



BAPTIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP SPRING NEWSLETTER 2016



St Martin and the origins of chaplaincy

Martin, born in 316, as the son of a veteran, was obliged to serve as a soldier from the age of 15 even though as a newly converted Christian he would have preferred to pursue his faith in a monastery. Consequently he joined the cavalry. He was stationed in Amiens where, one day, he saw a beggar lying naked in the road, shivering with cold. Martin took his sword, cut his cloak in two and gave the beggar half of it to keep him warm.

The following night Martin saw Christ in a dream wearing the half a cloak he had given away. Moved by this vision Martin sought immediate

baptism and asked to be excused military service. "Up to now," he said to Emperor Julian, "I have served you as a soldier; allow me henceforth to serve Christ. I am a soldier of Christ and it is not lawful for me to

fight." Julian accused him of cowardice, but Martin said he would go to war but only without weapons. He was, instead, sent to prison for refusing to fight. When the war came to an end he was released from prison and went to join the great scholar Hilary at Poitiers who ordained him a deacon.

Martin then felt called to return home to Italy where he managed to convert his mother to Christianity, though his father refused. After a distinguished career in the church he ended up as Bishop of Tours in 371. Legend has it that the half of his cloak that he kept was taken by the Merovignan kings and placed in a shrine. The Latin for cloak was *cappa*; the priest who cared for the cloak in its reliquary was therefore called a *cappellanu*, and ultimately all priests who served the military were called *cappellani*. The word *cappa* became *chape* in old French, so the shrine where it was kept was a *chapelle*, or house of the chape and the keepers of it, chapelaines from which the English word *chaplain* is derived. The cloak was reputed to have healing powers so it was taken out on military campaigns to heal wounded soldiers. So keepers of the cloak of a conscientious objector were the predecessors of the military chaplains we have today.

Bob Gardiner

From pacifism to a theology of the just war

Writing of chaplains, who I'm sure do a difficult job with integrity and courage, in the January issue of the Baptist World Mission magazine, Catalyst, there is a splendid picture, of Revd. Dr David Coulter QHC, the chaplain General of the army, in full military uniform replete with dog collar. That photograph reminded me of a quotation from Tertullian I had read 25 years ago when I was a student at Cardiff: "We are not allowed to wear any uniform that symbolizes a sinful act." (Against Celsum 8.73) He was referring to military uniform as the context made clear. "The Lord, by taking away Peter's sword disarmed every soldier thereafter."

Tertullian was a particularly controversial writer and was given to making a number of extreme assertions many of which would today be regarded as heretical. However in this respect he was in tune with most Christian views in the first 200 years after Christ. Origen wrote, "If someone is a military governor, or the ruler of a city who wears the purple, he shall cease or he shall be rejected. The catechumen or faithful who wants to become a soldier is to be rejected, for he has despised God." Even 100 years later Lactantius wrote, "'A just man may not be a soldier'". (Divine Institutes 6.20). Indeed Scott McKnight: (Professor of New Testament at Northern Seminary in Lombard, IL) has recently written, "there was not a single Christian writer in the first three hundred years of Christianity who said that Christians should serve in Rome's military." Our own Alan Kreider has written, "no Christian theologian before Constantine justified Christian participation in warfare" (Military Service, 431).

"Nine different Christian writers in 16 different treatises explicitly say that killing is wrong. Four writers in 5 treatises clearly argue that Christians do not and should not join the military. In addition, four writers in eight different works strongly imply that Christians should not join the military. At least eight times, five different authors apply the messianic prophecy about swords being beaten into ploughshares (Isa. 2:4) to Christ and his teaching. Ten different authors in at least 28 different places cite or allude to Jesus's teaching to love enemies, and, in at least nine of these places, they connect that teaching to some statement about Christians being peaceful, ignorant of war, opposed to attacking others, and so forth. All of this represents a considerable consensus." (Ronald J. Sider Distinguished Professor of Theology, Holistic Ministry, and Public Policy at Palmer Theological Seminary of Eastern University.)

Of course this view has been challenged: in particular some historians have pointed out that:

1 archaeological evidence has been found on Christian tombstone inscriptions which identify the person buried as a Christian who was in

the military. At least eight of these inscriptions are clearly pre-Constantine.

2 Under the influence of Saint Gregory, Armenia became the first Christian nation in a.d. 303. When Maxminus tried to force the Armenians to renounce Christianity in a.d. 312, the Armenians took up arms and defended their faith and freedom. They defeated the Roman army. (This does not predate Constantine, however.)

