too, hostile to Christ? Is the laurel of the triumph **made of leaves, or of corpses**? Is it **adorned with ribbons, or with tombs**? Is it **[sprinkled] with ointments, or with the tears of wives & mothers**? It may be of some Christians too; for Christ is also among the barbarians...On the contrary, **if a soldier is converted he must abandon the military immediately.**”

Tertullian, *The Shows (Spectacles) 2*:

“There’s a vast difference between the corrupted state & that of primal purity, just because there’s a vast difference between the Creator & the corrupter. Why, all sorts of evils, which as indubitably evils even the heathens prohibit, & against which they guard themselves, come from the works of God. Take, for instance, murder, whether committed by iron, by poison, or by magical enchantments. Iron and herbs & demons are all equally creatures of God. Has the Creator, withal, provided these things for man’s destruction? Nay, **God forbids every sort of man-killing** by that one summary precept, ‘*Thou shalt not kill.*’”

Tertullian, *On Idolatry 19*:

“But now inquiry is being made concerning these issues. First, can any believer enlist in the military? Second, can any soldier, even those of the rank and file or lesser grades who neither engage in pagan sacrifices nor capital punishment, be admitted into the church? **No on both counts**—for there’s no agreement between the divine sacrament & the human sacrament, the standard of Christ & the standard of the devil, the camp of light & the camp of darkness. **One soul cannot serve two masters**—God & Caesar. And yet some people toy with the subject by saying, ‘*Moses carried a rod, Aaron wore a buckle, John the Baptist girded himself with leather just like soldiers do belts, and Joshua the son of Nun led troops into battle, such that the people waged war.*’ But how will a Christian engage in war—indeed, **how will a Christian even engage in military service during peacetime—without the sword, which the Lord has taken away?** For although soldiers had approached John to receive instructions and a centurion believed, this does not change the fact that afterward, **the Lord, by disarming Peter, disarmed every soldier.**”

Tatian, 185AD:

“I do not wish to be a ruler. I do not strive for wealth. **I refuse offices of military command**...I do not fight for a victor’s laurels. I am free from the mad thirst for fame. **I despise death.**”¹

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book 4, Ch. 34.4:

“No new covenant was given, but they [the Jews] used the Mosaic law until the coming of the Lord; but from the Lord’s advent, **the new covenant which brings back peace**, and the law which gives life, has gone forth over the whole earth [Isaiah 2:3-4; Micah 4:2-3]. If therefore another law & word, going forth from Jerusalem, brought in such a [reign of] peace among the Gentiles which received it (the word), and convinced, through them, many a nation of its folly...[Gentiles changed] the swords and war-lances into ploughshares, & changed them into pruning-hooks for reaping the grain, [that is], into instruments used for peaceful purposes, and that **they are now unaccustomed to fighting, but when smitten, offer also the other cheek** [Matthew 5:39].”

¹ Roberts, Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1979, p 69.

Clement, *Exhortation to the Heathen* (Chapter 11):

“This is the proclamation of righteousness: to those that obey, glad tidings; to those that disobey, judgment. The loud trumpet, when sounded, collects the soldiers, & proclaims war. And shall not Christ, **breathing a strain of peace to the ends of the earth, gather together His own soldiers**, the soldiers of peace? ...The trumpet of Christ is His Gospel. He hath blown it, & we have heard [Eph. 6.10-18].”

Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 39:

“**We, who used to kill one another, do not make war on our enemies.** We refuse to tell lies or deceive our inquisitors; we prefer to die acknowledging Christ.”

Cyprian *Letter* 56.2:

“The soldiers of Christ are now watching, and stand sober and armed for the battle; that they cannot be conquered, but that they can die; and that by this very fact they are invincible, that they do not fear death; that they do not in turn assail their assailants, since **it is not lawful for the innocent even to kill the guilty; but that they readily deliver up both their lives and their blood**; that since such malice and cruelty rages in the world, they may the more quickly withdraw from the evil and cruel.”

Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition*:

“**A soldier**, being inferior in rank to God, **must not kill anyone**. If ordered to, he must not carry out the order, nor may he take an oath (*sacramentum*) to do so. If he does not accept this, let him be dismissed from the church.”

“**Anyone bearing the power of the sword**, or any city magistrate, who wears purple, **let him cease from wearing it at once or be dismissed from the church.**”

“Any catechumen or believer who wishes to become **a soldier must be dismissed from the church because they have despised God.**”

Athenagoras, *A Plea for Christians* 35:

“What man of sound mind, therefore, will affirm, while such is our character, that we are murderers? [Non-believers know] that **we cannot endure even to see a man put to death, though justly**...But we, deeming that **to see a man put to death is much the same as killing him**, have abjured such spectacles. How, then, when we do not even look on, lest we should contract guilt and pollution, can we put people to death? And when we say that **those women who use drugs to bring on abortion commit murder**, and will have to give an account to God for the abortion, on what principle should we commit murder? For it does not belong to the same person to regard the very foetus in the womb as a created being, and therefore an object of God's care, and when it has passed into life, to kill it.”

