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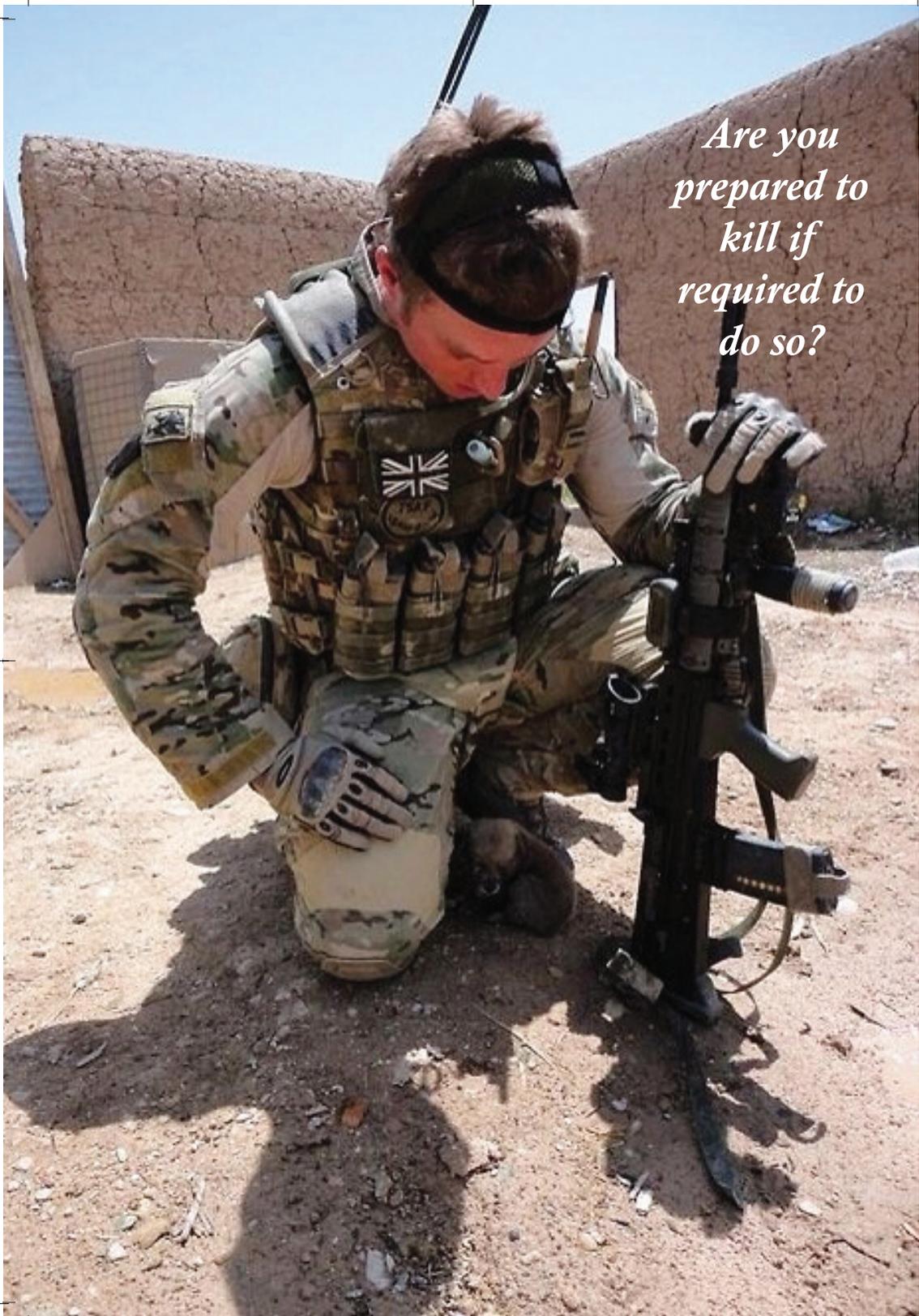


