



MISSION

ISSUE 1 2016

CATALYST

Intelligent comment on faith and culture

War!

What is it good for?

Technological advancement, the economy, weapons manufacturers, gaining territory, promoting patriotism, regime change, stopping the Nazis, building empires, political popularity ratings and advances in medical technology.

Well, that's alright, then.

Yeah, comforting.

Super.

Christianity's complex relationship with war

Q&A: CHAPLAIN GENERAL

04// *The Army's David Coulter on pacifists, chaplains, killing and evil.*

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LETTERS

PRAISE FOR AN IMAM'S INPUT AND RECOGNITION THAT THERE ARE NO SIMPLE ANSWERS WHEN IT COMES TO DEBT.

SHEIKHING UP THE READERS

“What Islam can teach Christians about Debt?” is a misleading title, as shared risk and the immorality of fixed interest were the official position of the Christian Church for most of its history! “What Christians taught Islam, but forgot themselves” would be more appropriate!

Bob Allaway

I have just read the excellent article on the above subject by Sheikh Mohammed Abou Zaid in *Mission Catalyst* issue 4 2015, for which I thank you.

I am impressed by what is written here to the extent that, if it is possible, I would like your permission please to reproduce the article within the church I pastor here in Norfolk.

In Jesus,

Reverend John Rose

I was delighted to come across the article by Sheikh Mohammed in the latest issue of *Catalyst*. I have had the privilege of meeting Sheikh Mohammed several times during my visits to Lebanon. He is a delightful man of love and peace, and a wealth of knowledge. We can learn much from him. God willing, I will have the opportunity to meet with him again in the future.

Catalyst is a great publication. Many thanks.

Blessings,

Cathy



NO SIMPLE ANSWER OVER DEBT

You and all involved in the production and publication of *Catalyst* are to be congratulated and thanked for a denominational periodical where serious subjects are addressed seriously.

The most recent number on ‘debt’ with its clever cartoon on the front cover illustrates the fact that to treat matters seriously means that no easy solutions are on offer. Some of the differing stances adopted by the various contributors in this current number are impossible to reconcile. We would like to have an indisputably Christian way we could adopt, but it is naïve to believe that this is available. Soon after the crumbling of the Berlin Wall, Archbishop Robert Runcie asked about 15 of us from the West to meet a similar number of Church leaders from eastern Europe. It was alarming for us to hear the enthusiasm with which they spoke of the free-market economy and we had to say that this was not the kingdom of God on earth. They replied that if we had had to endure 40 years of a command economy we would understand their enthusiasm.

In present times, some governments have incurred great debts which their successors are having to reckon with whilst they and their fellow citizens, innocent of this wrongdoing, suffer, sometimes with dire consequences. It is attractive then to present the option of wiping the slate clean as being the Christian way. Yet I have long since been warned that if I was willing and able to pay off the debt of a profligate spender without the latter demonstrating their willingness to amend their ways, I would not be helping them – only renewing their opportunities to reoffend.

We have to continue to search for a truly Christlike way to live in our present day world.

Douglas C Sparkes

All letters to Mission Catalyst at PO Box 49, 129 Broadway, Didcot, OX11 8XA and emails to catalyst@bmsworldmission.org will be considered for publication and may be edited for length and style if selected. Many letters are invited. Not all are chosen.

AN APOLOGY FOR WAR?



WAR IS ONCE AGAIN TOPICAL. DO WE HAVE ANY FRESH PERSPECTIVES TO OFFER?

Tony Blair has offered an apology for the war in Iraq; in both senses of the word. Evidently it did contribute to the emergence of ISIS, but it also brought benefits for the Iraqi people. Blair's so-called 'boyfriend's apology' – admitting what went wrong in such a way that no blame attaches – seems almost timely as we revisit old questions about military intervention, this time in Syria. Once the recent attacks in Paris, and the Labour leadership's wrangling over whether to support the renewal of Trident are added to the mix, along with Jeremy Corbyn's conscientious hypothetical refusal to push the fictitious and antiquated 'button', there is a definite whiff of nostalgia to recent arguments about war and disarmament.

The reasons for military intervention are more concrete and so more compelling this time around; there really are millions of refugees staggering across Europe to escape from war and find safety for their children. No need to look for spurious weapons of mass destruction, even though deciding who to bomb in Syria leaves many reaching for a coin.

Jeremy Corbyn's evaluation of Trident is framed as a threat to national

security and feared to be so unpopular or impractical that it prompts threats of resignation from his own front bench.

The premise, though, if not the conclusion, is surely sound. The Cold War is history and threats to national security no longer originate with nation states. The world is a different place, and perhaps more dangerous for that. Should we just be resigned to a nuclear deterrent, even if its function feels more like that of a security blanket (good to hold onto when you're in the dark)?

Sitting in comfortable rooms, with no guns in sight and no buttons to push, may lead to a sterile discussion that resembles a rehearsal of cherished arguments from early ethics classes. Paris and the sight of refugees marching towards even the vaguest prospect of peace reminds us of the need for a solution, for action. The latest issue of BMS' *Engage* magazine carries an article that would helpfully accompany the debate that this issue of *Mission Catalyst* takes forward, to ensure that we do not settle for easy or comfortable conclusions. In it, Carlos Tique Jone tells of his experience as a conscripted soldier in Mozambique's civil war and of the terrifying circumstances which led him to say, "Today is my last day to live."

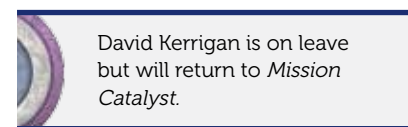
As we return to reconsider the case for military intervention and perhaps even think through nuclear disarmament again, is there any point in dusting off old arguments? Does Just War theory make sense in a post-Christendom society? Is there still something strong to be said about the use of force in the defence of the weak? Can we think in terms of right intentions, when national and corporate interests are thoroughly intertwined in areas of conflict? Is it right to pragmatically think through what we can do towards a more 'nearly just' world or should we urge a pacifistic politics of Jesus?

Certainly we will have to admit that the history of the Church is permeated with these discussions, as is our present. There is no Christian consensus on war or disarmament. Also, our Scriptures are soaked in the questions and consequences of violence. It is not just that there are terror texts in the telling of Israel's history. Even the prayer life of the Psalms is continually conditioned by the presence, threat and atrocities of the enemy and the desire to wrap God up in defence and retaliation.

