

FOREWORD

United States military officers undergo multiple levels of leadership and military training throughout their careers. It was only twenty-five years ago that I sat as a young Air Force Captain and received my first exposure to the history of warfare, military leadership, the rules of modern warfare, and the Geneva Conventions. I prided myself on being one of the “good guys” in the world, and was able to shove back beyond my conscience the obvious conflicts, such as the use of indiscriminate weaponry, “collateral damage,” and some of the more embarrassing moments in our history of conflict. It seemed that, regardless of our moral wrongs, we were basically a good nation and the greatest hope for the world.

It was only a few years later that I began to feel the stirrings of an awareness of myself as a sinner in the hands of a just God and, eventually, came to faith in the finished work of Christ as my only hope for salvation. I eagerly consumed the Bible and theology, finding myself aligned with the “Christian Right” evangelical movement. Conveniently, I found that my theology and nationalism seemed to meld perfectly. I was proud to serve in a military that was ready to defend interventionist foreign policies. Conveniently, I found it easy to follow the advice of my father, himself a career military combat officer: “It is not our job to concern ourselves with politics and Washington, D.C. We are to be about the profession of war.” Dad certainly had a healthy distaste for politicians, as do many officers.

Truth has an unhealthy habit of confronting lies. In my case, it came in the writings of Laurence Vance. His writings used the wisest military tactics, on the one hand, scrambling my communications with military doctrine, and on the other, attacking my religious beliefs with a brilliant flanking maneuver. My concurrent discovery of www.lewrockwell.com worked together with Vance’s writings to challenge my rather weak public education and strong military indoctrination. I found both my Christian faith and my understanding of the state confused and uncertain. My first reaction was anger and disbelief.

Vance is nothing if not a persistent Christian. Indeed, he is “running the race to win,” and has refused the world’s attempts to silence him. Each essay unsettled my military view, my theology, and my understanding of the history of the Christian Church. I found myself running to history books, historical Christian writers, and the Bible to disprove him.

Most describe it as a “loss of innocence”—that moment of enlightenment when we discover a painful truth of life. My loss of innocence is still ongoing. Vance has caused me to open my eyes. The result has been a discovery of the wonderful truths and economics of libertarianism, and a correction and deepening of my faith in and understanding of Christianity, and most importantly, the orthodox, historical, and biblical views of war.

Growth does not come without price, nor does following the teachings of Christ. Inspired by Vance, I have set about trying to reach my Christian brethren who support war and the military due to their confusion over key passages in the Bible. To some degree I have found myself ostracized; yet, rather than discouraging me, it tells me that I am on the right course, for Christ himself predicted such for those who followed him in obedience.

In this most commendable work, Vance greatly expands upon his previous edition. It will be my goal to get a copy into the hands of every military comrade and fellow Christian that I know well enough to reach with my concerns. Let me not suggest that the reader must be military or Christian. Indeed, this book is a perfect antidote for the poison being slowly fed through the media, our public schools and universities, conservative and fundamental Christian churches, and the military. Within its pages, the reader will surely be challenged in his prior understanding of history and the biblical view of warfare. Vance pulls no punches; I cringed the first time I found myself being called a “Christian warmonger.” As I have said, growth can be painful. I will be forever indebted to Vance for his clear understanding of history, Christianity, and libertarian thought. I challenge the reader to not simply accept what he writes, but to test what he writes by holding it against the pale of orthodox Christianity, the Bible, and history itself. This book is a clarion call that challenges the modern American church, the military member, and all citizens as to their beliefs concerning the historical and moral aspects of warfare. For me, it was literally life changing.

~ Mike Reith, Major, USAF, Ret.