The Martyrdom of Maximilian (via beheading), 295AD:

“I will not take the badge [of the Roman state]. If you insist, I will deface it. I am a Christian & I'm not allowed to wear that leaden seal around my neck. For I already carry the sacred sign of the Christ, the Son of the living God...It is he whom all we Christians serve, it is he whom we follow, for he is the lord of life, the author of our salvation.”

The proconsul Dion replied, “There are Christian soldiers serving our rulers Diocletian & Maximilian, Constantius & Galerius.”

Maximilian, “**That is their business. I also am a Christian & I cannot serve.**”²

² Egan, *Peace Be With You*, pp 30-31.

Sulpicius Severus, *On the Life of St. Martin* 4:

"Hitherto I have served you as a soldier: allow me now to become a soldier to God: let the man who is to serve you receive your donative: **I am the soldier of Christ: it is not lawful for me to fight**...If this conduct of mine is ascribed to cowardice, and not to faith, I will take my stand unarmed before the line of battle tomorrow, and in the name of the Lord Jesus, protected by the sign of the cross, and not by shield or helmet, I will safely penetrate the ranks of the enemy."

...It was granted him that he should not be sent unarmed to the fight. And although the good Lord could have preserved his own soldier, even amid the swords and darts of the enemy, yet that his blessed eyes might not be pained by witnessing the death of others, **he removed all necessity for fighting**. For Christ did not require to secure any other victory in behalf of his own soldier, than that, the enemy being subdued without bloodshed, no one should suffer death."

Marcellus the Centurion martyred 298 AD:

"While the objection to sacrifice thus appears as the main ground for the bold step Marcellus took, it is clear that he was also exercised over the nature of military service as such: for his last words to the judge were: "I threw down (my arms); for **it was not seemly that a Christian man, who renders military service to the Lord Christ, should render it (also) by (inflicting) earthly injuries.**"³

Origen, *Against Celsus* 3.7

"If a [rebellion] had led to the formation of the Christian commonwealth, so that it derived its existence in this way from that of **the Jews, who were permitted to take up arms in defense of the members of their families, and to slay their enemies**, [Jesus] would not have altogether forbidden the putting of men to death; and yet **He nowhere teaches that it is right for His own disciples to offer violence to any one, however wicked**. For He did not deem it in keeping with such laws as His, which were derived from a divine source, to allow the killing of any individual whatever. **Nor would the Christians, had they owed their origin to a rebellion, have adopted laws of so exceedingly mild a character as not to allow them**, when it was their fate to be slain as sheep, on any occasion to resist their persecutors."

5.33:

"And to those who inquire of us whence we come, or who is our founder, we reply that we have come, agreeably to the counsels of Jesus, to "cut down our hostile and insolent 'wordy' swords into ploughshares, and **to convert into pruning-hooks the spears formerly employed in war.**" For **we no longer take up "sword against nation," nor do we "learn war anymore," having become children of peace, for the sake of Jesus, who is our leader, instead of those whom our fathers followed** [the Jews], among whom we were "strangers to the covenant," and having received a law [the Jews]."

8.73

And to those enemies of our faith who require us to bear arms for the commonwealth, and to slay men, we can reply: "**Do not those who are priests at certain shrines, and those who attend on certain gods, as you account them, keep their hands free from blood**, that they may with hands unstained and free from human blood offer the appointed sacrifices to your gods; and even when war is upon you, you never enlist the priests in the army. If that, then, is a laudable custom, how much more so, that while others are engaged in battle, these too should engage as the priests and ministers of God, keeping their hands pure, and wrestling in prayers to God on behalf of those who are fighting in a righteous cause, and for the king who reigns righteously, that whatever is opposed to those who act righteously may be destroyed!" And as we by our prayers vanquish all demons who stir up war, and lead to the violation of oaths, and disturb the peace, we in this way are much more helpful to the kings than those who go into the field to fight for them...And none fight better for the king than we do. We do not indeed fight under

³ Cadoux, *The Early Christian Attitude to War*, 1982, p. 152.

him, although he require it; but we fight on his behalf, forming a special army— an army of piety— by offering our prayers to God.

Letter [Epistle] of Pope Nicolas 1, 6:613, 861AD:

“The soldiers of the world are distinct from the soldiers for the church. Hence, it is improper for the soldiers of the church to fight for the affairs of the world, **which involves them inevitably in the spilling of blood.** Just as it is wrong for a layman to interfere with spiritual affairs, **so it is ridiculous & inappropriate for a cleric to take up arms & go to war.”**