3 Eusebius relates that soldiers in the Melitine Legion would kneel and pray before going into battle, as was the custom of Christians. In a particular battle with Germans, the legion was in dire thirst. Due to the prayers of the Christian soldiers, God sent rain to refresh them while he sent lightning to confuse their enemies. The legion went on to triumph against their enemies due to the influence of the Christian soldiers.

4 in *The Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus is described as striking people dead. These stories are clearly fictitious; nevertheless, their presence in the popular literature of the early church reveals that some believers did not view Jesus as a pacifist.

Modern scholars, for example John F. Shean's *Soldiering for God: Christianity and the Roman Army*, and Despina Losif's *Early Christian Attitudes to War, Violence and Military Service*, assert that "early Christians held widely divergent views", and that the "rigorist, pacifist stance of selected authors has been overly emphasized at the expense of archaeological, epigraphic and literary evidence showing Christian participation in the military almost since the very inception of the faith". But Sider, after a thorough examination of their arguments, maintains that "there is very little basis in the texts for describing the early Christian view as "divided and ambiguous." There are no authors who argue that killing or joining the military is permissible for Christians. On these questions, every writer who mentions the subject takes essentially the same position. Some pre-Constantinian Christian writers say more about these topics than others. Some do not discuss them at all. But to conclude from this relative silence or paucity of surviving texts that other writers disagreed with the extant texts would be sheer speculation. The texts we have do not reflect any substantial disagreement. Every extant

Christian statement on killing and war up until the time of Constantine says Christians must not kill, even in war."

"That an increasing number of Christians were in the army by 295 is clear. But to claim that few Christians had any qualms about joining the army simply goes beyond the evidence we have. In fact, the extant Christian authors, Arnobius of Sicca and Lactantius, whose works date from this period and who mention killing and warfare say clearly that Christians do not do that."

The pacifism of the early church was in stark contrast to the prevailing philosophy of the time: that of "might is right." The person with the greater power is able to dominate others, and so is in the position to determine what is just and unjust. An early philosophical statement of this position is given by Thrasymachus in Plato's Republic. He says that "*justice is the interest of the stronger.*" Essentially this was the guiding principle of Alexander and then the Roman Emperors. Numerous nations have followed this policy, including Britain, even though few admit it. We do not need to exercise much imagination to conceive of a nation that was so powerful that no other nation could stand as a credible threat: a nation with great weapons of total destruction as well as powerful military forces to enforce policies and protect its sphere of influence. Of course, such a nation would issue proclamations of its virtue and benevolence and inherent peacefulness. Yet, let another power emerge that posed even a remote threat to its hegemony, and that other power would be attacked and dismantled. Empires have operated on that basis from ancient Egypt onwards.

The major change in attitude to war came with the conversion of Constantine. His forces carried the Christian cross on their shields, the first time that sign had been used in warfare, and even Lactantius changed his views once he had become tutor to Constantine's son. In 'On the Death of the Persecutors' (c. 313-315), he goes so far as to celebrate Constantine's military victories. It would seem that the dramatic change from being the persecuted minority in the Roman Empire to being in the seat of power sadly effected a conversion almost as dramatic as that of the initial conversion to Christ.

Augustine lived at a time when the might of the Roman Empire was crumbling fast.. Rome was sacked by Alaric the Visigoth in 410. Jerome, in a letter to a friend from Bethlehem wrote that he burst into tears upon hearing the news. "My voice sticks in my throat, and, as I dictate, sobs choke me. The city which had taken the whole world was itself taken," he said. In a commentary on the book of Ezekiel, he wrote, "Who would believe that Rome, built up by the conquest of the whole world, had collapsed, that the mother of nations had become also their tomb." At a time when the Christian Roman Empire was disintegrating at the hands of a Christian invading force, a pacifist response by either one or the other seemed unrealistic. Augustine's prodigious mind sought to bend his theology round the corners to meet the case. Why had Christians suffered in the taking of Rome? Indeed the eastern half of the empire was awash with refugees from the west (in reverse parallel to the situation today!) According to the Bible, God would have spared Sodom if there had been just ten righteous souls in it. Yet here was a city with thousands of Christians, a major church centre, too, and yet God had allowed it to be ravaged. The pagans blamed Christian pacifists.