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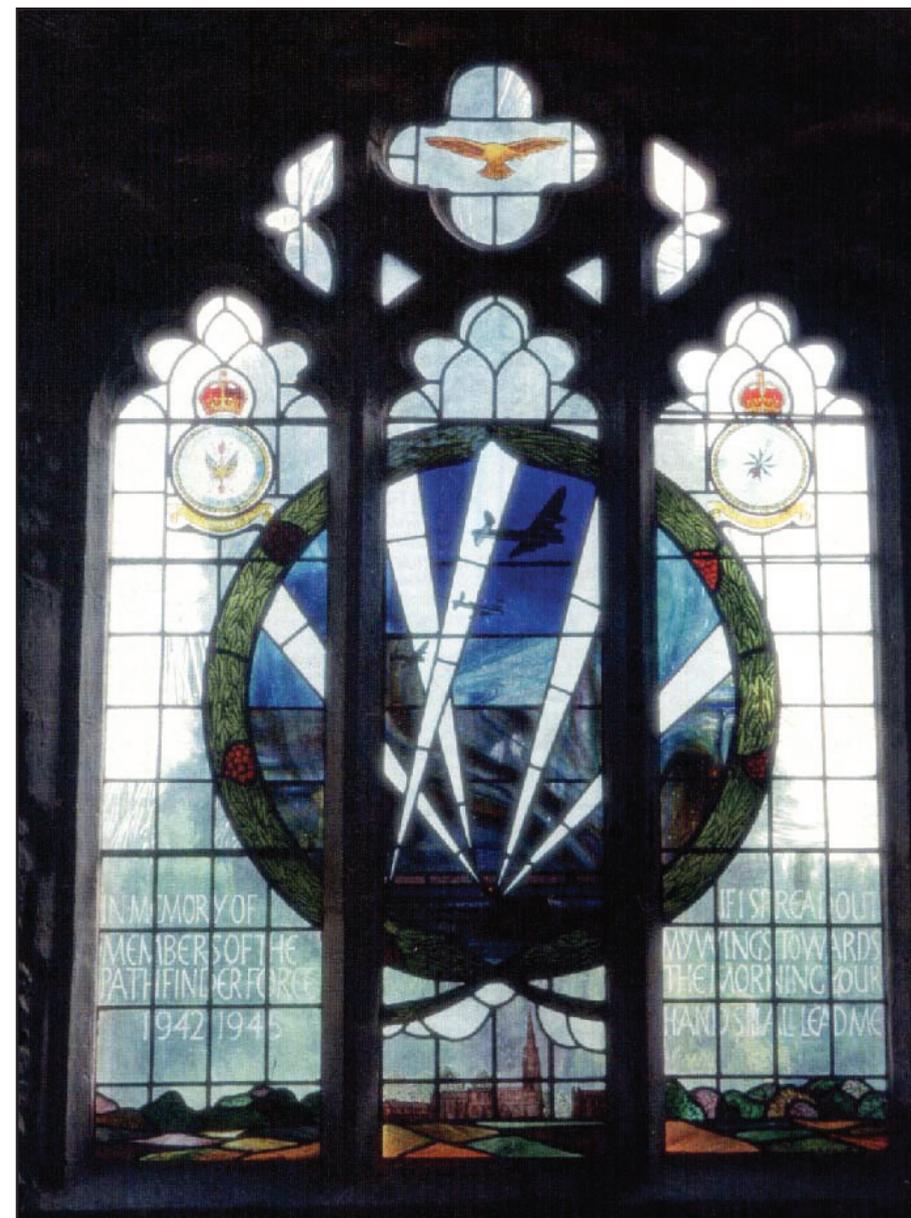
An  
  
Publication



**A Christian View of Warfare**



*Are you  
prepared to  
kill if  
required to  
do so?*



*As within a nation, so between nations  
'righteousness' comes before 'peace'*

The memorial window to No 156 'Pathfinder' Squadron  
RAF, in St Mary Magdalene Church, Warboys, Lincolnshire

## APPENDIX B

### REFERENCES

1. The Principles of Theology (pp 476, 478) - W.H.Griffith Thomas – Church Book Room Press
2. May a Christian Serve in the Military? - Lt Gen William Harrison – Officers Christian Fellowship (USA)
3. The Christian and Nuclear Deterrence - Rear Admiral W.J.McClune - Officers Christian Union
4. Mere Christianity - C.S.Lewis - Harper Collins

## APPENDIX C

### FURTHER READING

Peace in Our Time? - David Atkinson – IVP

Just Deterrence - Malcolm McCall and Oliver Ramsbotham - Brassey's

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## FOREWORD

by The Venerable (Air Vice-Marshal) Ray Pentland QHC

RAF Chaplain-in-Chief

A Christian View of Warfare, can there be such a thing? Should there be such a view? What does the Bible have to say? How can a Christian serve in the military?

