The Christian Influence on the Adjusted Perceptions of Chemical Weapons

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“GAS! Gas! Quick, boys!-- An ecstasy of fumbling,
    Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
    And floundering like a man in fire or lime.--
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light
   As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.”

--Wilfred Owen, “Dulce et Decorum Est”

The horrors of war have not been a well-kept secret. Since Biblical times, the haunting stories of the rotting infant corpses strung around their mothers’ necks or of the heartless slaughter of man, woman and child remind humanity of the dark consequences of war. Recently, reflections on war have been solemn, full of wisdom and regret, because of the unbounded level of violence and inhumane actions during the crisis of war (Walzer 23). Modern technology has shifted the states’ war capabilities and threaten pre-existing humanitarian laws (Perrigo 10, 15). With the increased modernization of weaponry, the traditional codes of conduct in war have been challenged and sometimes re-orientated to include the latest advances in weaponry, such as chemical, biological and nuclear weapons (Toffler 85).

Chemical warfare is defined by the Chemical Weapons Convention as any chemical that can cause death, injury, temporary incapacitation or sensory irritation. Chemical weapons have an especially cruel history: they prey on the psychological and physical well-being of the enemy soldiers. Yet, when Infantry General Berthold von Deimling gave the order for the first chlorine gas attack during World War I, he justified it with the fact that “war is necessity and knows no exception” (Tucker 13). This essay explores the ancient use of chemical weapons, the advent of Christianity and Just War theories, and the modern reactions to chemical weapons. Specifically, we will investigate the role of Christian philosophy and Just War theories in the paradigm shift from general acceptance to aversion of chemical weapons.

Ancient Chemical Warfare
Although most believe that chemical warfare was a modern discovery, the utilization of chemical warfare in the ancient world was vast and often the mark of a highly civilized society. By observing nature, the ancient cultures developed weapons that were “surprisingly sophisticated” (Greek 64). The weapons used included “toxic substances, venomous creatures, poison plants, animals and insects, deleterious environments, virulent pathogens, infectious agents, noxious gases, and combustible chemicals” (Greek 29). Due to the broad definition of chemical weapons, this paper focuses on poisonous gases, primarily in Europe and the Near East.

The origin of poisonous gases began with the discovery of weaponizing natural poisons. The use of poison was common amongst hunters in areas such as Europe, the Near East, Asia, and Africa (Greek 76). Also, ancient societies “knew of at least two dozen dangerous plants” and venomous creatures (Greek 67). Toxic ores of mercury, sulfur and arsenic also were studied (Poison 71). These materials were typically used for their medicinal qualities; however, they “could also be employed to create toxic weapons” (Greek 67). Eventually, poison was introduced into warfare in techniques such as poisoning drinking water, projectiles and weapons.

Poisonous gases were first used in China “by burning sulfur and arsenic to fumigate insects as early as the seventh century BC” (Greek 222, Brown 63). This discovery led to more research into weaponizing the gases for the military, which were recorded as Ancient Chinese recipes for noxious gases and smoke balls (Greek 222). The research was not exclusive to ancient China. In the fourth century BC, the ancient Indian text, Arthashastra, described specific powders that would produce a fume when burning that would “drive enemies mad or blind, or cause them to sicken or perish immediately” (Greek 222).

Smoke and gases were commonly used against tunnelers during sieges (Greek 222). Chinese defenders used poison gas against tunnelers by burning toxic plants and pumping the
smoke into the tunnels around fourth century BC (Greek 224). In 189 AD, the same tactic was used against the Romans by the city of Ambracia in Greece (Greek 224). Similarly, in 265 AD, the Persians attacked the Romans in Syria (Greek 224, 225). The Romans defensively used poison gases, which was verified through an archaeological find in 1935 (Greek 225, University 1, Ancient 1). The archaeological evidence showed that many Persians died in tunnels due to sulfur and pitch gas bombs (Greek 225, University 1, Ancient 1). These siege tactics were encouraged by military strategists, such as Aeneas, and codes of conduct, such as the document *Mo Zi* (Greek 222, Fleming 47).