Are we able to offer a fresh apology for war or a better defence for disarmament, or are we still caught on the horns of this dilemma?

Mark Ord

Co-Director of BMS World Mission's International Mission Centre



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Reverend Dr David G Coulter, QHC, is a Church of Scotland minister who became Chaplain General to Her Majesty's Land Forces in 2014.



CHAPLAIN GENERAL DAVID COULTER

*THE CHAPLAIN GENERAL OF THE ARMY TALKS ABOUT
PACIFISM, RISKING OR TAKING LIFE AND FIGHTING EVIL.*

There is a strong trend within some parts of the Church that takes being anti-war to the point of being suspicious of any involvement with the military. Do you encounter that much?

You don't encounter it a lot, but certainly I absolutely believe that God's kingdom doesn't stop the day you put on an army uniform. Within the army (the navy and the air force experience ministry differently) we try to ensure that every

major deployable unit has a chaplain. And when a young soldier or young officer enters the armed forces, they are introduced to the chaplain almost from day one and certainly from week one.

Why does the army want the chaplains alongside our people? I think it's because they believe in what the chaplain brings to the soldier. To look after their spiritual needs, to provide pastoral care and to give them moral guidance where it's needed.

When it comes to that moral guidance, does that ever conflict with army guidance or orders that are being given?

Of course it can do, but I don't think it often does. I think that we're not in the business of blessing bombs. What we're there to do is to minister to the people who are having to make some very difficult choices. Which include putting their own lives on the line and possibly taking life.

What is the counter-argument to the one that finds serving in the military, even as a chaplain, problematic for Christians?

When you asked me that question, I immediately thought of Matthew 25. God made disciples of all people and chaplains are ministering to people where they are. The greatest compliment a chaplain is ever paid is not being looked at as another serving officer (although chaplains are all professionally qualified officers) but being able to minister to people. And when a soldier or an officer says, 'can I have a word?' they are inviting you into their lives to hear their story. Being alongside them is very important.

One of my predecessors as Chaplain General used to say that what a soldier gets from a chaplain is that you come 'value loaded'. Because they absolutely know where you're coming from and they know they can come to you in confidence; they know you've got time for them and you will give them an honest listening to. And also that you will give them an honest appraisal of where they're at. That occasionally you will say: 'you need to stop doing this' or 'you need to seek more advice' or 'you need to go to the doctor' or 'you need to change the way you're living.' I think the honesty of that relationship shines through.

Perhaps one of the hardest questions to ask on these matters is: can we love our enemies while trying to kill them?

Absolutely, I don't think that being in armed conflict, being in the armed forces, is a dehumanising exercise. I think that we teach our soldiers core values of courage, loyalty, integrity and selfless commitment and respect for others. So as part of the respect for others, it's not only acknowledging a person as who they are, but also it's taking notice of their faith and their human right to life. And that's one of the things that we teach our soldiers

does that do to someone?

Well, you read stories of soldiers in combat, and in many recent books that have been written about soldiers in Afghanistan they talk about being put in a position where they have to take lives (and more often than that risk their own lives). Some would say it's morally

on the whole armour of God to do that. Every generation faces really challenging, almost insurmountable problems, and I just thank God that there are people who are prepared to put on the uniform, who are prepared to put themselves in harm's way. Who are risking their lives to beat evil and do good.

“ I DON'T THINK THAT BEING IN THE ARMED FORCES IS A DEHUMANISING EXERCISE ”

corrosive. There are things which never leave people. People become, quite rightly, indelibly marked by these experiences, and sometimes people will come to a chaplain and speak in confidence about their feelings, seeking a sense of forgiveness, a sense of peace and would certainly want to know that if someone loses their life that they are treated with dignity and respect.

What position does that leave you in if people ask you, 'should we go to war?' It seems to me that it's military people who are often the least keen to go too easily to war.

I think anybody who's ever been involved with conflict would say the last thing on earth you want to do is go to war. Soldiers don't join the army because they want to be at war fighting. They join the army because they feel they are going to do some good. And in some cases it literally enables them to face evil, which is a problem in our day. And are prepared to put their own lives on the line to overcome it.

Do you think that God in this day and age perhaps ordains or uses war to achieve his purposes?

That's a really difficult question. I've certainly never thought of it in those terms.

Do you have any sympathy with pacifists? With people who take a hard pacifist line?

Absolutely, I think people have got to be honest about who they are and where they're coming from. People don't often reach these positions lightly. They actually give it an awful lot of thought. I hugely respect someone who is saying, 'I am a conscientious objector' or 'I am an absolute pacifist and from a biblical and spiritual perspective do not believe that it's right to engage in any kind of violence or conflict.'

What do you think is the greatest misconception about conflict and war that you find amongst Christians who've never served in the military?

When I first became a chaplain, my friends in the Church said, 'David, when are you coming back to the Church?' Because they thought I'd actually left the Church. They didn't realise. And the same way the Alpha Course is targeted at the 23-year-old male, that is exactly the target audience that we're privileged to serve alongside.

Soldiers will forgive everything except not saying prayers. They expect you to be prayerful and expect you to be professional and to have a positive effect upon their lives and the lives of their families.

The Chaplain was talking to Jonathan Langley

“ CHAPLAINS ARE MINISTERING TO PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE ”

routinely through their annual training tests and through every pre-deployment: that this respect for others, respect for culture, respect for religion, is part of what we're there to do.

When you've had those values inculcated in you and then you do take a life, what

That question of evil raises the issue of the Church being tempted to view our nation's enemies as God's enemies. Is that a hard line to walk as a chaplain?

Yes, it's not a view I would support. I think of what Paul was saying in Ephesians 6, talking about preparing the Ephesians for how to overcome evil, to put

DOES RELIGION LEGITIMATE WAR?

FROM HINDUISM'S SACRED TEXTS TO OUR OWN, HISTORICAL PATTERNS OF WAR DEMONSTRATE RELIGION'S ROLE IN JUSTIFYING ORGANISED VIOLENCE.

