

## Some Terms, Insights and Quotes on War ...

### **Militarism**

War is part of the struggle for a desired state of affairs. The 'virtues of war' – utter loyalty, nationalism, courage and solidarity – are uppermost.

The militarist is an idealist in that he seeks an ideal situation through military means. Hitler's 'Thousand Year Reich' is an example of this.

The religious equivalent of militarism manifests itself in the 'Holy War' tradition. In this case, war is prosecuted actively to promote God's will, and is not, in the case of Just War, merely a lesser of two evils.

### **Absolute Pacifism**

War is intrinsically wrong. All problems must be solved by non-violent means.

Absolute pacifists resemble militarists in their idealism: their practice of pacifism expresses their belief in a higher moral order.

### **Contingent Pacifism**

Augustine stressed pacifism as binding on a Christian in their personal relationships: 'Turn the other cheek ...' requires them to forgo retaliation for slights and insults suffered.

This practice might not be extensible into the political arena because of a duty to protect innocent lives.

Contingent pacifists are realists rather than idealists: they do not rule out the necessity of recourse to arms in certain instances.

The Just War tradition is a precursor of this more recent attitude to warfare.

Towards the end of the second century Clement of Alexandria in the document Apostolic Tradition declares "that he who holds the sword must cast it away and that if one of the faithful becomes a soldier he must be rejected by the Church, for he has scorned God"

*"Christ, in disarming Peter, ungirt every soldier"*  
Tertullian, (155-212), early Christian theologian and apologist

*"We do not draw the sword against any nation, and we no longer learn to fight, because we have become, thanks to Jesus, Sons of Peace"*  
Origen, (185-254 AD), early Christian theologian

In January 313 Constantine legalized Christianity with an edict that read: *"Let this be so in order that the divine grace which we have experienced in such manifold ways, may always remain loyal to us and continue to bless us in all we undertake, for the welfare of the empire"*.

As far back as the Council of Arles in 314 C.E. the Church saw that *"to deny the state the right to go to war was to condemn it to extinction"*

During the Crusades, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux urged the Christian nations to *"expiate your sins by victories over the infidels"* and to *"let the Christian world resound with the words of the prophet, 'Cursed be he who does not stain his sword with blood'"*

At the second Lateran Council held in 1139 and presided over by Pope Innocent II the use of crossbows, bows and arrows and siege machines were forbidden in Christian warfare for they were considered to be weapons of such perfection that they were deemed to be too murderous.

*'Anyone who has ever looked into the glazed eyes of a soldier dying on the battlefield will think hard before starting a war.'*

Otto Von Bismark (1815-98), Prussian statesman. Speech, Aug. 1867, Berlin.

*'We used to wonder where war lived, what it was that made it so vile. And now we realize that we know where it lives, that it is inside ourselves.'*

Albert Camus (1913-60), French-Algerian philosopher, author. Notebooks, vol. 3 (1966), entry for 7 Sept. 1939

*'I don't believe that the big men, the politicians and the capitalists alone are guilty of the war. Oh, no, the little man is just as keen, otherwise the people of the world would have risen in revolt long ago! There is an urge and rage in people to destroy, to kill, to murder, and until all mankind, without exception, undergoes a great change, wars will be waged, everything that has been built up, cultivated and grown, will be destroyed and disfigured, after which mankind will have to begin all over again.'*  
Anne Frank (1929-45), German Jewish refugee, diarist. *The Diary of a Young Girl*, (1947; tr. 1952), entry for 3 May 1944.

*Force and fraud, are in war the two cardinal virtues.*  
Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), English philosopher. *Leviathan*, pt. 1, ch. 13 (1651).

*War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things: the decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks nothing worth a war, is worse.... A war to protect other human beings against tyrannical injustice; a war to give victory to their own ideas of right and good, and which is their own war, carried on for an honest purpose by their own free choice is often the means of their regeneration.*  
John Stuart Mill (1806-73), English philosopher, economist. "The Contest in America" (1859), written to oppose England's siding with the Confederacy during the American Civil War.

*What the horrors of war are, no one can imagine. They are not wounds and blood and fever, spotted and low, or dysentery, chronic and acute, cold and heat and famine. They are intoxication, drunken brutality, demoralization and disorder on the part of the inferior . . . jealousies, meanness, indifference, selfish brutality on the part of the superior.*  
Florence Nightingale (1820-1910), English nurse. Letter, 5 May 1855, to her family (published in *Forever Yours*, Florence Nightingale: Selected Letters, ch. 2, 1989), written while nursing on the Black Sea.

*'You are surprised that soldiers are taught that it is right to kill people in certain cases and in war, while in the books admitted to be holy by those who so teach, there is nothing like such permission, but, on the contrary, not only is all murder forbidden but all insulting of others is*

*forbidden also, and we are told not to do to others what we do not wish done to us.'*  
Leo Tolstoy, Letter to a Non-Commissioned Officer

*In the arts of life man invents nothing; but in the arts of death he outdoes Nature herself, and produces by chemistry and machinery all the slaughter of plague, pestilence, and famine.*  
George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), Anglo-Irish playwright, critic. *The Devil, in Man and Superman*, act 3.

*What a country calls its vital economic interests are not the things which enable its citizens to live, but the things which enable it to make war. Petrol is more likely than wheat to be a cause of international conflict.*  
Simone Weil (1909), French philosopher, mystic. "The Power of Words," in *Nouveaux Cahiers* (1 and 15 April 1937)

*'It is impossible to conceive of a just war in a nuclear age.'*  
(Pope John XXIII)

*"infernal massacre . . . this outrage against civilization"*  
(Pope Paul VI on the 20th anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bomb)

*'Just keep him alive for a few minutes so we can question him. After that he can die. It doesn't matter to me.'*  
US commanding officer to a regimental doctor in Vietnam who is treating an enemy soldier

*'... Pacifism teaches people to make no distinction between the shedding of innocent blood and the shedding of any human blood. And in this way pacifism has corrupted enormous numbers of people who will not act according to its tenets.'*  
G. E. Anscombe, Catholic Philosopher

*'Those who dare to interpret God's will must never claim Him as an asset for one nation or group rather than another. War springs from the love and loyalty which should be offered to God being applied to some God substitute, one of the most dangerous being nationalism.'*  
Robert Runcie (b. 1921), Archbishop of Canterbury. Sermon, 26, July 1982, at the Falkland Islands Thanksgiving Service, St. Paul's Cathedral, London