The first recorded use of an incendiary was in 429 BC in the Peloponnesian War, in which the Spartans burned a combination of sulfur and pitch to give blue flames with an “acrid stench” and “toxic sulfur dioxide gas” to break the siege of Palatia in Greece (Greek 211). The Spartans even went so far as to develop “a flame-blowing machine” (Greek 27). Because of the sulfur dioxide gas, this siege marks the first use of poisonous gases above ground; however, the Spartans may have been unaware of this (Greek 211). After the Spartans’ use of sulfur, other states began to add sulfur to flames, which depicts the wide acceptance of chemical warfare tactics. Additionally, calmative fumes were widely used to sedate the enemy (Greek 26). These intoxicants were comprised of “toxic honey, drugged sacrificial bulls, barrels of alcohol, and mandrake-laced wine” (Greek 26).

Despite the general acceptance and use of chemical weapons, there were also ancient texts and agreements that restricted the chemical warfare. However, while agreements displayed the moral concerns about chemical weapons, the documents also reflected the respect for the intelligence and resourcefulness of the chemical warfare. Examples of these documents were found in India, China, and Rome.

In ancient India, the “military codes... The Laws of Manu (500 BC- AD 150)...[and] the Arthashastra... (4th century BC)” restricted the use of poisoned arrows, but described “hundreds of recipes for toxic weapons” (Fleming 45). In China, Sun Tzu’s *Art of War* promoted the use of
deception, fire and poison smoke bombs around 500 BC, even though the Chinese codes of war explicitly forbade the harming of citizens and unnecessary suffering from 450 to 200 BC (Fleming 45).

The Roman empire defined the conditions to start a war, but did not restrict the weapons or strategies used in war (Fleming 46). Although the historian Lucius Florus believed that chemical weapons were dishonorable, the warfare strategist, Polyaenus, “advocated [the use of] numerous biochemical stratagems...as a means of avoiding...barbarians” (Fleming 46, Greek 37). Vegetius emphatically articulated that “it is preferable to subdue an enemy by famine, raids and terror, than in battle where fortune tends to have more influence than bravery” (Greek 37). The Romans also showed concern over “the casualties in a fair fight [,which] could be avoided altogether by deploying toxic weapons” (Fleming 46).

Even though there were moral questions regarding chemical weapons, in the heat of battle, the total-war tactics overwhelmed moral dilemmas. During “sieges, civil wars, and rebellions, or in conflicts with exotic cultures, the whole population was considered the enemy...lifting the constraints on vicious weaponry and total-war tactics” (Greek 30). In a time period defined by war, the strategists and warriors were praised for their clever resourcefulness. Thus, the total-war culture accepted chemical warfare techniques, unless the weapon would bring dishonor. Although the weapons were at times cruel, they were also an indicator of a civilized culture, since there was access to academia and strategists. Even though war agreements and other ancient documents depicted tension between honor and chemical weapons, the overwhelming majority praised the underhanded, intelligent techniques of chemical warfare in the ancient world.

The Arrival of Christianity and Just War Theories
At the conclusion of the ancient era, a new religion, Christianity, was introduced. With its foundations in love and grace, Christians struggled with the concept of war. Surrounded by a war-centered culture, the early Christians were distressed with the inconsistencies in their Bible, since Deuteronomy 20 advocated for the complete slaughter of an enemy, while Jesus proclaimed that they should turn the other cheek to violence. In the early Middle Ages, the Christian ethical approaches to warfare were relegated to three distinct categories: pacifism, just war and the holy war (Bainton 14). As the Church grew in both popularity and power, Christian ethics influenced the European and surrounding cultures and, subsequently, the warfare techniques and codes of conduct.

The first category, pacifism, was favored in the early Church, which “had an aversion to bloodshed” due to the Church’s focus on the love that Jesus had preached (Bainton 77, 15). This mindset continued and evolved during the Middle Ages and Enlightenment. Popular theologians, Lactanius and Aquinas, advocated for the interpretation of the New Testament that prohibited bloodshed and extended love to all humanity, including the non-believers (Merrin 35, 38, 68).

