LOVE IN JUST WAR?

**1. Christianity and just war ‘spirituality’**

* from Jesus through Augustine to ‘loving’ war
  + from act to motive: vengeance or love?
    - To Tribune (regimental commander) Flavius Marcellinus, AD 411/12 (Letter 138) (See *In Defence of War/IDOW*)

‘secular’ ambiguity and tragedy

To Paulinus of Nola, AD 408 (Letter 95) (*IDOW*)

* cp. David Rodin’s ‘just war’ in terms of rights … but also ‘respect’
* merely a Christian problem or also Christian wisdom?

**2. Is a Christian spirituality of ‘just war’ psychologically plausible?**

* the norm of love of comrades: “Greater love hath no man than he lay down his life for his friends”
  + the *language* of love?
    - General Sir Hugh Beach: “I never came across the word ‘love’ as applied to my comrades in arms (I think it would have been met with a snigger, let alone the enemy”(*Studies in Christian Ethics*, forthcoming 2015)
    - but Major-General Marriott, Commandant, Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, 2011 *(IDOW)*
    - Lt Patrick Bury, Royal Irish Regiment, Helmand, 2008: “… we call it respect because it’s easy to say. It’s not soft and it’s not embarrassing. But Matt has called it by its true name, love” (*IDOW*)
* but love for *the enemy?*
  + the non-necessity of hatred and the possibility of fellow-feeling or ‘compassion’
    - * e.g., R. H. Tawney, 1916 (*IDOW*)
      * e.g., George Orwell, 1938 (*Homage to Catalonia* [Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1974], pp. 64, 95, 178-9)
        + e.g., Chris Keeble, Battle of Goose Green, Falkland Islands, 1982: “cradling wounded Argentine soldiers in their arms” (*IDOW*)

**3. Must we be trained to ‘dehumanise’ the enemy, if we are to kill them?**

* e.g., Martin Cook (US Naval War College), “Is Just War Spirituality Possible?”, *Nova et Vetera*, 10/4 (2012): ff. J. Glenn Gray: “Most soldiers are able to kill … more easily in warfare if they possess an image of the enemy sufficiently evil to inspire hatred and repugnance”
* … but see 2 above
* ‘dehumanisation’ vs ‘demonisation’? The virtue of ‘callousness’ or clinical detachment
  + Commanders vis-á-vis subordinates:
    - e.g., General Douglas Haig, 1914-18 (according to Churchill) (*IDOW*)
    - e.g., General Bernard Montgomery, 1942 (*IDOW*)
      * as a commander to his subordinates, so a combat soldier to his enemy: unsentimental professionalism: e.g., Karl Marlantes *(IDOW)*

**4. The springs of hatred and the possibility of discipline**

* rage at an enemy who ‘doesn’t play by the rules’: cheating, mutilation etc.
  + e.g., North Africa, 1943 *(IDOW)*
* clash of military cultures
* regulars vs irregulars
  + e.g., Patrick Bury “… I was glad he was dead. It was funny. He had tried to blow us up, and the stupid fucker had blown himself up. That was gratifying, warming, pleasant. But later I see photos of his body and I feel sick. Somewhere within me, under the hardening crust, compassion still pervades my thoughts. *What about his mother, his family? What a waste of a life.*

My compassion lasts less than twenty-four hours. As we debate whether to return his body to a mosque before sundown, like the soft, moral, Geneva-bound men we are, the Taliban prepare to ambush us at the mosque. Luckily, we don’t have the manpower. The family can collect him later. Then we find out about the ambush. Rage.

*Fuck them, the dirty despicable bastards. Is nothing sacred? Ambush your enemy as he returns your dead? Honour? You bastards. YOU FUCKING BASTARDS. I WILL KILL EVERY LAST ONE OF YOU.*

*…*I am struggling with this war…. Struggling with our enemy. An enemy that says it is strictly Islamic yet runs harems and makes and takes drugs, an enemy that uses handicapped kids as mules for suicide bombs, that executes children for going to school. I start to hate them. Hate them for what they are doing to me. Hate them and their terrifying suicide bombs that separate us from the locals. Hate them for eroding me.

*Do they hate us in the same way?Yes.*

And I hate the locals for not standing up to them. For harbouring them, sheltering them. For not returning our smiles. For not being human. For hating us. For watching us walk over IEDs [Improvised Explosive Devices].

*Not all of them…. Not all of them.*” *(IDOW)*

* nevertheless, military training and leadership
  + Bury: “Killing, whatever its form, can be morally corrosive. Mid-intensity counter insurgency, with its myriad of complex situations, an enemy who won’t play fair and the constant, enduring feeling of being under threat, compound such corrosiveness. A good tactical leader must recognise this and constantly maintain the morality of those he commands…. Sometimes I felt my own morality begin to slip…. And at these times my memory would flit back to Sandhurst, to the basics, and I would find renewed vigour that what I was saying was indeed right. My moral compass, for all its wavering, was still pointing North. And that was the most important lesson I was taught in Sandhurst, and that I learnt in Afghanistan.” *(IDOW)*

**5. Must a combat soldier aim to kill?**

* Tom Simpson in *Studies in Christian Ethics*, forthcoming 2015
* cp. Patrick Bury: “If he does that again, kill him” *(IDOW)*

**6. The phenomenon of a troubled military conscience**

**Further reading**

Nigel Biggar, *In Defence of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, 2014), esp. Chapters 2, 3

*Soundings*, 97/2 (2014):

Lisa Cahill, “How Should War be Related to Christian Love?”

Cian O’Driscoll, “Tough Reading: Nigel Biggar on Callousness and the Just War”

Nigel Biggar, “In Response”

*Studies in Christian Ethics*, forthcoming in 2015

(General Sir) Hugh Beach, “Can a Soldier Love his Enemy?

Cian O’Driscoll, “The Heart of the Matter? The Callousness of Just War”

Tom Simpson, “Did Marine ‘A’ Do Wrong? Biggar’s Lethal Intentions”

Nigel Biggar, “In Response”

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