At the onset of battle, the warrior prince Arjuna halted in the middle of the battlefield. Behind him were his brothers, friends and relatives. Facing him were his teachers, uncles, brothers-in-law and other relatives. He cried to his charioteer, "I do not want to kill them, though they be killers, Madhusudana, even for the sovereignty of the three worlds, let alone earth!" It is at this moment in the great Indian epic *The Mahabharata* that Arjuna's charioteer Krishna begins a conversation known as the *Bhagavad-Gita*. During the conversation, Krishna reveals [for Hindus] his true nature as the Lord and proclaims:

I am Time grown old to destroy the world, embarked on the course of world annihilation: except for yourself none of these will survive, of these warriors arrayed in opposite armies. Therefore raise yourself now and reap rich fame, rule the plentiful realm by defeating your foes! I myself have doomed them ages ago: be merely my hand in this, Left-handed Archer! Slay Drona and Bhishma and Jayadratha, and Karna as well as other fine warriors – my victims – destroy them and tarry not! Wage war! You shall

trounce your rivals in battle!

After hearing Krishna's explanations, Arjuna answers his charioteer's call to arms and the great battle commences.

In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the divine (as the avatara Krishna) persuades Arjuna to choose war. While this may seem unconventional in a religious scripture, it is not. Similar examples abound

infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey." (1 Samuel 15: 3)

Religious scriptures are replete with commands to commit to war and, in some cases, genocide. Yet divinely prescribed acts of war and genocide do not lessen a people's reverence of the divine or scriptures. Throughout centuries, these religiously sanctioned examples have served as justifications for wars. Wars often arise from politics and economics. However, the issue is not whether religion causes war *per se*. The issue is the impact religion has when it is engaged in war.

When religion and war are conjoined, one of the most powerful results is the change in combatants' mindsets. To fight against evil infuses the battle or

“ Authority distances the volunteer from his ethical concerns, and the most powerful authority is the divine’s ”

in various religious traditions. One more explicit example comes from the Old Testament. The Abrahamic Lord sanctions genocide of the Amalekites in his discussion with Moses (Exodus 17: 14). Then, God orders the first king of Israel, Saul, to finish the task: "Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have; do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and

conflict with cosmic relevance. Equally powerful is the change in the way these combatants view their responsibility.

In the 1960s, the psychologist Stanley Milgram conducted experiments on the role of obedience to authority. Milgram wanted to determine how much pain an ordinary person would inflict upon another person because they were ordered to do so. The results were



staggering: the greater the perceived authenticity of the authority, the more likely the volunteer would inflict life-endangering shocks to his or her confederate. Milgram's work provides insights into how ordinary people shed their individual responsibility and commit violent and unethical acts. The experimenter orders the volunteer to shock the confederate and claims to assume responsibility for whatever happens. This invocation of authority distances the volunteer from his ethical concerns.

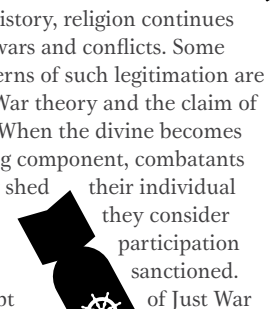
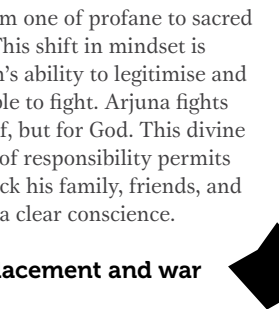
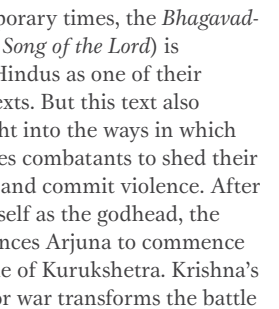
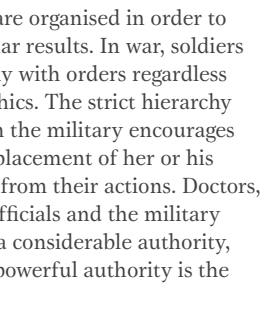
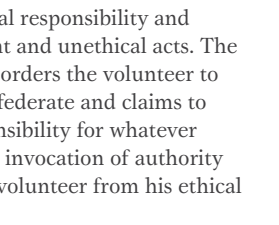
Militaries are organised in order to facilitate similar results. In war, soldiers need to comply with orders regardless of personal ethics. The strict hierarchy of authority in the military encourages a soldier's displacement of her or his responsibility from their actions. Doctors, government officials and the military all command a considerable authority, but the most powerful authority is the divine's.

In contemporary times, the *Bhagavad-Gita* (literally, *Song of the Lord*) is esteemed by Hindus as one of their most sacred texts. But this text also provides insight into the ways in which religion enables combatants to shed their responsibility and commit violence. After revealing himself as the godhead, the Krishna convinces Arjuna to commence the great battle of Kurukshetra. Krishna's justification for war transforms the battle for Arjuna from one of profane to sacred significance. This shift in mindset is due to religion's ability to legitimise and motivate people to fight. Arjuna fights not for himself, but for God. This divine displacement of responsibility permits Arjuna to attack his family, friends, and teachers with a clear conscience.

Divine displacement and war

Throughout history, religion continues to legitimate wars and conflicts. Some common patterns of such legitimisation are through Just War theory and the claim of sacred space. When the divine becomes the authorising component, combatants do not merely shed their individual responsibility; they consider their participation as divinely sanctioned.

The concept of Just War



plays a part here. In the early years of the Roman Catholic Church, Bishops Ambrose and Augustine wove together the Roman principles of a just war (*bellum iustum*) and their biblical tradition. In their writings, Christians are charged with preserving peace for the polity; war is depicted as a form of restraint. When a war is labelled just, it becomes religiously sanctioned. Then, soldiers go to war not for their generals or rulers, but for God.

This just war mentality is evident in many religious scriptures such as the Quranic injunctions of Islam, "Do not kill the soul sanctified by God, except for just cause" (6: 151; 25: 68). In times of war, both sides view themselves as acting defensively, which facilitates the interpretation that their cause is just. Yet, at a deeper level lies the power of religion to legitimate violence by sanctioning war as just.

Both of these layers become explicit in the Buddhist promotion and support of Japanese imperialism in the early twentieth century. During the Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905), the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy wrote to the Rinza Buddhist priest Shaku Soen, asking him to co-operate in appealing for peace. Soen conceded that the Buddha forbade the taking of life, but added that the Buddha also expounded on how there would not be peace until all sentient beings had awakened (become enlightened). At the time, Japanese Buddhists viewed Chinese and Korean Buddhist doctrine as deficient and they were near non-existent in Russia. Thus, it was imperative for the Japanese to protect true Buddhism and bring correct Buddhist teachings to other parts of the world. Soen concluded that this war was necessary. For the Rinza Buddhist priest, the Japanese expansion into East Asia was a means of attaining peace.