The second category, Just War theory, was developed by St. Augustine of Hippo from the “Ciceronian and Christian ideas about war” (Marrin 52). Just War theory was analyzed, criticized and developed by “some of the most profound intellects of Christendom--[including] Ambrose, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther... Vitoria ...Karl Barth, Reinhold Niebuhr, and the popes and priests of Vatican II” (Marrin 8). The Just War theory shaped war from the prevalent total-warfare strategies to a “civilized warfare” (Marrin 10).

Just War theory is the thought that there are just causes for war, but before entering a war, the reasons for fighting and how they will fight must be analyzed (Walzer 21). These thoughts can be separated into two categories: *Jus ad Bellum* (justice of war) and *Jus in Bello* (justice in war). For the purposes of this essay, we will explore *Jus in Bello*, since chemical weapons relate to how a state fights a war.
Jus in Bello has three principles: distinction, proportionality, and responsibility (Moseley 1). Distinction involves defining who are active participants in a war, effectively labeling who can be killed (Walzer 41). Proportionality is the line between excessive and appropriate force (Moseley 1). Finally, responsibility assures that enemy is solely responsible for all blame and evil in the war. The principles of distinction and proportionality directly relate to the use of chemical weapons.

The principle of distinction discriminates who is a combatant and who is a non-combatant or civilian. War has evolved from "a contention between the whole populations of the belligerent states...[to] a contention of States through their armed forces" (Perrigo 20). This distinction increased the stringency of humanitarian laws, making an attack on civilians traditionally a war crime. "An army warring against aggression can violate the territorial integrity and political sovereignty of the aggressor state, but its soldiers cannot violate the life and liberty of enemy civilians" (Walzer 137).

Because of the distinction principle, the Just War theory is credited for establishing the foundation for the first international humanitarian laws (Joblin 1). Initially, the leaders of the Catholic Church individually sought humanitarian reform during battle. Bishop Guy of Anjou, France began in 975 by having a counsel in his local town, proposing methods to limit violence (Long 56). His example was inspirational to other bishops, who gathered in Charroux and drafted the Peace of God (Long 56). The document demanded the cease of attacks on the poor, the church, and the clerics (Bainton 110, Long 56). Even though the Peace of God movement had waned in the eleventh century, the church’s passion for limiting violence continued (Long 59). The bishops and nobility formulated the Truce of God proclamations in 1027 and 1054, which categorized the noncombatants, defined properties that could not be attacked, restricted the days of military tactics, and limited different weapons (Bainton 110, Long 59). Both the Peace of God and the Truce of God proclamations influenced the modern just war theorists (Long 59).
The Catholic Church also published *Pax Ecclesiae* and *Pax Dei* to protect the noncombatants and churches from violence (Marrin 74). Not only did the Catholic church legislate protection, they also opened their doors as sanctuaries for those who were in danger, excluding those who were “guilty of high treason or sacrilege” (Marrin 324). The Christian community and Church actively continued to champion these humanitarian rights throughout the centuries until they evolved into universal beliefs. These examples personify the principle of distinction: protection of the life and rights of the innocent.

Proportionality strives to regulate war to appropriate force. This principle gives enemy soldiers the humanity that is often forgotten. The primary example of proportionality is the naked soldier: a lone enemy soldier who wanders into the line of fire, yet none of the opposing men shoot (Walzer 138). As a single soldier, the rival soldiers do not see him as the enemy but as a fellow man trapped by war. This principle not only protects the slight humanity of war, but also limits the destructive nature of war. Because of proportionality, chemical weapons and poisons fell out of vogue during the Renaissance and Enlightenment in Europe. However, chemical weapons were still promoted in other non-Christian regions, since those governments did not abide by the Just War theory. For example, in the early Middle Ages, Islamic countries advocated the “use of ‘smokes, prepared liquids, and ill-smelling deadly odors for causing damage to forts and castles and horrifying the enemy” (Greek 226).

