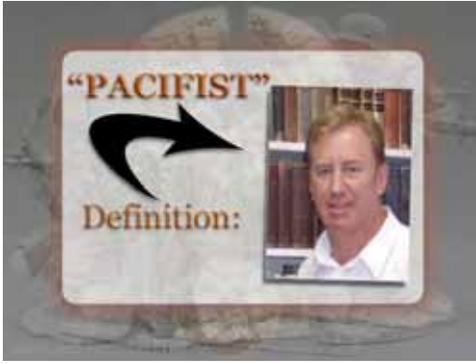




***Is there such a thing as a “Just War”? Can military conflict be thought of as advancing the Cause of Christ? Should Christians serve in the Armed Forces?...***

Former Whitehouse Deputy Secretary of State (and Christian), Richard Armitage, has described the “Coalition of the Willing” (including the armed forces of the USA, UK, and Australia) as doing the “Lord’s work” in their military campaign in Iraq. But does God really sanction war? Is there really ever such a thing as a “Just War”?





I am presenting this as a Pacifist. I do not come from a military family. I do not agree with war. I have never seen "action". I have never served in the military. But, I am an amateur war historian, and I have throughout my pastoral career pastored soldiers, airmen, and naval personnel. I have publicly and consistently denounced our invasion in

Iraq even before the Bush Whitehouse proposed it. Therefore, I stand open to the accusation of bias when it comes to the issue of "Just War" - but it is a *declared* bias that the reader should factor into their own opinion about this vital topic.

*There never was a good war,  
or a bad peace.*

Benjamin Franklin

## ***THE COST OF WAR***

War always comes at a cost. Usually this cost is borne by those directly engaged in the struggle: military personnel. But this is no longer the case. The ratio of military personnel to civilians has been hurtling toward a much higher civilian casualty rate. This is evidenced by the statistics from WW1 through to the most recent Gulf War 2.



FACTS	WW1	WW2	KOREAN	VIETNAM	GULF2
YEAR	1915 -18	1939 - 45	1950 - 53	1966 -1974	2003 -
CASUALTIES	37M	81M+	5.6M	8.4M	80K
DEATHS	15M	62M			
(CIVILIANS)	6.6M	37M		5M+	50K
RATIO	44%	59%		60%	70% (?)

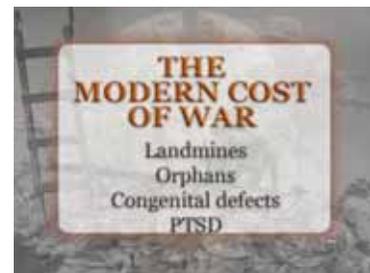
*There is no such thing as an inevitable war. If war comes it will be from failure of human wisdom.*

Andrew B. Law

*Nations have recently been led to borrow billions for war; no nation has ever borrowed largely for education. Probably, no nation is rich enough to pay for both war and civilization. We must make our choice; we cannot have both.*

Abraham Flexner

## **THE "EXTRA" COST OF WAR...**

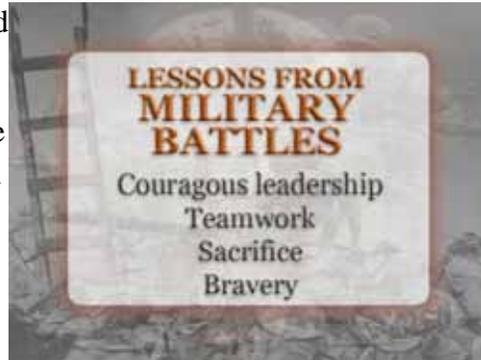


Of course, casualties are not the only cost of a military conflict.

Some of the costs of war, which are hard to put a number to, include: residual landmines (left “live” in the ground even after a war and still killing and maiming today), orphans of those killed in a conflict, congenital birth defects resulting from toxic chemicals used as weapons of clearing agents (for example “agent orange”), and the increasingly diagnosed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, are all costs of war which don't usually get reported in the most commonly cited statistics.

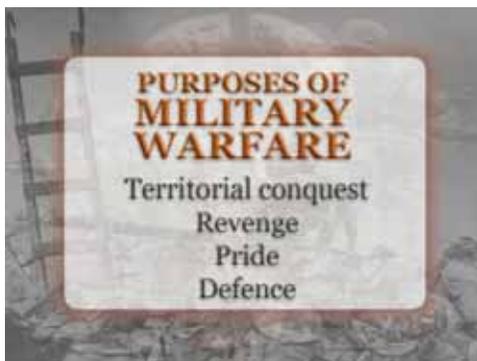
## ***LESSONS PACIFISTS CAN LEARN FROM WAR...***

There many valuable life-lessons that can be learned and applied from military campaigns. In our DVD presentation, *THE ANZAC SPIRIT*, I show that the best of what it means to be Australian is graphically seen in the battles that Australians have been engaged in. There are of course negative examples that can be noted from military battles, such as



excessive cruelty, torture, murder, betrayal, and sniping. But such positive qualities as courageous leadership, teamwork, self-sacrifice and bravery in the face of adversity are admirable traits that often shine in the dark tempest of military turmoil.