On the one hand Augustine tried to argue that things were not as bad as they seemed. His general advice was to turn one's gaze inwards, not in an attempt to ignore the political turmoil around him, but to be able to handle it. He likened the pressure of the events to the pressure in an olive press that served to produce a pure oil. He did not see it as a punishment for any particular sin, but he did connect it to the general guilt of humanity. For Augustine this meant that Christians should not try to avoid the suffering by trying to escape it as a refugee. Instead he promoted activity in face of decline. He looked towards the future, rather than the past, and painted vivid pictures of the heavenly Jerusalem in the minds of his listeners. By living under the intense pressure of this world, the Christians were preparing for the coming world. Augustine felt he lived in an old world, a world that was no longer at the height of its strengths. This was not something one should be surprised at: the world followed the same pattern as everything living. Instead one should look to Christ: "Do not hold on to the old man, the world; do not refuse

to regain your youth in Christ, who says to you: "The world is passing away, the world is losing its grip, the world is short of breath. Do not fear, *"Thy youth shall be renewed as the eagle's"* (Sermon 81, 8.)

In *City of God*, Augustine's assessment of Rome is ambivalent; he clearly criticizes the corruption of pride and the lust for rule; without the love of God all the pagan virtues are deemed "splendid vices" (XIX.25). Moreover, it had led to the expansion of the Roman empire and required the Romans to "roll with dark fear and cruel lust, in warlike slaughters and blood" (IV.3). The glory of empire is likened to "glass in its fragile splendour." Thus a wiser state opts for moderate wealth and status, rather than expansion. For all of this, Augustine did acknowledge that the pagan political order could establish a temporal good: the good of order and peace. Christians could benefit from *pax romana* and contribute to the temporal peace. This peace, Augustine says, is not "to be esteemed lightly." It involves the good qualities of health and safety, food and shelter, and fellowship. But the good of peace imposes "stern and lasting necessities" (XIX.7), among which are the use of force. By the use of force, "lawless men are prevented from doing harm" (XIX.21). So he justifies the use of force in restraint of the wicked and lawless and by extension this is developed into a theory of a just war which according to Augustine, does not depend on the great or glorious righteousness of the cause, but on preventing the wicked from harming others. In fact, Augustine is quite sceptical of the purity of the cause of justice and is prepared to live with an ambiguity of earthly claims to justice. The greatest evil in war, according to Augustine, is the opportunity for "love of violence, revengeful cruelty, fierce and implacable enmity, wild resistance and the lust of power." He further says, "it is to punish these things," that "good men undertake wars, when they find themselves in such a position as regards the conduct of human affairs." As long as the use of force was aimed at the maintaining of just order and involved the right intention, it was accepted as part of the temporal duty of the Christian. Ultimately Christians are pilgrims through a world compromised by sin travelling to the heavenly city where they will at last experience higher peace of Christ.

He thought that war was always a sin, and if there had to be a war, it should be waged with sadness. But since sin was the natural human state of the world it had to be faced realistically. Augustine accepted that there would always be wars. So Augustine said that although war was always the result of sin, war could also be the remedy for sin. And if war was the remedy for sin, then war could sometimes be justifiable - but only if it was a remedy for sin. He stated that Christians did not have the right to defend themselves from violence, however they could use violence if it was necessary to defend the innocent against evil. So Augustine legitimized war as an instrument of national policy which, although inferior to the perfect ideals of Christianity, is one which Christians cannot altogether avoid and with which they must in some sense make their peace.

Nine hundred years later, writing at the time of the so-called Crusades, Augustine's general principles of a just war were codified and made more explicit by Thomas Aquinas. Put simply,

- 1) war must be an act by "the authority of a sovereign by whose command the war is to be waged."
- 2) a just cause is required, "namely that those who are attacked should be attacked because they deserve it on account of some fault." (Aquinas draws no distinction between wars of attack and wars of defence, sometimes attack is necessary to defend justice).
- 3) War can only be embarked upon if the intention is the advancement of good, and ultimately that good is peace. For the establishment of peace is the *raison d'être* of government.

"We do not seek peace in order to be at war, but we go to war that we may have peace. Be peaceful, therefore, in warring, so that you may vanquish those whom you war against, and bring them to the prosperity of peace".

It is clear that what changed in the first 400 years of the history of the church, was that, from being profoundly distrustful of pagan government, it moved to a position where it saw the sovereign, or magistrate, as being an agent of divine peace. Roman emperors had moved from being gods in their own right to being men governing by

divine right. Serving them would no longer be idolatry but opposing them would be resisting the will of God. So when Augustine and then, more simply, Aquinas made the first clause of their justification of war that it should be declared by a legitimate authority it was going to be but a small step for those rulers to assert that war would always be right because they were acting in their divinely crowned role as his representatives on earth. Resistance to this was unreasonable dissent that was quickly seen as rebellion. Once Christians moved from being pacifist to holding a rational position justifying war, it would no longer be possible to assert conscience. To resist the sovereign was always going to be unreasonable treason.