The final category, the holy war, was initially acceptable by early drafts of the Just War Theory, since it was “waged under the proper authority, its object [wa]s peace, [and was] achieved through the vindication of justice” (Marrin 79). This description included “holy wars” or crusades in the early Christian Church, since the war was waged under the authority of God. In the twelfth century, this gave the soldiers right to a total warfare, since they were not only fighting against an enemy state, but also the enemy of their Lord (Marrin 79). Although the crusades showed a Christian negligence to humanitarian rights, in the Enlightenment, the Church denounced the concept of holy war, removing it from the Just War theory (Bainton 173).
With the expansion of Christianity throughout Europe, there was a cultural shift that integrated the Just War theory into the state governments. Thus, a code of conduct in the military allowed the innate masculine violence to become controlled and socially beneficial (Braudy 50). During the Middle Ages, Christianity drastically modified “the warrior ethic” (Braudy 73). The term chivalry was originally defined as one who rides on horses, but developed into an honor code for knights. However, the term was also adapted by Christianity as an affirmation to “defend society from its enemies,” while excluding any warfare that was not honorable (Braudy 92). For example, in the Canons of the Second Lateran Council, incendiaries and archers were excised due to the destructive and underhanded behavior (Long 60). Thus, archers and chemical warfare were phased out of Christian warfare, with only the sword remaining as “symbol of class and honor” (Archer 146, 149).

Because of Christianity’s widespread power and influence, the culture of the European nations was gradually changed by the chivalric codes from a war-centered society to a civilized, humanitarian society. Due to this advancement, the destructive power of chemical weapons soon fell out of vogue and were somewhat forgotten. Although use of chemical weapons had discontinued in the period between ancient society and the early 20th century, the weaponry advances were continued in scientific research. For example, in the fifteenth century, Leonardo da Vinci designed an artillery shell that would contain chemical gases, which could be thrown, explode, and release the gases (Haber 15). However, Christianity still retained a strong sense of morality and chivalry, so the church was adamantly against the development of new weaponry, even propagating that the scientists were being guided by Satan and his demons (Archer 220). These beliefs were supported by Martin Luther, which caused a lingering sense of distrust and ambiguity about the morality of scientific advances for the purpose of warfare (Archer 221, 405, 410). These technological developments also reminded society of the danger of total warfare and chemical weapons, which led to prohibitions of chemical warfare.
In 1675, the “first known international agreement banning chemical warfare” was composed by the French and Germans, forbidding the use of poisoned bullets (Tucker 10). Other documents prohibiting chemical warfare included the United States’s Lieber Code of Conduct in 1863 and the Brussels Declaration in 1874 (Tucker 10). The most authoritative pre-World War I document was the Hague Declaration Concerning Asphyxiating Gases in 1899. This document specifically forbade the “use of projectiles, the sole object of which is the diffusion of asphyxiating or deleterious gases,” which removed the possibility of utilizing chemical shells before they were invented (Tucker 11). However, at the time of the agreement, poison gas warfare was only hypothetical (Slotten 478).

As shown through the development of Just War theory, the establishment of humanitarian rights, and the gradual distinction between total warfare and civilized warfare, Christianity modified the cultural and societal perceptions towards total-warfare. This introduction of ethical warfare also impacted the general reaction towards chemical weaponry.

Modern Chemical Warfare

Modern warfare is defined by its strategic encounters and technological advances. For the purpose of this essay, modern warfare began with World War I, due to the introduction of small combat troops and many weaponry advances, such as chemical warfare and air strikes. Two cases of modern warfare, World War I and Iraq’s use of chemical weapons, are chronicled in order to analyze the modern response to chemical weapons. The modern approach to chemical weapons was directly influenced by the Just War theory, which, by extension, implies that Christianity induced a paradigm shift from general approval of chemical warfare to moral aversion.

Case Study 1: World War I
World War I signified the beginning of modern warfare, which chronicled the transition from a man-powered warfare to a technology-fueled warfare (Archer 510). Included in the technological advances, poison gas warfare and modernization of the gas delivery systems were reintroduced to warfare. The initial response and retaliation to the poison gas warfare illustrated a cultural and philosophical deviation from the ancient times to the modern times.

In the tormentous trenches, the survival and military instincts for both the Allied and Central Powers began to overwhelm the “traditional legal and moral restraints on the use of poison gas” (Tucker 11). Although the Hague Convention had explicitly banned the use of poison gases, France took the first crucial step into chemical warfare by using tear gas against the Central Powers. This act, coupled with the German interpretation that the Hague convention only banned lethal gases and chemical shells, sparked Germany’s advanced chemical industry to research into weaponry (Tucker 10, 11).