In a military community that has been constantly involved in conflicts across the globe for the last twenty years or so, these and many more questions are inevitable, and indeed it is vital that they should continue to be posed. I have been privileged to find myself discussing such questions informally, in crew rooms, mess halls, study groups, and churches, both at home and on operations, in peace and conflict, and formally in classrooms, in lecture halls, training units, national and international conferences, colleges and universities. The settings may differ, but the questions rarely change.

This simple booklet addresses the age old questions, clearly summarising Christian teaching.

I recommend it to all who serve in the military community in the hope that more questions will be asked, and truth discovered, and that the Prince of Peace may come to reign in the hearts of all who read it.

# A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF WARFARE

## 1. WARFARE - THE AWFUL REALITY

### Facing the Truth in Military Service

If there ever was a time when war could be viewed as exciting and glamorous, no sane person regards it as such now. That is partly because modern communication methods allow the horrors of warfare to be known by anyone at the flick of a TV switch. But it is also the nature of warfare from the twentieth century, as well as the advance in communications, which confirms the conviction that it is an awful reality which is welcomed by no-one, except perhaps by the few who are prepared to profit from the misery of others. Although tradition still governs much of service life, and this can present the armed forces in a glamorous light, the truth behind their purpose is not hard to see.

In countries with a legitimate civilian government, those offering themselves for military service today are seldom self-serving. They see the profession of arms as a challenging career, and expect to get much satisfaction from it, but they are not glamorising warfare, nor are they prepared to commit war-like acts just for their selfish benefit. In fact when they enter the armed forces, the vast majority find the answer to the inevitable question: 'Are you prepared to kill if required to do so?' gives them some deep soul searching. If this is true of most reasonable people, it is doubly true of those whose conscience is sharpened by their Christian convictions. It is easy for them to feel uncomfortable when well-meaning friends question whether the Christian faith allows people to take up arms with a clear conscience. Those who know the Bible a little will be aware of the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill', and the injunction to 'turn the other cheek', and many well-intentioned people feel that pacifism is an attractive response.

### Scope of this Booklet

It is the aim of this booklet to aid the thinking of those in the armed forces who are perplexed by the moral issues raised. It is unashamedly from a Christian Biblical perspective. Clearly the subject is a big one, and more extensive reading is worthwhile to consider it fairly, but it is hoped that this will be a helpful introduction, starting from a Biblical perspective on justice and the use of force. The modern practice of intervention for the purpose of justice and peacemaking are touched on, but the considerable ethical issues raised are mostly beyond the scope of the booklet. Traditional responses of 'Just War' theory and pacifism are considered, before addressing the twin questions of belonging to a fighting service and being prepared to take life in the course of duty.

## 7. PROPORTIONALITY

The means used of conducting warfare should be limited to those necessary to achieve the end intended. However the negative effects in terms of loss and damage (including long term effects) must not exceed the evil that is sought to be stopped.

## 8. PROTECTION OF NON-COMBATANTS

Only enemy combatants may be attacked. Non-combatants must be protected from attacks and shielded from the indirect effects of war.

## APPENDIX A

### JUST WAR CRITERIA

The following list is based on that in 1995 IVP New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology. The first six criteria relate to the justice of going to war (jus ad bellum), and the last two relate to the conduct of war (jus in bello)

#### 1. JUST CAUSE

The only just cause for war is defence against violent (and unjustified) aggression against the State, or against a neighbour state unable to defend itself. Pre-emptive defence may be possible, subject to the other conditions set out below. Injustice (e.g. going to war in response to unjust economic sanctions) would not generally be sufficient cause, unless the survival of the people or the State were so threatened as to warrant the injustice being classed as violent aggression.

#### 2. JUST INTENTION

The only just intention is to restore peace to friend and foe alike. There must be no motive of revenge or retribution. Just intention demands also proper conduct, avoiding any tendency to hatred or brutality.

#### 3. LAST RESORT

The use of military force must be a last resort after every other effort to resolve the situation, including international negotiations, has been exhausted and has failed.

#### 4. PROPER AUTHORITY

The decision to go to war must be made by the highest lawful government or supra-government authority, and should be marked by an official declaration of hostility.

#### 5. LIMITED ENDS

A war must be waged for limited ends only - sufficient to repel aggression and to redress its injustice.

#### 6. REASONABLE CHANCE OF SUCCESS

Because, if a just peace cannot be achieved, the additional suffering caused by the war would serve no purpose, war must only be undertaken where there is a reasonable chance of success, and must be discontinued if that chance fades.