Bob Gardiner.

Advance notice: It is hoped that BPF will be able to participate in a joint day conference with URC and Methodist peace fellowships in the Autumn. If so the AGM will take place as part of that event.

Peace Sunday this year will be on 18th September.

Resources for worship will soon be available on the Fellowship of Reconciliation website: <http://www.for.org.uk/resources/>

Book Reviews, Norman Kember

1) Nonviolent action – what Christian ethics demands but most Christians have never really tried, Ronald J Sider; Brazos Press 2015.

Sider is the writer of 'Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger'. This very important study recounts in detail many examples of nonviolent actions from Gandhi. Martin Luther King, the defeat of Marcos to the Arab Spring. The story of the Witnesses for Peace in Nicaragua was only known in outline by the reviewer. Sider considers the effectiveness of these campaigns with an honest evaluation of their longer term achievements (perhaps the saddest note being about the successes of the women of Liberia to overthrow the tyranny of Charles Taylor but concludes with 'the devastation of the Ebola virus threatens to reverse many of the improvements achieved'). In the section 'Intervening,

accompanying and reporting' he records the foundation and work of nonviolent activist movements from Shanti Sena to Peace Brigades International, CPT and EAPPI. He introduces the work of Nonviolent Peaceforce which was formed in 2002. The book finishes with an analysis of the effectiveness of nonviolence quoting the studies of Chenoweth and Stephan (Univ. of Columbia Press 2011) who found, for example, that democratic regimes were established in over 50% of nonviolent struggles but in only 6% of violent overthrows of despotic rulers. Sider makes a plea to all Christians, pacifist and non-pacifist alike, to reconsider the challenge of nonviolent action. Just war has the condition that all nonviolent solutions be exhausted but how seldom have nonviolent solutions to conflict been tried before resort to armed conflict? The book is published in the USA but is readily available in the UK.

2) The Great and Holy War - How WW1 changed religion for ever, Philp Jenkins, Lion Hudson 2014. This is a masterful survey covering Christianity, Judaism and Islam. The section that surprised me concerned the support that German theologians gave to the Kaiser's Imperial vision to spread their 'superior' culture. Karl Barth in Switzerland was shocked by this stance of his theological heroes. Although not immediately relevant to the theme of nonviolence it is a disturbing example of Christian blindness to national jingoisms. The book confirms our understanding that the mistakes of WWI led to WWII and reverberate in conflicts up to the present time.

The Megaton Bomb: A Guide to Armageddon DVD 30 Minutes
Using U.S. Congress and British Home Office official data, this programme shows what would actually happen if a one megaton warhead burst a mile above St Paul's cathedral in the centre of London. Within 30 seconds houses six miles away would be reduced to rubble, winds of 80 - 90 miles per hour would toss objects pell-mell, and shatter windows, sending shards of glass through the air at 120 feet per second, slicing skin. Paper and other light material would ignite spontaneously. Those in sight of the light would suffer severe third degree burns,

charring skin to black carbon and causing permanent retinal burns. Two couples carried out civil defence measures to see how effective these measures would be. For ten days they lived in temporary constructions following government guidelines. The film looks at how they fared, but suggests that after an actual explosion it is highly unlikely they would emerge at all. The Hiroshima Bomb had a strength of 15 Kilotons. A single rocket fired from a Trident submarine carries three nuclear bombs with a total strength stated to be the equivalent of a 1 megaton bomb (1000 kilotons). This programme can be rented on our Video on Demand system for £1.63. For this you can view as often as you like within a 48 hour period of your own choosing. £16.30 plus postage.

www.concordmedia.org.uk

Eric Walker (trustee)

Joan Miro: Still life with an old shoe. 1937



It is both a landscape and a still life, showing very simple objects: the eponymous shoe, a loaf of bread, an apple with a fork stuck in it, and a bottle. You can find these objects in any house, even in a war zone. The key colour here is black. It permeates everything, it spoils the food and poisons the drink. Wherever you are, war finds a way to get you. Black is unstoppable here, it seeps through the canvas, coming at you from behind it, and as you watch the painting, its blackness expands, grows bigger, and devours all these simple elements of life.

For me this is an ultimate anti-war statement: there are no escapees, there can be no survivors, even if the war is waged far from your home. War is an all-consuming fire and blackness. (From the art blog, standing ovation, seated).



Arthur Boyd, the mining town, or money changers expelled from the temple, painted towards the end of WW2.