The power of sacred space

A second historical pattern of infusing



religious relevance into a conflict is sacred space. Religious rhetoric creates the category of sacred space and, with it, the scarcity of it. As many scholars (such as Hector Avalos) have noted, Jerusalem does not have great economic or strategic value other than that derived from the Abrahamic scriptures. By viewing the space as sacred, a person perceives that the space is indivisible – a common mentality that provokes religious communities to fight and defend that space.

Another example is the site of what was the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, India.

South Asian Muslims revered the mosque, partly for its historical legacy as a tribute to the first Muslim emperor of South Asia, Mughal Emperor Babur, in 1527.

However, Hindu groups also lay claim to the site, arguing that it was the historical birthplace of Rama, the *avatara* of Vishnu. The dispute over ownership has led to multiple conflicts between Hindu and Muslim communities. A mass conflict occurred on 6 December, 1992, when 300,000 Hindus armed with tridents descended upon the mosque and tore it apart. More than 3,000 people died and 100,000 businesses were destroyed or looted in subsequent intercommunal violence.

Integral ingredient of violence

Religion may not be the cause of wars, but it is an integral ingredient in making war permissible and justifiable. The invocation of religious doctrine alters the significance of a war as well as the mindset of its combatants. Combatants who see the war embedded with cosmic importance are permitted to shed their individual responsibility in order to serve the divine. While religion may be a vehicle for peace and reconciliation, the history of the intersection of religion and war demands a critical examination of the deadly patterns as well.



MOMENTS IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY THAT DEMONSTRATE *our* COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP WITH WAR

ABOUT 2,000 YEARS OF CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES TO WAR, ALL IN THE FORM OF A HANDY, ROUGHLY CHRONOLOGICAL LIST.

Whilst *Buzzfeed*-esque lists are not *Mission Catalyst's* natural form, here are five points to ponder about Christianity's horrendously complicated and shifting attitude to violent conflict.

1 The dogged pacifism of the Early Church

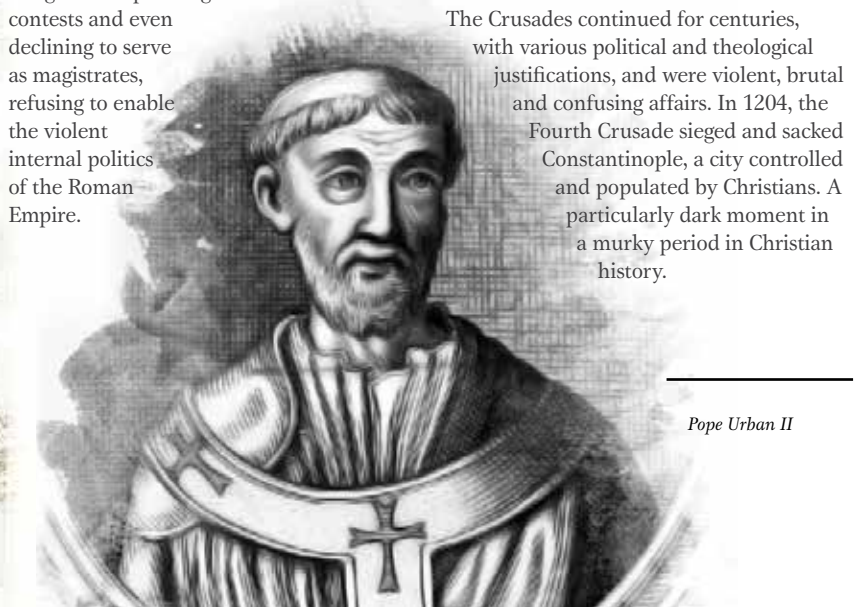
The Early Church had it tough. Facing persecution and violence from Romans and Jews alike, many early Christians were martyred for their faith, which included their rejection of the Roman pantheon of gods and their attitude to war. Tertullian (circa 160-225) said: "Christ, in disarming Peter, unbelted every soldier," aptly summing up the attitudes of early Christians. They abhorred killing, refusing to fight or be part of gladiatorial contests and even declining to serve as magistrates, refusing to enable the violent internal politics of the Roman Empire.

2 The Crusades

Pax Romana was a bygone dream by the 10th century. Muslims and Christians had been fighting on the Iberian peninsula for centuries, and the Seljuq Turks dealing the Byzantine Empire a huge defeat at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071. In 1096, Pope Urban II announced the First Crusade, calling Christians to "take up the cross" in response to the loss of Asia Minor and the perceived abuses Muslims had inflicted on Christians in Palestine. The Crusades continued for centuries, with various political and theological justifications, and were violent, brutal and confusing affairs. In 1204, the Fourth Crusade sieged and sacked Constantinople, a city controlled and populated by Christians. A particularly dark moment in a murky period in Christian history.



Tertullian



Pope Urban II

3 St Aquinas and the Just War

No overview of Christianity's relationship with war could ignore Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). His conception of Just War has deeply impacted Christian attitudes to conflict even to this day. Aquinas defined three conditions through which war can be justified – sovereign authority, a just cause and an intention for good. From its inception to the modern day, Just War theory has comforted and motivated soldiers and provided justifications for wars as relatively uncontroversial as the Second World War and those as controversial as the 2003 invasion of Iraq.



Thomas Aquinas

5 Faith and fighting, side by side

From the 'divine right' of kings to rule (and wage war), to the Queen serving as the head of both the Armed Forces and established Church today, British Christians have long had a supportive (if ambiguous) relationship with the military. This relationship perhaps has

its best expression in the form of chaplaincy.

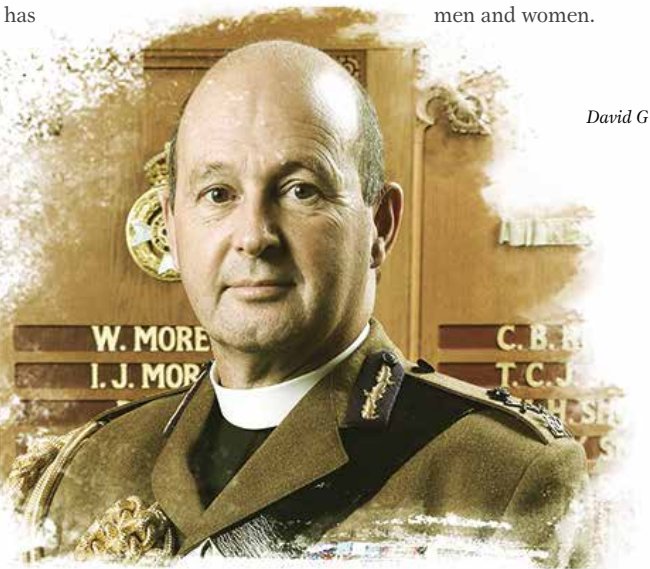
Military chaplains – non-combatants who play an important spiritual role in the barracks and on the battlefield, enjoy an almost unparalleled level of trust and access within the lives of service men and women.