### 2. JUSTICE AND THE USE OF FORCE

#### Legitimate Authority

When God created man, He gave him the instruction: 'Be fruitful and increase in number: fill the earth and subdue it' (Genesis 1: 28). The Hebrew word translated 'subdue' is used elsewhere in the Old Testament when an enemy land is brought into submission (Numbers 32: 22). This shows that God has given to mankind the responsibility of enforcing order on His world.

Centuries later, at a time when a particularly ruthless government was ruling a large part of the civilised world, and the early Christians were suffering bitter persecution by pagan Romans, as well as by Jews, the apostle Paul wrote: 'Every Christian ought to obey the civil authorities, for all legitimate authority is derived from God's Authority, and the existing authority is appointed under God. To oppose authority, then, is to oppose God, and such opposition is bound to be punished . . . The officer is God's servant for your protection. . . . The 'power of the law' which is vested in every legitimate officer, is no empty phrase. He is in fact, divinely appointed to inflict God's punishment upon evil doers' (Romans 13: 1,2,4 - Phillips).

So, clearly, a Christian must serve God conscientiously within the framework of any legitimate system of government under which he is called to live. He should regard the force necessary to maintain order as ordained by God, even if it is wielded by a patently non-Christian authority. Of course, these remarks clearly apply to the legal government, rather than to that of a usurping power. Regardless of this, obedience to such a power could in some circumstances be treason. At the same time, whoever has to exercise the force or 'bear the sword' is commended in the Bible as 'the servant of God.' (Romans 13: 4).

Divine authority in human government is mentioned again in Paul's letter to Titus: 'Remind your people to recognise the power of those who rule and bear authority. They must obey the laws of the State and be prepared to render whatever good service they can.' (Titus 3: 1 - Phillips). Again, in Peter's first letter he writes: 'Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right' (1 Peter 2: 13,14). Jesus emphasised that civil authority derives from God when He said to Pilate: 'You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above.' (John 19: 11) When, earlier, the Pharisees had tried to trap Jesus into denouncing the civil authority by asking: 'Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?', He replied 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's' (Mark 12: 14, 17). If then the State calls legitimately on its subjects to maintain order, either by

civil or military means, the Christian is not entitled to avoid participation, although he has the additional responsibility to pray for those in authority and do what he can to ensure that the force used in the resistance of evil may be limited to what is strictly right and just.

### **The Use of Force**

That there is nothing incompatible between the seeking of God's help and the use of force, when necessary and when ordered, is made clear in the Bible. For instance we read that, when Nehemiah was faced by enemies using force to prevent the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, he sought God's help for his resistance: 'We prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat' (Nehemiah 4: 9). This attitude was adopted similarly by Oliver Cromwell, many centuries later, who told his troops: "Trust in God and keep your powder dry".

There are, however, passages of Scripture that are sometimes quoted as showing that the use of force is always wrong, and these merit honest consideration. In the 'Sermon on the Mount' for instance, words such as 'Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also' (Matthew 5: 39) are taken by some to mean that force should not even be used to protect society against evildoers, nor for nations to defend themselves against unprovoked attack, nor for the strong to use their power to protect the weak.

In addressing the question whether it can be right for a Christian to resort to war, the early 20th century theologian W.H.Griffith Thomas concludes: 'The law is plain (in the Sermon on the Mount) that envy, hatred and malice are as absolutely wrong in nations as they are in individuals, and so is revenge. Not only so, but the very existence of war is a clear proof that the law of God has somehow been broken, for if it had been perfectly obeyed, it would have made war impossible. But when violence, aggression, and tyrannical cruelty are seen, the question at once arises as to what Christianity requires of Christians. As long as the individual's own life is concerned, the matter is plain, but the problem becomes acute when he is responsible for others. The difficulty in some minds is due to a confusion between retaliation and resistance. The former is unchristian; the latter is not. Resistance of evil may be and often is a positive duty, for if a man or woman were to yield to pressure in the face of certain aspects of evil, it would imply a weak and sinful compliance. There is also no essential distinction between police force and military force, because in both instances force is exercised to resist evil...And so it may be concluded that the moral significance of force lies only in its use, and it is the unnecessary or cruel employment alone that is wrong ... As it has been well said, the true conclusion is not 'peace at any price,' but 'righteousness at any cost.'" ( 1)

## **7. THE CHRISTIAN AND MILITARY SERVICE**

### **The Bible in Context**

This approach to the question as to whether it is right for a Christian to be in 'the profession of arms' has been largely based on what we find in the Bible. It is worth emphasising that this approach cannot be on the basis of throwing out Bible texts, which one can do to serve any argument, but to look at what the Bible says in its context.