## ***THE NATURAL PURPOSES OF MILITARY WARFARE...***



People have their reasons for going to war. These reasons surely fall under the general headings of 'power' or 'defence'. Under the general category of 'power' we might include (i) territorial conquest, (ii) revenge, or (iii) pride. But history reveals that war often serves a more mysterious purpose.

## ***THE DIVINE PURPOSE OF MILITARY WARFARE...***

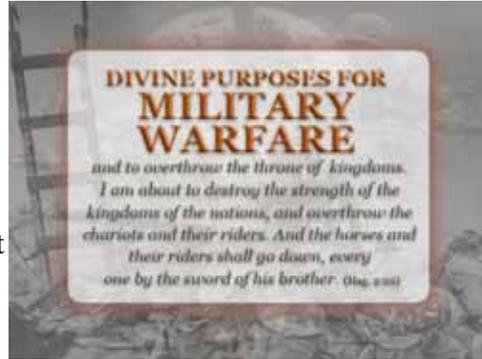
*and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother.*

Haggai 2:22

*The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is His name.*

Exodus 15:3

Scripture seems to indicate that God used military battles to evict, judge, vindicate, rescue, humble, and teach. It was Thomas Aquinas who argued in the Middle Ages that if wars are to be fought they should only be fought if they meet three criteria that makes them “just”.



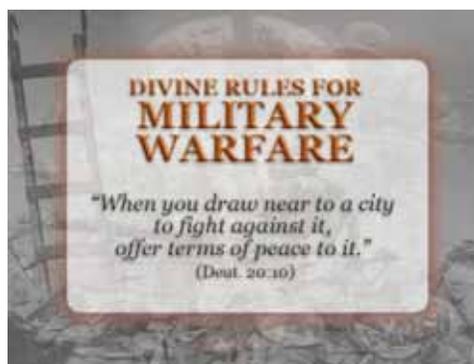
***In order for a war to be just, three things are necessary. First, the authority of the Sovereign... Secondly, a just cause... Thirdly... a rightful intention.***

Thomas Aquinas

This is the origin of the “just war” theory. But what might surprise people is that whenever God instructed war in the Old Covenant, it was always restricted to either defence, or an offensive limited to a specific time and place for a stated purpose. That is, Israel was not free to make war whenever it chose. Added to this, God gave some very stringent rules for how military conflict was to be carried out.

## ***DIVINE RULES FOR MILITARY WARFARE...***

Deuteronomy 20 contains rules of warfare that include the protection of non-combatants, women, children, animals and even fruit trees.



*"When you draw near to a city to fight against it, offer terms of peace to it...but the women and the little ones, the livestock, and everything else in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as plunder for yourselves. And you shall enjoy the spoil of your enemies, which the LORD your God has given you..."*  
Deuteronomy 20:10, 14

## ***POPULAR MYTHS ABOUT BIBLICAL WARFARE...***

It is a myth that God or the Bible ever authorised "Holy War". The term nowhere appears in Scripture.

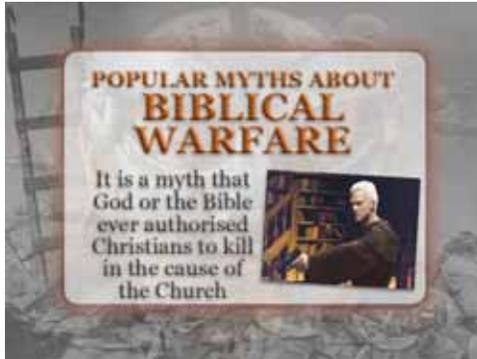


Some Muslims claim that the Bible is same as the Qur'an when it comes to sanctioning violence. One Australian Federal politician who used Parliamentary Privilege to air these claims even said that the Bible authorises the *ripping open of pregnant women*. This politician went on in her speech to cite a violent story from the Bible where this apparently occurred to support her case. The main problem was, however, in using this violent war-crime story to back-up her position (that the Bible was just as violent as the Qur'an) she actually drew on a story from the Qur'an! Nowhere does the Bible endorse such war crimes - in fact, it condemns them as "evil"!

Thus says the LORD:

“For three transgressions of the Ammonites,  
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,  
because they have ripped open pregnant women in Gilead,  
that they might enlarge their border.”

Amos 1:13

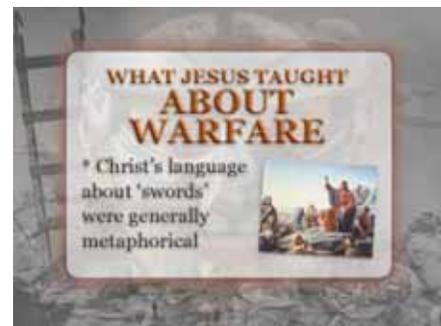


Despite the DaVinci Code book and movie promoting the idea that the Church conducts strategic assassinations in order to silence its enemies and advance its cause as somehow endorsed by the Bible, this is wrong. It does not. Christians are not authorised by God or the Bible to carry out executions in the name of God or the Church.