Martin Luther King Jr

4 Christian pacifists, peace churches and conscientious objectors

The past few hundred years have marked a renaissance in the Christian peace movement, seeing a resurgence in the reading of Jesus' teachings as advocating not just peacemaking but pacifism. The establishment and growth of 'peace churches', such as the Quakers, Mennonites and Church of the Brethren (who took part in the first peace church conference

in 1935), follow a strict policy of nonviolence and nonresistance. Others, like Martin Luther King Jr, also preached nonviolence as a catalyst for change. Many other Christian denominations have pacifist organisations (such as Pax Christi and the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship), and nonviolence is a core aspect of many who identify as Christian.



David G Coulter

From the exploits of King David to modern day army chaplains or the believers blockading arms fairs, God's people have had a complex relationship with conflict for millennia. That seems unlikely to change any time soon, which is all the more reason to consider the issues surrounding Christianity and war more deeply.

WAR – IN – THE OLD TESTAMENT

'THE BAN', THE BIBLE AND MOVING BEYOND A NEW TESTAMENT VERSUS OLD TESTAMENT VIEW OF VIOLENCE.

I always ask my students in courses on ancient Israel what surprises them most about the cultural traditions of the people who brought us the Hebrew Bible. Some point to the ubiquitous presence of blood sacrifice, others to the practice of slavery, and others mention biblical war-views, in particular divine commands to destroy everything that breathes, men, women, children and infants.

What are we to make of these traditions concerning 'the ban' (God's occasional command to give enemies no quarter, make no exceptions, and destroy everything that breathes) that seem contrary to any notion of proportionality, that critical part of Just War doctrine? As a scholar, I try to understand the place of such traditions in ancient Israelite worldviews, and I have reached some conclusions that at first may seem controversial and contrary to our own views of the ethical qualities we associate with religious identities as Jews and Christians.

In one thread of war texts in the Hebrew Bible and in evidence from the wider ancient Near East, war dead may be regarded as sacrifices vowed to the deity in exchange for victory (see Numbers 21: 1-3; Josh 10: 28). The language of the ban means 'to devote to destruction' and implicit in passages such as 1 Kings 20: 35-42 is the notion that life is the

“ *Amos berates Israel's enemies for casting off pity in war* ”

deity's to give or to take. Under certain circumstances he is imagined to demand that most valuable commodity, human life.

To be sure, the Hebrew Bible as a whole rejects and polemicises against human sacrifice (Lev 18: 21; 20: 2-5, Deut 12: 31; Jer 7: 30-31), but the idea remains an aspect of war-views, perhaps a way in which some make sense of killing in war by blaming the violence on divine expectations and human needs for victory. This notion of killing as sacrifice morphs into concepts of martyrdom on the one hand, and apocalyptic images of a sacrificial banquet on the other in late material (Ezek 39: 20). Ancient Israelite writers themselves grapple with the notion of killing in war as vowed sacrifice and are, I would argue, uncomfortable with this concept.

These contributors to the biblical tradition, especially those found in Deuteronomy and the related Deuteronomic tradition, see the violence

of the ban as punishment for idolatry, for tempting God's people to worship other deities, or for disobedience to God, and such punishable acts may take place inside the group (Deut 13: 12-17) or outside it (Deut 7: 2-7). The ban to such writers is a matter of God's justice.

It must be emphasised, however, that the violent banning traditions, whether they justify killing in war as divine justice or as a matter of giving the deity his due, are not the only war-views in the Hebrew Bible. Indeed other threads in the tradition insist that God himself will fight those who threaten his people and that they need only have faith and allow him to intervene. Thus we have the image in 2 Chronicles 20 of the Judean king Jehoshaphat and his people who face annihilation from a better-armed invading force as praying, singing and waiting for the Lord who does rescue them by miraculous means. This ideology of non-participation, of course, does not let God off the hook for the wholesale destruction that annihilates human beings, but the presumption is that he acts justly to save his people from a hostile army.

Another important set of biblical texts offers a view of war that allows for humanising of the enemy and for some degree of proportionality which actually criticises excessive violence, even in the defence of a just cause. In this category is Genesis 49: 5-7, a section of the so-called Testament of Jacob, a poetic series of blessings and observations by the aged patriarch regarding his sons, the putative



Violent and apparently genocidal passages in Scripture are often glossed over as if we'd prefer them not to exist. The Victory of Joshua over the Amalekites by Poussin Nicolas

progenitors of the tribes of Israel.

Jacob's words concerning the brothers Simeon and Levi recall the tale narrated in Genesis 34 concerning the brothers' vengeance against neighbouring Canaanites. Their leader's son Shechem has raped the brothers' sister Dinah and the brothers strike back. Jacob, however, describes their warring actions as unjust: "Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce – their overflowing rage, for it is relentless." The 8th century BC prophet Amos berates Israel's enemies for their conduct of war. Edom "cast off all pity" (Amos 1: 11). Ammonites have "ripped open pregnant women in Gilead in order to widen their borders" (Amos 1: 13). Like Simeon and Levi, these groups are berated for their perpetual anger and eternal wrath.

Two narratives also address the treatment of defeated warriors taken prisoner. In 2 Kings 6: 23 and 2 Chronicles 28: 9-11, prophets demand that the prisoners be treated humanely, properly fed and clothed and sent back to their own people. The account in 2 Kings 6 ends on the note that Aramaeans did not come raiding against the land of Israel again. The implication may be that just treatment of defeated enemies reduces the likelihood of further aggression and

“ Just treatment of defeated enemies reduces the likelihood of further conflict ”

conflict.

Finally, let me mention a Bible scholar's pet peeve regarding views of warring behaviour as presented in Old Testament and New Testament. One frequently hears the suggestion that, whereas the Hebrew Bible offers a vengeful violent response to the 'other', the writers of the Christian scriptures approach enemies with a more peaceful attitude. Juxtaposing the work of the 6th century BC Judean prophet Deutero-Isaiah (Isa 40-55) with the New Testament book of Revelation quickly dispels the generalisation.