It can be seen that the Bible shows military service to be honourable and lawful, and fully acceptable for a Christian. Furthermore, God is a God of order, and in this present era, as in Biblical times. He ordains that human governments maintain order by force. As within a nation, so between nations 'righteousness' comes before 'peace'; and although we are told 'If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone' (Romans 12: 18), there is no guarantee that peace will be possible. Indeed St. Paul, who wrote this exhortation, did not always find it possible, for he wrote: 'when Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face' (Galatians 2: 11).

### **Seeking Righteousness**

So force may be necessary for ensuring 'righteousness', or right living, and a righteous war is possible, and permitted by God, for defence against aggression, or for upholding the weak in the fulfilment of solemn undertakings. The logical conclusion is that, if force leads to the taking of life, this too is a lawful though unpleasant duty, that even a Christian may be called on to perform - and can do faithfully. These principles apply universally, but to the Christian serving in the Armed Forces of a country whose laws find their origin in Christianity, there is potentially the added assurance and comfort that their purpose is for defence and to maintain peace, rather than for selfish wars of aggression. When rightly used, the role of the Armed Forces is analogous to that of a police force, which seeks to prevent crime and to keep order. So, a Christian can regard it as an honour, and as a duty to be faithfully followed, should God call him to serve in the armed forces.

Finally, if a Christian in the Armed Forces honestly faces up to these moral questions, and continues by faith in the service of the Nation, he will find ample opportunities of serving his Lord and the 'Captain of his salvation'. The Christian indeed should set an example of leadership that will help others, and raise morale, being like Abraham who 'was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God.' (Romans 4: 20); he may well take as his motto 'Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.' (1 Corinthians 16:13).

that in cutting off a man's ear, Peter, who was obviously not a skilled swordsman, was actually trying to kill the man in his angry response to Jesus' arrest, and was therefore guilty of attempted murder. Jesus' response may have meant that it was foolish, humanly speaking, to fight against such superior forces; and also that the time had come for Him to bear the penalty of our sins, and it was therefore wrong for Peter to intervene. But even more, He might have been pointing out that people who murder are liable to the death penalty. Nevertheless He over-ruled the incident to supply a last testimony to the High Priest, through the healing of his slave (Luke 22: 51). It seems clear that it was to show this that the incident was recorded, not to make our Lord's rebuke a permanent and universal prohibition of the use of lethal weapons.

That it can be right to use 'the sword' in certain circumstances was implied by Jesus when He said: 'If you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one' (Luke 22: 36), and He surely knew that some of his disciples carried swords at the time of his arrest. Earlier in the Lord's ministry, He sent out his disciples on a missionary journey, without 'bag or money' (Mark 6: 8) to proclaim the Kingdom. But now, by contrast, bag, money and sword would be needed. This was probably a warning to them that they would not have the protection they had had on the missionary journey, but would be scattered, and would need on occasion to seek the protection of 'the sword' of authority (Acts 23: 17-35). Our Lord would hardly have said this if it were always wrong to use the sword.

### **The Importance of Motive**

It is clear from our Lord's teaching that it is the motive that counts: that murderous anger is as bad as murder itself (Matthew 5: 21,22). The real question for the Christian member of the armed forces is not 'is it right for me to kill?', but 'am I serving the lawful government of my country?' If, with a full sense of responsibility towards God, he can answer 'yes', then he may carry out his duties fearlessly, whatever they may entail, in the assurance that the ultimate issues of life and death are in the hands of God himself. With such an attitude, the Christian must still pray to be guarded against ungodly excitement which may result from the very act of taking life in the execution of his duty.

The injunctions to 'turn the other cheek' and the related words in Matthew 5: 40,41: 'If someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles' are not apparently designed to forbid the resistance of wrongdoing, but to urge disciples to be prepared for personal inconvenience and suffering in the pursuit of good.