Titled the father and mastermind of chemical warfare, Fritz Haber joined the German researchers to shorten war and decrease the casualties during war (Tucker 23). Haber created a chemical shell that “released and diffused gas” but also released shrapnel, so that the sole purpose of the shell was not gas related, effectively evading the Hague Convention (Tucker 11). However, after several failed attempts, the strategy changed to releasing the gas from pressurized canisters, which “would blanket a far larger area...and the gas would dissipate rapidly, allowing the affected areas to be occupied by friendly troops” (Tucker 12). They found that the gas would form a toxic cloud, differing in concentration and height (Haber 42). However, the key to success was the wind velocity and direction. Thus, this method was effective but imprecise (Haber 43).

The first attack site was Ypres in Flanders, Belgium, which was occupied by the Allies (Tucker 12). Ypres was chosen because it was an Ally-dominated town that was conveniently located for future attacks on the Allies. After waiting for the winds to have the correct direction and velocity, the chlorine gas was released from the canisters. At first, the Allied forces
assumed that the green-yellow cloud was a smokescreen, to disguise an attack. However, once the gas was upon them, the excruciating effects of the gas quickly presented themselves. While the Allied forces were drowning on land, the “Germans launched an artillery barrage” (Tucker 14). The Allies reported approximately 5,000 casualties in the Ypres chemical attack (Slotten 476). This battle marked the first successful chemical warfare tactic in World War I. However, the German government did not send infantry to secure Ypres, since they did not foresee success with chemical weapons. Thus, even though the attack was successful, Ypres was reclaimed by the Allies.

The horrifying event at Ypres triggered the Allies to turn to chemical warfare as well. The British retaliated with poison gases on September 24, 1915 (Slotten 480). By 1916, both the Allies and Central Powers were utilizing chemical warfare, each escalating the intensity of the weapons (Tucker 17). The Germans were constantly introducing new chemical weapons and gases, such as phosgene gas and mustard chemical warfare agent (Tucker 18). Both of these chemical agents had distinct smells, but could otherwise not be detected by soldiers (Tucker 18). Often, soldiers would not realize “that they had been exposed...until it was too late” (Tucker 18). The Allies’ media exaggerated the casualties that were caused by chemical warfare, due to the unpopularity of the military technique. The total casualties in World War I were 247,217 people; however, only 27.3 % of these casualties were caused by poisonous gas (Scammell 479).

The general public’s initial reaction to chemical warfare was shock and disbelief; the underhanded behavior associated with chemical weapons did not seem morally just to the modern society. The majority of Europe thought the German use of chemical warfare was “unmanly and cruel” and equated the weapons with “barbarity” (Withrow 595, Slotten 478). The modern militaries’ lack of information on chemical weapons added to the psychological effect of poison gases, creating fear for the unseen enemy that could not be fought or defeated. The Allies communicated that “the gas cloud...had no precursors...With most other weapons the
development can be traced over decades if not centuries...As a weapon it existed principally in the imagination of writers” (Haber 15). With this statement, the Allies revealed that they were unfamiliar with the history of chemical weapons. Without this knowledge, the Allies still used poison gases in retaliation; however, they did not ignore the ethical dilemma.

As World War I progressed, the modern idealists attempted to persuade the public that chemical warfare would decrease casualties and shorten war (Tucker 23, Scammell 476). In the United States, General Fries campaigned for a chemical war division in the military, claiming that it was “just as sportsman-like to fight with chemical warfare materials as it is to fight with machine guns” (Tucker 20). General Fries’s position called into question the principle of distinction, since both civilians and soldiers were involved with chemical weapons research. Additionally, by allowing chemical warfare, it increased the economic advantage of the chemical industry. Even the Pope wrote in favor of academic research on sulfur dichloride (Haber 112).

However, among the casualties were the young, drafted men and the occasional civilians, which triggered a negative emotional response. Even though they were not targeted, civilians were sometimes affected by the imprecise delivery method of chemical gases (Tucker 18). The accidental involvement of civilians invokes the *Jus in Bello* principle of distinction. However, the more consequential and authoritative principle of *Jus in Bello* is proportionality. Since Just War theory was the prevalent ethical standard during World War I, the disregard of the *Jus in Bello* principles caused a mainly adverse response to chemical weapons.