The wide range of material explored in this brief response essay expresses the very human desire to deal with and make sense of such complex matters as human aggression, divine control, group identity and guilt surrounding killing in war. It should be added that post-biblical writers continue to wrestle with and be influenced

by inherited biblical traditions of war.

Cotton Mather, the 17th century American Puritan, equates indigenous peoples of New England with Amalek, and considers them deserving of the ban.

Biblical violence is thus justified and recreated in his Bostonian present. Threads in the Rabbinic tradition on the other hand tend to circumscribe and in some cases to soften notions of all-out war. In contrast to the literal reading of Joshua 10 that invokes the ban in describing the conquest of the land, the Rabbis read certain biblical war texts to suggest that even Canaanites, doomed to destruction in a literal reading of Deuteronomy 20: 17, are to be spared if they accept terms of peace. The biblical tradition is thus as complicated and challenging as the human beings that produced it and continues to offer a variety of models for war, rooted in a variety of socio-historical realities.

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HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION: JUSTIFIED WAR?

ASSUMING THAT WE HAVE A 'RIGHT' TO INTERVENE IN HUMANITARIAN CRISES MAY BE A MISTAKE.

The consideration as to whether to intervene with military force to prevent war crimes often requires a judgement regarding the lesser of two evils.

Politicians can be damned if they do and damned if they don't. In the face of ethnic cleansing and genocide, how do we assess the justification for external intervention, how it should be carried out and who decides? When a conflict or repression has reached such dire proportions it is likely that the international community has missed earlier opportunities to de-escalate the crisis. How then can the Church better witness to the imperative to resolve violent conflict and build peace?

Some support for the principle of humanitarian intervention can be found in all major religions because at their core is a belief in the integrity of each human being and a recognition of our responsibility for one another. Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan who, at some cost to himself, helped a stranger

of a different nationality. Jesus' parable invites us to imagine that a foreigner with whom we have no communal relationship might behave towards us with greater care and compassion than two upstanding members of our own community. The story had a ring of authenticity with those crowded around Jesus and the role reversal that makes the foreigner the main agent in the story reinforces the breadth of our common humanity. As individuals, we do recognise in the homeless and bereaved victims of war, human beings who love and grieve like us. So, we find support for the argument that wherever in the world women, children and men are being attacked indiscriminately, we cannot simply stand idly by.

One difficulty it seems is that while individually we can and do act altruistically (and at other times reprehensibly), nation states act primarily in their national interest. States may not commit personnel, money or political capital to providing security in other countries unless there is a clear national benefit in return. If this is the case,

then in what sense is a 'humanitarian intervention' truly humanitarian?

The legality of an intervention is another consideration. In practice, for an intervention to be deemed legal it requires that the permanent members of the Security Council (the US, UK, Russia, China and France) do not exercise their right of veto. In 1999 in Kosovo, ethnic cleansing of towns and villages was taking place, yet Russia could not agree to a Security Council resolution authorising military intervention. The US-led intervention was, according to most accounts, illegal. But was it nevertheless legitimate? If so, do such actions undermine the credibility of international law? And what are the implications?

Burdened with such dilemmas, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) was established in 2000. In 2005, a World Summit, attended by the largest number of Heads of State that the UN has ever seen, adopted the Commission's 'Responsibility to Protect' framework. This framework did a number of useful things. It reaffirmed that the responsibility to protect citizens falls firstly on the national government. Responsibility might transfer to the international community only in very exceptional circumstances of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing. Military intervention can be used as a last resort

“ We should recognise the range of non-violent strategies for humanitarian protection ”

and only when non-violent means of coercion such as the use of sanctions have failed. No country or coalition can assume a ‘right to intervene’, and the focus of collective action (endorsed and regularly reviewed by the UN) must remain the protection of the civilian population.

So, might clearer consensus around some fundamental principles lead to better collective decision making in practice? Possibly, but the performance of the international community since this time has not been encouraging. In Libya, Colonel Gaddafi’s forces were thought to have killed over 1,000 unarmed protesters by early March 2011. A Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire had gone

unheeded by the Gaddafi regime, and so the UK, France and the US brought a further resolution to the Security Council in March 2011. This resolution drew heavily on the Responsibility to Protect framework, making reference to the “responsibility of the Libyan authorities to protect the Libyan population” while authorising the UK, France and the US to establish a no-fly zone. Russia was cautious but secured an agreement that there would be no foreign occupying forces in Libya and allowed the resolution to pass.

Under a section of the resolution titled Protection of Civilians is a phrase authorising the UK and its allies “to take all necessary measures to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack”. This was used not simply to protect civilians but to bring about regime change. But we were not prepared for the long haul. We dealt with the problem of Gaddafi by defeating the army and dismantling the state apparatus, causing the country to descend into a tribal civil war – leaving people even more vulnerable to the influences of Islamic State and al-Qaeda. It has caused a setback in the application of the Responsibility to Protect and it is likely that the use of this language in future Security Council resolutions will be little-trusted as a result.

One lesson we might take from the experience of Libya is to avoid equating ‘humanitarian intervention’ with resolving conflict. The primary purpose of humanitarian intervention must be to restore order and provide security. Those who have established no-fly zones or have tamed a national army that has been bombing civilians have needed, through necessity, to take sides. We may need to consider, with respect to Syria for example, that the same external actors may not be best placed to broker a political settlement due to their alignment towards parties to a conflict. Furthermore, the wider challenge of national reconciliation is likely to be led by indigenous leaders and groups, and must utilise the influence of those who have become marginalised because they chose to stand apart from the violence. Finally, we should recognise the range of

WHAT IS HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION?

Humanitarian intervention refers to measures taken to protect civilians from serious abuses of human rights resulting from their own government’s actions or failure to act. They include non-violent measures such as the use of sanctions, as well as the more controversial use of military force. The United Nations Charter recognises two possible grounds for military intervention in other states: firstly that of self-defence and secondly when a state poses a tangible threat to international peace and security. An armed intervention in a sovereign state to save lives does not fit either of these and the principle of non-interference in the affairs of sovereign states is fundamental to the UN Charter. But even so, armed humanitarian intervention may be legal if authorised by the United Nations Security Council.

non-violent strategies for humanitarian protection in the context of conflict. They include human rights monitoring and evidence gathering so that human rights abusers can be brought to justice; education to build respect for human rights; negotiating security for the delivery of humanitarian aid; finding ways to enable the voices of women in conflict to be amplified, and sending international companions to be present alongside oppressed communities to help deter aggressive actions.¹ Is it not also valuable for the Church and its members, particularly in wealthy western nations, to advocate for integrity in our trade and diplomatic relationships? If serial abusers of human rights can be rewarded with lucrative economic ties, it should not come as a surprise if at some point in the future we find ourselves witnessing crimes that demand intervention.