## **3. FORCEFUL INTERVENTION**

### **Can War Help?**

Helpful as these considerations are, they still leave questions in the minds of sincere people as to whether warfare can ever be used legitimately. It is sometimes objected that wars never settle anything. On this, Lieutenant-General William K. Harrison, US Army, a strong Christian who served with distinction in the Second World War, and who was Chief UN negotiator for the cease fire of the Korean war, has written: 'If this means that war does not end wars and produce a permanently static civilisation, I agree. The human race is constantly changing, generations dying, new ones being born. Civilisation is fluid. But I think that war has settled some things, many of great importance. War established the Roman Empire, in which there was a century or more of as nearly complete peace as has ever existed in civilised lands. War prevented the Saracens (and in the 20th century the Nazis) from completely dominating Europe...I don't intimate that these results could not have been obtained in a much better way. I don't know of a war which could not have been settled peaceably if men had been peacefully inclined.' (2)

### **Peacemaking**

The trouble is that men are frequently not peacefully inclined, and over time numerous attempts at establishing peace with justice have failed. Jesus said 'Blessed are the peacemakers.' (Matthew 5: 9), and it must be conceded that one of the positive effects of military force which came into focus at the end of the 20th century is where it is linked with 'peacemaking'. Peacekeeping has been a shot in the locker of the United Nations since its foundation, but it has been seen recently that the posting of neutral military observers can be an ineffective action if the threat of force is entirely absent. Thus the concept of peacemaking has been forced on sometimes reluctant participants. Perhaps the most obvious illustration has been the military actions in the wake of the break up of Yugoslavia, but a more clear cut example was the use of British forces to hugely beneficial effect in association with the United Nations peacekeeping force in Sierra Leone in 2000. Nonetheless, such actions (which have partly evolved from the reduction from two world super-powers to one) are fraught with ethical difficulties which the Christian would do well to seek to understand.

### **Just War**

Historically, before the time of Christ the Greeks had begun to lay the foundations of a code to assist in deciding whether the terrible human consequences of war could ever be justified. After the conversion to Christianity of

the Emperor Constantine, Christians began to share in the exercise of state power and to serve in the Roman army. Mainly through the influence of Augustine of Hippo, the Christian church then began to consider more explicitly the circumstances under which, in a fallen and disordered world, it might be morally right to engage in war, and if such a tragic step was judged necessary, what limits or constraints should govern its conduct. The 'Just War' tradition was subsequently developed by Christian thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Francisco Suarez, and following the initiative of Hugo Grotius, a 16th century Dutch political scientist, it became an element in international law. It was thought by many to have been superseded in the 20th century by the UN Charter, with the prohibition on the threat or use of force except within the terms of the Charter. However, with the end of the Cold

War, the 'Just War' philosophy has undergone a revival in the discussions on the legality of 'humanitarian intervention'. The precepts derive from the basic moral principle that man should not do unnecessary harm to his 'neighbour', and are expressed in two categories:

When is recourse to war permissible (Jus ad bellum)

How should war be conducted (Jus in bello)

The traditional criteria are listed in Appendix A.

Mark and Luke. And I am told that there is the same distinction in Hebrew. Not all killing is murder, any more than all sexual intercourse is adultery. War is a dreadful thing, and I can respect an honest pacifist, though I think he is entirely mistaken.' (4)

### **Lawful Killing**

The view that it is lawful to kill in the special circumstances of war is supported by the fact that nowhere in the Bible is an individual held responsible for killing in the execution of justice, or in battle. For example, capital punishment is endorsed in many passages in the Old Testament, showing both the unacceptability of murder and at the same time the rightness of killing under certain circumstances. (Leviticus 24: 17; Numbers 35: 31; Genesis 9: 6)

To understand this properly, we must consider the subject as a whole, going back to the time when 'Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin'. (Romans 5: 12) The first murderer was Cain whose 'brother's blood cries out to me (God) from the ground' (Genesis 4: 10) but at that time God did not delegate to man the punishment of murderers. He Himself was both Judge and Executioner and He protected Cain from the vengeance of man, giving him a lifetime in which to repent. Until the Flood, it seems, no penalty for sin was exacted, every man being required to act according to his own conscience. Scripture records man's complete failure under this test, until 'the earth was ... full of violence' (Genesis 6:11). With the coming of the Flood, God, having patiently borne with man for many generations, saw fit to execute capital punishment upon all the ungodly, and after the Flood the few who remained and re-peopled the earth were invested with a new responsibility. God's Covenant with Noah included the injunction: 'Whosoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed.' (Genesis 9: 6). This has delegated to human government, since the days of the Flood, the ultimate sanction of taking life.