The Christian perspective on chemical warfare mirrored the horror the world felt. H.D.A. Major, a leading theologian during World War I, reflected that “the military technology brought into play for the first time on a large scale...the position of civilian populations...War became ‘total’ [again]” (Marrin 124). Karl Barth also claimed that “modern machine warfare [was] total war,” and since civilians were intimately involved with wars, they could not pass moral responsibility to their governments (Marrin 140). World War I was aptly called the war to end all wars, or so the Christians hoped. Barth openly advocated against any war, and the Protestant
churches joined in the protest, claiming that the cruelty of modern warfare could not be supported in anyway (Marrin 140, Bainton 215).

Case Study 2: Iraq and Chemical Weapons

Since the 1980’s, Iraq has possessed, used, and been accused of having chemical weapons. This cycle of development, use and stockpiling chemical weapons makes Iraq’s chemical warfare program an ideal example of modern warfare. Iraq used chemical weapons in three main events: the Iran-Iraq war, the Kurdish genocide and the First Gulf War.

Iraq began to acquire chemical weapons in the 1960’s, but did not officially begin a Chemical Weapons Program until the early 1980’s (Cordesman 525). The tension between Iran and Iraq had climax in the form of the eight year war from 1980-1988. The United States had invested interest in seeing Iraq win, so “private American suppliers, licensed by the U.S. Department of Commerce, exported...biological and chemical materials to Iraq from 1985 through 1989” (Blum 19). These items were starting materials in reactions that form chemical weapons, such as sarin. Additionally, independent American companies “sold Iraq more than $1 billion worth of the components needed “for biological, chemical and nuclear warfare” (Blum 18).

The chemical weapons were then utilized against Iran during the eight year war. The Iraqi government already possessed weaponized mustard gas and artillery shells, and they began to acquire nerve agent precursors (Cordesman 526-527). Whenever Iraq had to go on the defensive, they used small quantities of poison gases in 1982 (Cordesman 528). In 1983, Iraq began large scale chemical attacks on the Iranians, regardless of whether Iraq was winning or losing (Cordesman 528). Initially, the global reaction was that of disinterest, thinking that the issue was between Iraq and Iran. However, because of Iran’s allegations that Iraq was using lethal synthetic gases, the United Nations became involved (Cordesman 530). Iran successfully created sympathetic propaganda, which condemned the use of gas warfare, eliciting the majority of the world’s support (Cordesman 530). The global reaction became hostile towards
Iraq, and even America withdrew its support (Cordesman 530). At the end of the war, approximately 45,000 of the “over 1 million military and civilian casualties” were caused by chemical gas warfare (Cordesman 531).

The Iraqi government also used chemical weapons against the Iraqi-Kurds during the Iran-Iraq war. Some Kurds were in support of Iran, while the majority of the Kurdish people had been advocating for their own humanitarian and political rights (Cordesman 534, Ala’Aldeen 1). Both of these activities were interpreted as dangerous by the Iraqi government (Ala’Aldeen 1). The Kurds had been aware of the chemical threat because of the attacks on Iran, but they had no way to defend against it (Ala’Aldeen 1). Chemical gases were released against the Kurdish rebels and civilians, regardless of their allegiance, possibly as early as 1982 (Cordesman 534). The Iraqi military “made extensive use of gas against non-combatant Kurdish villages and areas” and did not cease the attacks “even after the cease-fire in the Iran-Iraq war” (Cordesman 534). The first officially recorded attack was on April 15, 1987, when Iraqi government used poison gas bombs on the Kurdish villages (Ala’Aldeen 1).

The chemical attacks became a daily reality for the Kurdish people, and the Iraqi government escalated the attacks to lethal nerve gases (Ala’Aldeen 1). The gas warfare became a way to depopulate the Kurdish area (Cordesman 535). The Iraqis had always been prejudiced against the Kurds; however, this chemical weapons event was the first time that weapons of indiscriminate destruction were used by a state against its own civilians (Ala’Aldeen 1). When the United Nations sent troops to inspect the Kurdish area, Saddam Hussein determined that the Kurds should be eliminated (Ala’Aldeen 1). A series of attacks from August 25 to September 1, 1988 killed tens of thousands of Kurds, which is now referred to as the Bahdinan holocaust (Ala’Aldeen 1).