The UK and its allies will “take all necessary measures to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack”. Security Council resolution, March 2011

¹ Christian Peacemaker Teams and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme to Palestine and Israel provide an illustration of the value of accompaniment.

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TRIDENT: A SAD NECESSITY

IT IS BOTH NAÏVE AND LACKING IN MORAL COURAGE TO ABANDON OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO A NUCLEAR DETERRENT.

One of the most teeth-grindingly infuriating gatherings I ever sat through was a long-ago Baptist Union Council meeting. It was about the renewal of Trident. It was infuriating because, as a mere invited observer, I didn't get to vote – and I had so much to say.

What bugged me was the assumption that it was those who believed in nuclear disarmament who occupied the moral high ground. One remark was to the effect that we should get rid of our nuclear weapons because a nuclear war would be a terrible thing.

But if you are in favour of replacing Trident it doesn't mean that you want a nuclear war. It means that you don't.

The last time a nuclear bomb was dropped was when there was only one nuclear power. The doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) is not a comfortable one, but all the evidence is that it has worked. That doesn't, of course, mean that the world has been safe or peaceful – the great powers have just fought proxy wars elsewhere – but there has been no nuclear war.

Neither does MAD mean that we should feel ethically comfortable. It is

a beastly doctrine, but then we live in a pretty beastly world.

Personally, I take a rather nuanced view. Disarmament has to be co-ordinated and verifiable. I'm not, in fact, entirely convinced that Britain needs an independent deterrent, but it's self-evident to me that this is a practical decision rather than a moral one. It is expensive – though the idea, much touted by the Left, that if we decided against it we would suddenly have billions to spend on schools and hospitals, is moonshine. It's all borrowed money. It would be like saying that if you decided not to borrow £5,000 for a holiday you'd magically have it to spend on a car instead.

It's also hard to see whom the deterrent actually deters, at least at present – though it's the “at present” which is the issue, since we're planning 20 or 30 years ahead.

Another argument is that we are all under the American nuclear umbrella in any case – though ditching Britain's deterrent because the Americans will look after us does mean we've abandoned any claim to moral superiority. It might be thought, too, that believing the Americans would launch a strike on Russia to defend a defenceless Britain requires a rather

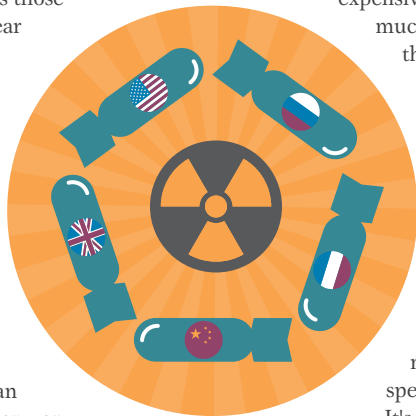
optimistic assumption of transatlantic altruism.

More interesting, from an ethical point of view, is whether I'd want to get rid of my country's deterrent if I were an American. Firmer ground here: definitely not. So much of the debate around this issue is that it lacks theological grounding. I take it for granted that we are all sinners, with a bias towards doing the wrong thing when we can get away with it. If only one country in the world had nuclear weapons, we should all tremble. It is the existence of a balance of terror which lets us sleep reasonably peacefully.

In the terms Christians often make it, the anti-Trident argument tends to fall on a spectrum of Christian pacifism described by theologian Nigel Biggar as a “virus of wishful thinking”. It's desperately sad that it might be more morally admirable to argue for nuclear deterrence rather than against it. But the argument should be based on what works; and so far, so good.

Of the wider argument, perhaps Hilaire Belloc might give pacifists pause for thought: “Pale Ebenezer thought it wrong to fight, but roaring Bill (who killed him) thought it right.”

Ebenezer is perfectly at liberty to choose martyrdom for himself. When he presumes to hold opinions on what our Government should do, he is saying that Bill can do what he likes to other people too, which is quite another thing.



BRITAIN
OF
DETERRENT

Symon Hill

Author, tutor for the Workers' Educational Association, associate of the Ekklesia thinktank and a member of the steering committee of the Campaign Against Arms Trade.

TRIDENT: IDOLATRY OF STRENGTH

RELYING ON WEAPONS RATHER THAN GOD FOR PROTECTION IS IDOLATROUS AND HAS NOT PROTECTED THE UK.

The sin that appears most frequently in the Bible is idolatry. To make an idol is to put our faith in something other than God. The Israelites were frequently warned against trusting in military might. Even when war seems to be commanded in the Old Testament, the Israelites are called to trust in God, not in the strength of weapons. Gideon is even told to reduce the size of his army so that he will realise that his success is due to Yahweh.

The theme comes up again in the prophetic books. "Alas for those who... rely on horses," says Isaiah. "Who trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One." (Isaiah 31: 1)

One of the biggest idols in our own society is "national security". This very vague term implies that everyone in a nation has a shared interest, which they do not share with people in other countries. We are urged to defend our country. Does that mean our country's government? Or our country's people?

And what if some of the country's people are under attack from their own Government – as with the current assault on the poorest people in Britain?

The arguments for high military spending – and nuclear weapons in particular – fail even on their own terms. The UK already has the sixth highest military spending in the world. Supporters of the Trident nuclear weapons system like to call it "Britain's independent deterrent". But Trident cannot work without US technology. Indeed, while the submarines and warheads are made in Britain, the missiles themselves are loaned from the US.