### **Taking the Sword**

A text that is sometimes quoted as forbidding killing in all circumstances is:- 'Put your sword back in its place ..., for all who draw the sword will die by the sword' (Matthew 26: 52). Our Lord's words here are thought by some to prohibit the use of the 'sword' as representing all weapons of offence and defence. But we must bear in mind the occasion and circumstances in which they were spoken. Jesus had earlier said; 'The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you' (Matthew 23: 2 - 3). These men were the constituted religious authority and the High Priest was the constituted ruler of the people of Israel (Acts 23: 5). The use by Peter (identified in the account in John's Gospel - John 18:10) of the sword on this occasion was therefore unauthorised, and so he was deservedly rebuked by Jesus. It might even be said

## 6. THOU SHALT NOT KILL?

### The Difference Between Killing and Murder

'Can a Christian be a soldier?' inevitably raises the question: is it ever right to kill someone else? People will argue from different standpoints on this, but the Christian viewpoint has to be grounded in what the Bible says.

If we accept, then, that military service is a legitimate occupation for a Christian, we are still faced with the basic problem for the individual Christian of whether it can ever be right for him to kill. Again turning to the Bible, we are familiar with 'You shall not murder' (Exodus 20: 13), and 'Love your enemies' (Matthew 5: 44).

Professor C.S. Lewis in his book 'Mere Christianity,' (written just after WW II, when there was capital punishment in Britain) interprets these commands as follows: 'I have to love my neighbour as myself. Well, how exactly do I love myself? A good many people imagine that loving your enemies means making out they are not such bad fellows after all, when it is quite plain that they are. In my most clear-sighted moments not only do I not think myself a nice man, but I know that I am a very nasty one. I can look at some of the things I have done with horror and loathing. So apparently I am allowed to hate and loathe some of the things my enemies do; I must hate the sin, but not the sinner. For a long time I used to think this a silly, straw-splitting distinction: how could you hate what a man did and not hate the man? But later it occurred to me that there was one man to whom I had been doing this all my life - namely myself. However much I might dislike my own cowardice or conceit or greed, I went on loving myself. In fact, the very reason why I hated these things was that I loved the man. Just because I loved myself, I was sorry to find that I was the sort of man who did those things. Consequently, Christianity doesn't want us to reduce by one atom the hatred we feel for cruelty and treachery. We ought to hate them. But it does want us to hate them in the same way in which we hate things in ourselves: being sorry that the man should have done such things and hoping, if it is in any way possible, that somehow, sometime, he can be cured and made human again. Does loving your enemy mean not punishing him? No, for loving myself does not mean that I ought not to subject myself to punishment - even to death. If you had committed a murder, the right thing to do would be to give yourself up to the police and be sentenced. It is, therefore, perfectly right for a Christian judge to sentence a man to death, or a Christian soldier to kill an enemy. I have always thought so, ever since I became a Christian, and long before the war, and I still think so now we are at peace. It is no good quoting 'You shall not murder'. There are two Greek words: the ordinary word to kill and a different one to murder. And when Christ quotes the commandment He uses the 'murder' one in all three accounts, Matthew,

## 4. A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF PACIFISM

Before going further, it is wise to consider the argument for pacifism. The Christian pacifist case rests largely on the interpretation from the Sermon on the Mount of the conduct required within the Kingdom of God, as our Lord's instruction for all Christians from then on. The passage already quoted (Matthew 5: 39) 'Do not resist an evil person...' etc., would therefore be an edict for all Christians for all time. The pacifist position also rests on such passages as Romans 12: 19, 'Do not take revenge.....for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord.' Such an emphasis fails to allow for the holiness, righteousness and justice of God, characteristic of his kingdom (c.f. Matthew 6: 33) to be worked out in this fallen world, before the Second Coming of our Lord, when the Kingdom of God will be here in all its fullness. Nor does it take account of the Lord's authority for the servants of the state to bear the sword for the administration of justice (Romans 13: 4). The question that pacifists fail to answer is where is the justice and righteousness of God for example in the case of a violent attack on an innocent victim that could be prevented by the proper use of force.

There will always be some, for whom the call to a peaceful non-resistance will be their interpretation of the will of God, but this can never be the position of the state with a duty of protection for its citizens. For the Christian soldier therefore, there can be a confidence that in lawfully taking up arms in the service of his country, he is serving a higher and just cause.

Some also go so far as to say that modern armaments and armed forces are the cause of war, and that if nations were to disarm war would disappear. On this point Lieutenant General Sir William Dobbie, an outspoken Christian who led the defence of Malta in the second world war, wrote: 'We need not examine this strange claim further than to note that modern weapons are not necessary for fighting. If such weapons are not available, and if men or nations desire to fight, they will do so with whatever is available, either more primitive weapons, or in the last resort with such weapons as Nature has provided.'