As Kurdish genocide drew international media attention and concern, other countries began to support either the Kurdish rights or the Iraqi government. However, there was a lack of action against the Iraqi government, which allowed the chemical attacks to continue weeks after
the initial Bahdinan holocaust (Ala’Aldeen 1). These Kurdish attacks were clearly in opposition with *Jus in Bello*, since not only were civilians being harmed, but they were being purposefully killed by their own government.

Even though there was global hostility towards the Iraqi chemical warfare program, they continued to stockpile chemical weapons. At the beginning of the first Gulf War, America was cautious of a potential chemical war; however, Iraq never used chemical weapons against the U.S. forces (Blum 23, Cordesman 535). This could have been an ethical decision or could have been a consequence of problems with their stockpile. Those problems could have included: “purity and storage problems...Iraqi fear of Coalition or Israeli retaliation with nuclear or chemical weapons... poor weather conditions... [or] ...it may not have weaponized large numbers of VX weapons” (Cordesman 545).

Regardless of the lack of use, the United States took the offensive by launching an aerial attack against the chemical weapons storage facilities (Blum 23). The storage facilities were bombed, effectively dispersing the stockpiled chemical weapons into the surrounding environment. This action was extremely risky, proscribing “tens of thousands of American soldiers to lives of prolonged and permanent agony” (Blum 23). The Gulf War Syndrome is described as having symptoms of “memory loss, scarred lungs, chronic fatigue, raspy voice and passing out” (Blum 21). Even though no chemical weapons were intentionally used, the dispersion of the chemical agents depicted the danger of these weapons, even if only stockpiled.

Iraq’s possession of chemical agents gives three different scenarios on chemical weapon usage: against external enemies, against internal enemies or civilians, and accidental effects of stockpiling. All three situations are hazardous to humanity, and the outcomes of each event shows the uncontrollable nature of this weapon, which contradicts the principle of distinction and proportionality in Just War theory. This demonstration of chemical warfare
created an international response against the production, use and stockpiling of chemical weapons.

General Responses and Regulations of Modern Chemical Warfare

General reactions to modern chemical warfare have been negative, reflecting on how war had reversed from civilized warfare back to total warfare. With the reintroduction of total warfare, any humanization of war had ended (Marrin 257). Helmut Gollwitzer, a theologian, claimed that the “new weapons of mass destruction have brutalized warfare so completely that participation in it is completely incompatible with the will of God,” equating modern warfare with mass murder (Marrin 255-56). Since the chemical weapons have indiscriminate destruction, it contradicts the principle of distinction and proportionality in Jus in Bello. Thus, this warfare has no distinction between combatants and noncombatants (Marrin 256).

Not only is there no distinction, but the soldiers lose their respect for humanity, since chemical weapons desensitizes them of mass deaths (Marrin 257). In fact, some claim that there is complete “incompatibility of [Just War theory’s] conditions with modern warfare” (Bainton 221). Cardinal Ottaviani described a new war theory, bellum omnino interdicendum, which articulates that modern warfare cannot be a just warfare, since modern warfare has unpredictable damages (Bainton 234).

However, even though the chemical weapons reintroduced the problem of total-war, the humanitarian rights were actively protected by implementing strict regulations. This illustrates Christianity’s impact on the modern cultural change, since humanitarian rights were more important to protect than victory. The regulatory documents were written as war treaties, prohibiting chemical warfare and promoting regulation of chemical weapons. There were two main documents that were drafted for these purposes: the Geneva Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).
After World War I, there was a conference in Geneva to prohibit the use of chemical weapons in war, leading to the 1925 Geneva Convention (Miller 7, Spring 49). The motivating factor for these legal documents was the “ethical impulse to protect humanity” (Perrigo 1). Mainly used to prohibit chemical weapons, it also developed standards on civilian treatment, differentiated between soldiers and noncombatants, and to protect the injured soldiers (Perrigo 2, 4). By "elevating the status of civilians and human rights," the Geneva Convention and the UN Charter “identified the conditions under which the use of force could be used justifiably (jus ad bellum)” (Perrigo 6, 7). These conditions are those defined in the Just War theory and effectuated into international law.

