

# Living by the Sword: The Ethics of Armed Intervention

Tom Frame

Reviewed by Neil James

Dr Tom Frame was a naval officer for 14 years before ordination in 1993 and is now the Anglican Bishop to the Australian Defence Force. He is noted analytical historian in both church and naval history and a master of clear, strong and illustrative prose. Within Anglican circles, and despite his relative youth as a bishop (2001), he is acknowledged as an intellectual theologian in the traditional stream. In this book he has drawn on all these talents and experiences to discuss a range of Christian theological, and wider ethical and philosophical, issues concerning the use of force in the affairs of mankind.

Based on a series of lectures and seminars he presented to New College at University of NSW in September 2003, and launched on Anzac Day 2004, the book is set very much in the contemporary Australian context. It has attracted much public interest because Bishop Frame retracts his initial, and well-publicised, pre-war judgement that the 2003 collective intervention in Iraq was a 'just war'. While written by a bishop the book is unfortunately somewhat of a curate's egg. While Dr Frame is a noted historian and capable theologian, and the book demonstrates these strengths, it does suffer in part from a want of political science scholarship. He has also been badly let down by his editors and fact checkers with some chapters including errors of fact or omission, and incomplete or arguable interpretations, which mar what would otherwise be an excellent reference to a vital subject. Fortunately, these deficiencies can be readily corrected for subsequent editions.

Beginning with a long autobiographical preface of Dr Frame's spiritual journey in reconciling Christian belief and military service, the book includes an introduction, nine thematic chapters, an epilogue and two appendices. The first chapter provides an excellent summary of the effects of Christian belief and warfare on each other from the crucifixion of Christ by the Romans, through the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity, to the mid-5th Century fall of the Western Roman Empire. Chapter two covers the interaction of Christian belief, temporal rule and warfare from the fall of Rome to the present day, with special emphasis on the development of the 'just war tradition' in Christian theology and practice—and in international law.

His third chapter brings a good summary of the development of the opposing pacifist and 'just war' traditions within Christian theology, and Christianity's progressive rejection of the belief that there was a scriptural basis for spreading the Christian message by the sword. In Chapter four he applies just war theory to the 1991 and

2003 wars with Iraq, concluding that the first was a just cause but the second probably not—although it is surely too early for such a definitive judgement on several of the agreed just war criteria. Chapter five covers Church–state relations based on an excellent discussion of its scriptural basis. The following two chapters discuss the problem of intervening in the affairs of other states, especially by pre-emptive action, and the practical and moral difficulties of a standing UN constabulary.

These latter three chapters in particular unfortunately include some errors, omissions or conclusions that are commonly arguable. As a sample, there is confusion between the concepts of collective defence and collective security, and inferences or assertions that Pakistan opposed the Taliban and that French involvement in Rwanda in 1994 was enlightened self-interest, when in both cases the opposite was more the case. The nature of Eritrea's annexation and eventual secession from Ethiopia is misunderstood. Discussion of the break-up of Yugoslavia misses the important example of Slovenia. The discussion of humanitarian intervention is somewhat cursory and does not address several modern developments and emerging international law in this regard. The discussion of declared and undeclared wars is considerably out-of-date and the fact that such declarations hold no legal status since the UN Charter was signed is absent. The discussion of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty wrongly ascribes to Pakistan and India the very status that has long led them to oppose the treaty. Two helicopters, not one, were shot down in Mogadishu in the 'Blackhawk down' battle.

The chapter on conscientious objection is an excellent summary of a complex topic. His final chapter on the morality and practicality of Australian defence strategy, and our record of warfare, is largely a good one, but the discussion and assignment of wars and campaigns to justified and unjustified lists include many arguable definitions, descriptions and conclusions. The epilogue is short and illustrative. The two appendices on Australian contributions to peacekeeping and humanitarian relief operations respectively are particularly marred by numerous factual errors, omissions and repetition of listed operations under different names or titles. That these were based on a Department of Defence report makes it even worse. The choice of 1950 as a starting date is also unfortunate as 1945 is generally taken as the beginning of the modern era for such multinational activities. However, this too was apparently because of the flawed records provided by the Department of Defence.

All in all a very good book but the next edition should be a great one. ♦

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