A man throws some people down the steps of a church and sets up a chain reaction of events. A truck spills its load as it smashes into a tree, the pigs on it scatter onto the street, a cripple hobbles away, a kite flier grabs a pig, muzzled dogs on leashes frighten a horse pulling a cartload of people and a funeral procession stops in the street. Only two lovers, embracing in a garden, seem to be unaffected by the turmoil. Behind this hive of activity, the factory chimney belches smoke. In the distance, cows graze in tranquil fields and birds fly over a calm sea. The long Station Pier identifies the suburb as South Melbourne and the bay as Port Phillip Bay. The man who has caused this chaos and drama is Christ, returned from the dead, to cast the moneylenders out of this suburban church.

The mining town is one of a group of multi-figured scenes with explicitly religious themes that Arthur Boyd painted towards the end of the Second World War. Son of the potter, sculptor and painter Merrick Boyd, he was brought up in a family with strong religious beliefs, with his grandmother reading him stories from a large, illustrated family Bible when he was a child and his grandfather conducting prayer gatherings. In the late 1940s, he turned to the Bible for inspiration as a means of conveying universal stories. The mining town is an allegory of the impact of greed and corruption on ordinary people and their everyday lives; Boyd emphasized the reality of this by placing it in a recognisable Australian suburb.

The mining town expresses Boyd's anger at war profiteers and at the futility of war. However, its artistic heritage is the Tower of Babel 1563, a biblical painting by 16th-century Flemish painter, Pieter Bruegel, which Boyd had seen in reproduction at the Melbourne Public Library. Like Bruegel, Boyd produced an expressive image of his local landscape and imagined activities around him.

Please note that at this year's agm (still to be fixed) we will need to elect a new committee, and the likelihood is that at least 2 of the current members will not be standing again. We are also functioning without a secretary (at the moment the task is being shared by Tina Parsons, the treasurer and Bob Gardiner, the chair). The task of campaigning for peace is as pressing today as it has ever been: it would be good to receive some nominations for the committee and secretary before the next edition of the BPF newsletter gets written in September/October.

CAST YOUR VOTE: should the UK government really be spending £45billion on war? Have your say at bit.ly/gdams2016



Hold a ballot in your town centre and/or church – all you need is 5 jam jars and a load of beans.

“Wars are poor chisels for carving out peaceful tomorrows. One day we must come to see that peace is not merely a distant goal we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that goal. We must pursue peaceful ends through peaceful means.” Martin Luther King, Jr.

10 Facts about the violent years in which we live

1. It was reported in the [2014 Global Peace Index](#) that only 11 countries in the world were not involved in conflict that year
2. In the [2015 Global Peace Index](#) the UK ranked at only 39 in the index of most peaceful countries and the USA, 94, out of 162 countries
3. The economic cost of violence in 2014 was estimated at \$14.3 trillion or 13.4% of global GDP ([Global Peace Index](#))
4. The amount of deaths from terrorism has increased by 61% in the last decade. However, the reality is that 82% of these deaths occurred in just five countries; Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria and Syria ([Global Peace Index](#))
5. In the world's most discussed conflict, Syria, 11.5% of the Syrian population have been killed or injured since the violence started in March 2011
6. There are fast developing conflicts that get very little attention, such as those in Chad, South Sudan, Burundi and in the South China Sea (if you want more information visit [Foreign Policy Magazine](#))
7. There are an estimated 250,000 child soldiers in the world today and it is estimated that 40% of all child soldiers are girls ([War Child](#))
8. The latest UNHCR report estimates that more than 50 million people are now either refugees or internally displaced. This is the highest number since the end of the Second World War ([Global Peace Index](#))
9. The most militarised country in the world today is Israel ([Global Peace Index](#))
10. Together nine countries possess more than 15,000 nuclear warheads. The destructive power of the UK Trident capability alone is more than 1000 times greater than the bomb that hit Hiroshima at the end of Second World War.

From the Anglican Peace Fellowship.

Disarm trident – resist, protest, disrupt month of creative nonviolent actions at AWE Burghfield throughout June 2016.

An announcement from CPT UK

We are asking you and your friends to spend at least one day in the month of June at AWE Burghfield to disrupt the illegal and immoral 'business as usual' by joining our month of action. We need you to show public opposition to Trident Replacement and to encourage nuclear disarmament. We will be providing briefings and information. If you need a workshop facilitator to help plan your direct action then let us know. You can ring 01547 520929 or 07456 588943 or email june@tridentploughshares.org

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Please contact Tina Parsons if you are happy to receive your newsletter online rather than as a printed copy.

BPF website <http://www.baptist-peace.org.uk>

Please submit copy for the next edition of the newsletter to Bob Gardiner before October 1