However, the Geneva Convention only prohibited the use of chemical weapons, not the producing or stockpiling of the weapons. The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) drafted an arms control and nonproliferation agreement in 1971. The CWC began to gain popularity in 1990, when the two countries with the largest stockpiles of chemical weapons (the United States and the Soviet Union) signed the treaty. The final draft of the CWC was completed on September 3, 1991 (Spring 51). As of 1997, approximately 98% of the world’s nations have agreed to the CWC (Gorbachev 1).

The CWC had much stricter rules and regulations than any other war agreement, since it banned the use, development and stockpiling of chemical weapons, even mandating that the current stockpile had to be destroyed (Broad 47). However, the agreement “permit[ed] research to develop and test protective gear, vaccines and antidotes” (Smithson 72). The CWC is implemented and enforced by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (Gorbachev 1).

**Conclusion**

Before Christianity, the ancient world was trapped in a total-war culture, where any tactic was acceptable if it brought victory and honor to their state. With this mindset, ancient cultures
generally accepted the use of chemical weapons, since the indiscriminate destruction was not relevant during total-war. The deaths of noncombatants were a tragic consequence of total war; however, since the entire population was at war, the deaths of noncombatants were not unusual.

Christians challenged the concept of total-war, establishing the Just War theory and basic humanitarian laws. As the Catholic Church gained power and popularity, the general Christian ethics began to influence European cultures, teaching populations to value and preserve the human life. Additionally, the Christian ethical approaches to war gained acclamation, which established Just War theory as the primary standard for war.

As modern chemical warfare began, it was compared to the Just War theory, as previous wars had been. The negative reactions to chemical warfare were influenced by the cultural and philosophical ideals of the modern world, which were established through Christian ethics and Just War theory. Since the chemical weapons destroyed indiscriminately, it contradicted *Jus in Bello* of the Just War theory. When the public denounced the compatibility of modern chemical warfare and Just War theory, the nations implemented international regulations on chemical warfare. The priorities had evolved from victory to humanitarian ideals. Therefore, with the advent of Christianity and civilized war ethics, chemical weapons were viewed as barbaric, which was juxtaposed with the ancient view of chemical weapons being intelligent and cunning.
Works Cited


Chemical weapons were first used on a large scale during World War I. In late 1914, the military imperative of breaking out of the bloody stalemate of trench warfare led the Prussian chemist Fritz Haber to propose releasing clouds of chlorine gas from pressurized cylinders in order to drive the enemy from his trenches. On the bright side, the effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention since its entry into force in 1997 has reduced the number of countries that possess chemical weapons from nearly twenty during the 1980s to a half-dozen today. The human rights group Christian Solidarity Worldwide alleged in 2005 that the Burmese Many nations continue to research and/or stockpile chemical weapon agents despite numerous efforts to reduce or eliminate them. Most states have joined the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which required the destruction of all chemical weapons by 2012. Twelve nations have declared chemical weapons production facilities and six nations have declared stockpiles of chemical weapons. All of the declared production facilities have been destroyed or converted to civilian use after the treaty went into Chemical weapon, any of several chemical compounds, usually toxic agents, that are intended to kill, injure, or incapacitate. In modern warfare, chemical weapons were first used in World War I (1914â€“18). Like nuclear and biological weapons, chemical weapons are often classified as weapons of mass destruction. On April 21, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) announced it would remove Syriaâ€™s â€œrights and privilegesâ€ within the association with immediate effect. The move was precipitated by 87 OPCW member states voting in favor of a proposal by 46 countries â€“ led by London, Paris, and Washington â€“ to strip Damascus of its voting powers in the assembly, and bar the countryâ€™s representatives from holding any offices within the organisation. Relying on the FFM report is inherently problematic, given mission investigators didnâ€™t actually visit the site of the attack, and all the samples reviewed were provided by the highly controversial White Helmets.