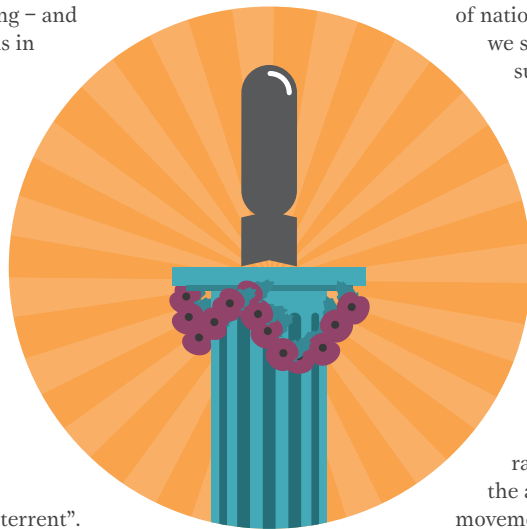
Trident may play some limited role in deterring others from going to war with the UK, although it did not stop Argentina invading the Falklands. It certainly will

not deter suicide bombers on the Tube, just as it did not deter the Provisional IRA. One of the biggest threats to our security is the prospect of runaway climate change and the chaos and poverty it will bring in its wake. Trident cannot halt rising sea levels. Indeed, the opposite is true: the Government spends more money subsidising research and development in the arms industry than on renewable energy.

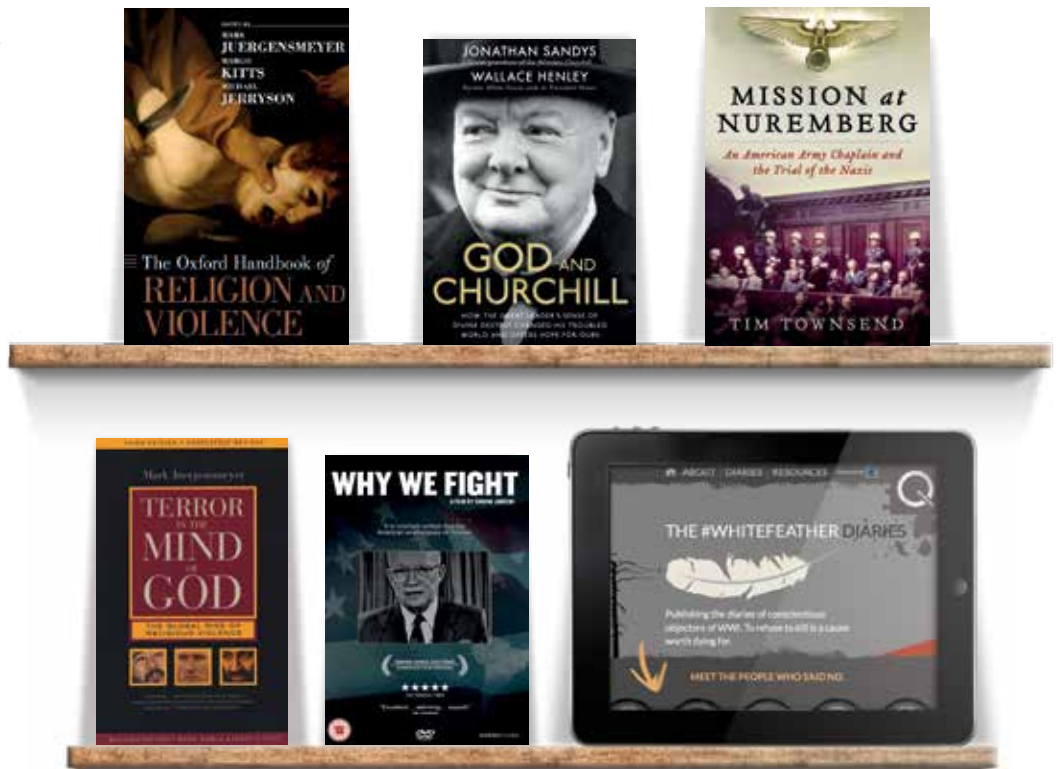
Everyday security means similar things to most people around the world: enough to eat, a place to call home, the love of family and friends, a community that will support us when things go wrong.

Only by falling for the idol of national loyalty can we start to think that such things can be guaranteed by nuclear weapons. We need to think across borders, and to work in alliance with those resisting warfare around the world. They range from the anti-nuclear movements in Russia that rarely make the western news, to the young people in Japan joining with veterans of the Second World War to defend the Japanese constitution's commitment to peacebuilding.

All real security comes from God. Let's keep ourselves from idols, including the nuclear ones.



In the wake of the terror attacks in Beirut, Baghdad and Paris (and as some prepare to react with similar violence), war, pacifism and Christian attitudes to both have never been more important. There's a wealth of material to read, listen to and learn from. Here's a selection to help your thinking on an important subject at a crucial time.



BOOKS

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF RELIGION AND VIOLENCE

Mark Juergensmeyer, Margo Kitts, Michael Jerryson
Forty original essays from literary to social studies analyses of the intersection of violence and religious practice (and theory).

JUST PEACEMAKING: Transforming Initiatives for Justice and peace

Glen Stassen
A key work by the Baptist pioneer of Just Peacemaking – a third way between Just War theory and traditional pacifism. Essential reading.

GOD AND CHURCHILL: How the Great Leader's Sense of Divine Destiny Changed his Troubled World and Offers Hope to Ours

Jonathan Sandys and Wallace Henley
Churchill's great grandson and a former Nixon aide give spiritual insights into the wartime leader.

MISSION AT NUREMBERG: An Allied Chaplain and the Trial of the Nazis

Tim Townsend
A former *New York Times* and

Rolling Stone journalist examines Henry Gerecke's troubling assignment: chaplain to Nazi war criminals as they faced their final days.

TERROR IN THE MIND OF GOD: The Global Rise of Religious Violence

Mark Juergensmeyer
Definitive study of religiously motivated terrorism and violence, from 9/11 and the Tokyo subway gassings to Christian fundamentalist violence.

BUDDHIST WARFARE

Michael Jerryson
Mission Catalyst contributor and expert on religion's intersection with violence examines the under-reported issue of Buddhist violence.

WAR CRIES: Military Prayers from Barracks to Battlefield

Mark Davidson
An eclectic collection of prayers rooted in the daily lives of military personnel, broken up along themes of peacetime, battle, post-battle and theatres of conflict.

FILM

WHY WE FIGHT

Eugene Jarecki
A brilliant documentary on the 'military industrial complex' and why war makes political sense in the United States.

PARADISE NOW

Hany Abu-Assad
A fictional film about two suicide

bombing recruits, recommended by Michael Jerryson.

WEB

CONFLICT AND RELIGION NEWS

Keep track of conflict related to religion in this Facebook group. <http://on.fb.me/1QjxNyY>

THE WHITE FEATHER DIARIES

A beautifully presented Quaker archive of stories and media about conscientious objectors in the First World War, themed around the white feathers routinely handed to 'cowards' who did not enlist. whitefeatherdiaries.org.uk

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