



War and Peace in the Western Political Imagination: From Classical Antiquity to the Age of Reason by Roger B. Manning.

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In only 284 pages of text, the historian Roger Manning (Cleveland State Univ.) presents a succinct, well informed discussion of the martial ethos of ruling elites in the Western world since Greek antiquity. This concise approach makes at times for difficult reading as the author seeks to cover political thought in the ancient, medieval and early modern worlds. Rather than a history of the theory, nature, or conduct of war, Manning concentrates on attitudes toward war, often from the perspectives of theology and political philosophy.

The first of the volume's five chapters concerns the legacy of classical antiquity. The second considers war and peace in the medieval world, while the third reflects on the Crusades and other religious wars. Chapter 4 covers Humanism and neo-Stoicism. Finally, the fifth chapter explores the search for a science of peace in the Age of Reason. As for primary source materials, Manning employs texts from his various eras of interest, chiefly those centering on political philosophy and the nature of the state and society, ending with a critique of Immanuel Kant's discussion of "Perpetual Peace." A few specifically military texts are mentioned: notably, Vegetius's *Epitoma rei militaris*, the *Strategikon* attributed to the Byzantine Emperor Maurice, and Machiavelli's *Art of War*.

Chapters 1-2 concern the role of Christianity in formulating an intellectual basis for the idea of the desirability of peace and the means of achieving it. Early Christian thought presumed that postlapsarian human nature precluded the elimination of war from affairs of the state; one could only hope for a restriction of its frequency and more brutal practices (e.g., the killing of prisoners after a battle). The author observes that John Wyclif represents a decisive break from St Augustine's conviction that war was inevitable. He argued instead that wars should be fought only for motives of Christian charity, not short-term gain. He was, nevertheless, prepared to accept the invasion of non-Christian lands for the purposes of either conversion or exacting punishment for injuries inflicted on Christians.

Chapter 3 makes several interesting observations, but the huge time period covered leads to oversimplifications. For instance, Manning writes that "The Christian concept of holy war emerged in the ninth century, when all of Europe was beset by invaders and immersed in war" (111); such statements stray from his main concern—the political and religious thought surrounding war and peace. Readers other than expert theologians will wonder about the validity of the claim that

the Muslim tradition of holy war was not very different from that of the Jewish Bible or the religious motivations of the medieval Christian crusaders and the teachings of many of the Protestant and Catholic divines and soldiers during the Wars of Religion of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. (112-13)

More compelling is Manning's treatment of the Islamic concept of holy war (113-19), which unfortunately gets a mere six pages in the book's broad-brush approach. Throughout the volume,

theological and political concepts are obscured by interwoven descriptions of treaties, wars, battles, and decrees. A degree of superficiality prevails throughout. The author devotes just four pages (166–70) to the Thirty Years War and only six (183–89) to Machiavelli's thought. He resorts to summarizing the findings of secondary literature regarding major thinkers.

Despite these shortcomings, Manning does deliver an important message by disputing the notion that "peace is a modern invention." Specifically, he asserts that revulsion against war and a longing for peace were espoused in the Middle Ages through religious concepts that, according to Manning, "the Age of Reason did not invent [but] ... merely secularized" (249). That said, he concedes that most proposals for "perpetual peace" during the Enlightenment were derived from the ideas of Hugo Grotius and Thomas Hobbes. He also maintains that peace will always be a "contested concept" because any war party will begin a conflict with specific objectives. Hardly a penetrating insight, given the extensive ground the book seeks to cover.

The book's conclusion (271–84) offers little beyond a terse summary of the historical development of a particular set of ideas.¹ Nonetheless, *War and Peace in the Western Political Imagination* will appeal to political theorists, philosophers, and theologians, but less so to historians.

1. There is, in addition, a short appendix on "Changing meanings of the 'sinews of war'," a three-page glossary, and a useful bibliography.