As it says in the letter of St James: 'What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?' (James 4: 1). War is here seen to be the result of sin - though it is evident that in this passage it is the motives that are condemned. That war is horrific is undeniable, and all sane people hate it and should do their utmost to prevent it. But that is not the same as saying that, quite apart from the motives, war is in it-

self sinful. In the Old Testament it is clearly permitted by God to achieve His just purposes. It is analogous to the 'Law' which Paul takes some pains to point out in his letter to the Romans, (e.g Romans 7: 7,8) is not of itself evil, but inevitably reveals the evil of which sinful man is capable.

### **Nuclear Pacifism**

A Christian who regards participation in a 'just' war as legitimate may find his conviction less certain when he considers the use of nuclear weapons. This relates to the possibility of their indiscriminate use in breach of the 'jus in bello' just war criteria. This could also be said of other weapons of 'mass destruction'. Of course nuclear weapons have for long been considered only in the context of deterrence, but that is an empty concept if their possible use is barred. It is for this reason that some thoughtful Christians, who are in no sense total pacifists, have argued that Christians should be 'nuclear pacifists'. The adoption of nuclear pacifism as a stance does however create a number of problems which, in the view of many, exacerbates rather than ameliorates the situation. The core of the issue is that the nuclear weapon is here to stay and will not go away. There is no evidence from history, nor does it accord with the Biblical understanding of sin, that the voluntary renunciation of nuclear weapons by one power or group of powers will lead to a world free of nuclear weapons. On the contrary, if one power or group of powers renounces the weapon the temptations for powers not influenced by democratic traditions not only to acquire but also to use the nuclear bomb will be considerably greater. Thus whilst nuclear pacifism is at first sight an appealing option to pursue, its consequences are far less so. At the very least it invites international anarchy and disorder, with the weaker non-nuclear states being at the mercy of a small number of maverick nuclear powers totally unprotected by any democratic government which is committed to security and the upholding of international law. In addition it offers a temptation to any nuclear powers not adopting nuclear pacifism to use, or at least threaten to use, their nuclear weapons, since they can then do it with impunity. Nuclear pacifism thus makes nuclear war more rather than less likely. Having said that, the subject merits further careful consideration. (3)

## **5. SOLDIERING**

The first fact that strikes us is that the soldier's calling and work are frequently mentioned, both in the Old and New Testaments, yet with no hint whatever that his calling is in itself either dishonourable or unlawful. There is for the soldier none of the stern denunciation that our Lord made against the traders in the precincts of the Temple (John 2: 16). When soldiers came to John the Baptist for advice, he said 'Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely - be content with your pay' (Luke 3: 14). He did not suggest they should leave the army; in fact he implied that they should continue to draw their wages as soldiers, but without complaint. He was calling them to repentance; they were not to use their arms nor their authority for their own private ends, such as the extortion of money to supplement their wages - a known practice of Roman soldiers at that time. Although in these Bible passages 'soldiers' are mentioned, it is clear that the principles laid down can be applied with equal force to the members of all fighting Services.

It is also significant that the four centurions mentioned in the New Testament are all commended in one way or another (Luke 7: 9, Luke 23: 47, Acts 10: 2, Acts 27: 43). The centurion at Capernaum is praised for his faith; and God honoured the centurion Cornelius, to the extent that in his home was founded the first Gentile Christian Church. There is no suggestion that these two men of faith were to give up their army career; they honoured God in it, each 'in the situation which he was in when God called him' (1 Corinthians 7: 20).

### **Soldiers as Spiritual Role Models**

The second fact that we find, especially in the New Testament, is that the Christian life is likened to many lawful and honourable occupations, such as that of a farmer, athlete, good workman, citizen, pilgrim, etc. There are also frequent comparisons with the life of a soldier, such as when Timothy in his second letter writes: 'Endure hardship like a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No-one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs - he wants to please his commanding officer.' (2 Timothy 2: 3,4) In this way, many of the aspects of the soldier's life that are considered, such as his discipline and loyalty, clearly derive from its lawfulness. The ultimate endorsement for the profession of arms, however, comes from the fact that human rule is based on the right use of force. This is a fact recognised and approved by God throughout the Scriptures, although Christians have a hope set before them of a time when all human relationships will be ruled by love, without any fear; when 'there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain' (Revelation 21: 4). Meanwhile Governments are responsible to maintain justice and order among their people, and evil has to be kept down by coercion and force, for the sake of society as a whole.

So the view endorsed by the Bible is that force is not inherently wrong when exercised by human government for the maintenance of order or in the defence of right. Nonetheless, what of the sixth Commandment?