

The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus 215AD:

16.7 If someone is a gladiator, or one who teaches those among the gladiators how to fight, or a hunter who is in the wild beast shows in the arena, or a public official who is concerned with gladiator shows, either he shall cease, or he shall be rejected.

9 A military man in authority must not execute men. If he is ordered, he must not carry it out. Nor must he take military oath. If he refuses, he shall be rejected.

10 If someone is a military governor (*has the authority of swords*), or the ruler of a city who *wears the purple*, he shall cease or he shall be rejected.

Council of Nicea, Canon 12, 325AD:

"As for those who were called by grace and at first zealously threw away their military uniforms, but then later returned like dogs to their own vomit (so that some regained their military positions through bribes and gifts), let these spend three years as hearers and ten years as prostrators. But in all such cases it is necessary to carefully examine their intentions and their repentance. If they give evidence of their conversions by their actions (and not mere pretense), with fear, tears, perseverance, and good works, then they may properly join the assembly in prayers once they have fulfilled their appointed time as hearers. Beyond that, the bishop may make an even more lenient (*philanthropion*) decision concerning them. But those who take the matter with indifference, and who think the prescribed form of entering the church is sufficient for their readmission, must fulfill the whole time."

Basil of Caesarea, **Canon 13**, 370AD:

"Our Fathers did not consider murders committed in the course of wars to be classifiable as murders at all, on the score, it seems to me, of allowing a pardon to men fighting in defense of sobriety and piety. Perhaps, though, it might be advisable to refuse them communion for 3 years, on the ground that they are not clean-handed."

Canon 43:

"He who gives a mortal wound to another is a murderer whether it is done in aggression or in self-defense."

St. Nicodemus, *Interpretation of Canon 13* of St. Basil:

"By 'Our Fathers' here Basil the Great means Athanasius the Great and his followers. For Athanasius says in his *Epistle to Amun* that for one to slay enemies in war is lawful and praiseworthy. But St. Basil explains also the reason why the more ancient Fathers permitted them to be pardoned, which is that those men who slay men in the course of war are fighting for the faith and for the maintenance of sobriety. For, if once the barbarians and infidels should succeed in gaining the upper hand, neither piety will be left, since they disregard it and seek to establish their own wicked faith and bad belief, nor sobriety and maintenance of honor, seeing that their victory would be followed by many instances of violation and ravishment of young women and of young men. The Saint goes on to add, however, on his own part, not a definitive Canon, but an advisory and indecisive suggestion that although these men who slay others in war were not considered murderers by the more ancient Fathers, yet, since their hands are not unstained by blood, it might perhaps be well for them to abstain from communion for 3 years solely as regards the Mysteries, but not to be expelled, that is to say, from the Church, like other penitents."

The Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ, 350- 400AD:

Chapter 2: "If any one be a soldier or in authority, let him be taught not to oppress or to kill or to rob, or to be angry or to rage and afflict any one. But let those rations [Luke 3.14] suffice him which are given to

him. But if they wish to be baptized in the Lord, let them cease from military service or from the [post of] authority, and if not let them not be received.”

Notes to Chapter 2: Forbidden Trades and Professions and Military Service in other Church Orders

(1) C.H. 65-79 have a long list of those who are not to be admitted...No man who has received the power of killing, or is a soldier, to be received...Christians are not voluntarily to become soldiers; if compelled, they must beware lest they be guilty of blood; if they have shed blood, they are not to receive Holy Communion till they repent.

(2) Eg. C.O. 41 headed “Of Actions and Works,”

A soldier being in authority...he who has the power of the sword or a city governor clothed with purple is to be rejected or else cease (from their profession). Catechumens or baptized persons wishing to be soldiers are to be rejected because they have despised God.

“Dark” to Medieval Age

The gradual development of a practical penitential *modus vivendi* that permitted lay people to engage in a process of spiritual renewal that did not require a commitment to lifetime of penitential obligations reached a culmination during the seventh century. First in Ireland and then in England monastic houses developed pastoral manuals that regularized the concept of short-term penitential acts that could be employed regularly over a lifetime in order to cleanse oneself of the stain of sin.¹²⁰ These penitential manuals were essentially schedules of sins with corresponding penances, and therefore have been labeled by scholars as “tariff books.”¹²¹ Once a penance had been completed successfully, the individual was understood to be fully reconciled with God and the Christian community. This development in practice was of particular importance to soldiers as it meant that they could now reasonably hope to die in a state of grace after a recent confession. In addition, soldiers could continue to serve in the army however often they confessed.

Of particular importance to soldiers was the inclusion of clauses in the penitential manuals dealing specifically with *homicidio* in the context of war, specifically publicly sanctioned warfare (*bellum publicum*) or warfare conducted by the king.¹²⁵ ...The *poenitentiale Valicellanum II* listed a penance of forty days on bread and water for anyone who killed a man in battle while serving with the king, and assigned the same penance to anyone who killed someone at the order of his “dominus.”¹²⁸ By the mid-eighth century, at the latest, penitential manuals of this type were also being produced not only in Ireland and England, but in large numbers in *Francia* and Italy as well.¹²⁹ As we will see in the next chapter, these developments in Christian penitential practice and in teaching about the sinfulness of killing had a profound impact on medieval wartime religion.

Religion and the Conduct of War, C. 300-1215, D. S. Bachrach, pp 28-30.