Some appeal to Dietrich Bonhoeffer as an example of a Christian Pacifist who adapted to his circumstances and embraced a “Just War” mentality when it became obvious that Adolf Hitler could not be stopped. He became a co-conspirator in the attempted assassination of Adolf Hitler early in the tyrant’s career.

## ***WHAT JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT WARFARE...***

Christ never condemned anyone for their military service. And He had plenty of opportunity to if He wanted to make a point about the morality of military service.



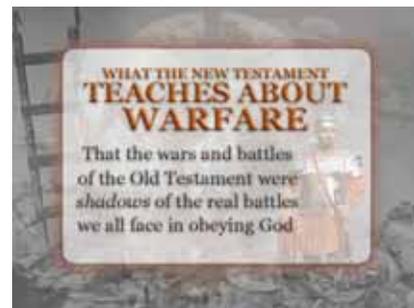
Christ’s language about swords was generally metaphorical. “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.” (Matt. 10:34) “Sword” in this reference speaks of *pain caused by division*, not a physical sword.

The same idea is conveyed in Luke 2:35 where Mary the mother of Jesus is told that a 'sword' will pierce her heart.

*Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place.  
For all who take the sword will perish by the sword."  
Matthew 26:52*

*He said to them, "But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one." (Luke 22:36)*  
This statement came from Christ during His Last Supper with His disciples. He was about to leave them. He had up until that point been their provider, their host, and their protector. His absence would highlight their lack of these things - hence His statement to them about needing other things to replace Him. This statement by Christ in Luke 22:36 is therefore metaphorical.

## ***WHAT THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHES ABOUT WARFARE...***

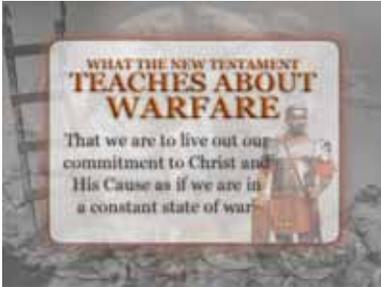


The New Testament teaches that the battles of the Old Testament were shadows or *types* of our real battles that we all face in obeying God.

*Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did...Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.  
1Corinthians 10:6-11*

The New Testament teaches that we are to live out our commitment to Christ and His cause as if we are in a constant state of war.

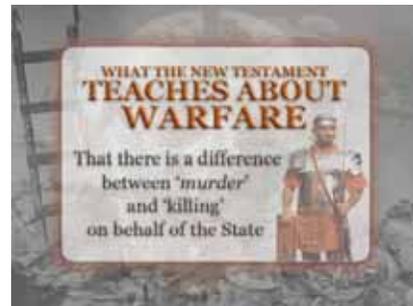
*Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.  
No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.*  
2Tim. 2:3-4



*For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.*  
2Cor. 10:3-4

*for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.*  
Romans 13:4

A distinction needs to be made between *murder* and *killing* on behalf of the State. Murder is the unlawful killing of another person. Death in military combat generally carries the authority of the State and is not as such categorised as murder.



## ***WHAT CHURCH HISTORY TEACHES ABOUT WARFARE...***



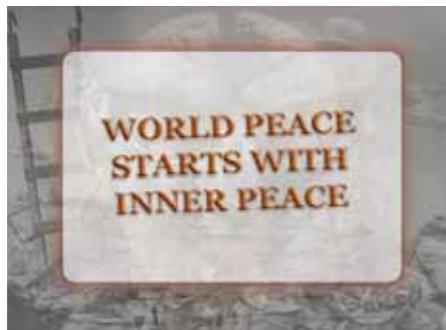
The Medieval Crusades are often used against Christians to show that we have a shameful and violent past. They are cited as examples of the ugly side of Christianity and therefore such a blight upon Christianity that it has no moral right to criticise the violence of other religions.

But these “crusades” were contrary to the teaching of Christ and Scripture! The Crusaders had to violate Scripture to conduct their crusades. The argument that most wars in human history have been caused by religion is just not true. The twentieth century has been described as the bloodiest century ever. All the major atrocities of the twentieth century were carried out by atheists - Stalin, Hitler, Pol Pot, to name some of them.

## ***CHRISTIANITY IS ABOUT PERSUASION NOT WARFARE...***

The cause of Christ and His Church is not advanced militarily. Our greatest weapons are the Gospel, prayer, holy living, courageous leadership, faith, and argument. Not military warfare. In other words, Christianity is advanced by dual persuasion – (i) the persuasion that comes from the witness of a believer, and (ii) the persuasion that can (and must) only come from the Holy Spirit.

For those believers engaged in military forces, the Scriptures affirm the dignity of such a vocation and the acceptability of carrying out just war within the rules of engagement in the cause of the State. And for those of us who long for world peace, the answer is rarely, if ever, war, but the kind of inner peace that only Christ can give to the world one individual at a time.



Amen.

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