**Making War:**

**Implications for both Church and State Policy of**

**Christian Theology, International Law, and the Constitution**

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Making War: When is it legal and morally acceptable? Sadly, there is little discussion among the people or in the media or even in most churches about whether a proposed military action is the "right" thing to do. Americans, even the Christian majority, seem to have bought into the myth that making war, like the rest of foreign policy, is not a legal or moral issue, just a pragmatic one. Whatever works is OK. Do whatever furthers American “interests” (read "economic advantage").

Could our government not adopt a new basis for foreign policy: "Do What Is Right"? Should our churches not educate parishioners on the theology of war? Should we the American people not demand that our government *at least* follow its obligations under the Constitution and International Law? How can we, as Christians, *not* bring our religious and moral values to bear on decisions meaning life or death to thousands, perhaps millions, of people? In addition, our faith *requires* us to determine when, and under what conditions, we may participate in the war-making adventures of our government. According to the Nuremberg principles established by the U.S. at the end of World War II, we even have a *legal* obligation to do so.

Let us start by examining the theological perspective. Within Christianity at large, there are four recognizable schools of thought on the morality of warfare.

**THE FOUR SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT**

At one extreme is the "Holy War" school. This is the school which considers warfare a holy obligation, a duty to God. This school gave us the Crusades. It very nearly gave us a nuclear war against "godless communism" under Reagan. Its adherents are few, and it has little influence in this country today.

At the other extreme is the "Pacifist" school. It condemns all forms of struggle. Its Christian roots are found in Matthew 5:39, "Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." Pacifists have made many important contributions, especially in arms control and international law. Yet they are a distinct minority in our society, and their beliefs are unlikely to become the basis for national policy.

Between these two extremes are two schools of thought which make up the broad "mainstream" of Christianity. They are the "Nonviolent Resistance School" and the "Just War School." Most American Christians belong to one of these two schools, even if they haven't given it much thought.

**NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE**

Nonviolent resistance differs from pacifism in that it allows non-cooperation and resistance to authority (although many who call themselves pacifists do not recognize this distinction). This is the school of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. It also is followed by most members of the traditional peace churches — Quakers, Brethren, and Mennonites. As a practical matter, the practice of nonviolent resistance has had considerable success in the last century. Several countries have adopted a form of it called "Civilian Based Defense" (CBD) as an official part of their national security strategy.

This school can also make a strong claim to having Jesus of Nazareth as one of its adherents. His lack of resistance from the time of his arrest to his crucifixion make him appear to be a Pacifist. Yet it was not so much the civil authorities, but his Father's plan that he was cooperating with. His open confrontation of religious authority throughout his ministry tends to place him in the nonviolent resistance school.

Adherents of nonviolent resistance are a minority, to be sure, but influential none the less. In the weeks leading up to the September 1994 decision on intervention in Haiti, many nonviolent resisters were already there, facing up to the national police in their own way. They had put their bodies on the line before -- in Bosnia, in the Middle East, in Selma, on the railroad tracks in front of the White Train, in front of abortion clinics, and at Kent State. Their position cannot be ignored.

**JUST WAR**

The dominant school of thought in the United States is the "Just War" school. It holds that war is morally permissible, but only under certain conditions.

Up until the time of Constantine, Christians refused to serve in the military. But as the church and Empire became allied, the church wrestled with the question of when it was moral to participate in combat, even kill an opponent.

Augustine developed the "Just War" criteria, later refined by Thomas Aquinas. The eight resulting criteria are still recognized by most Christian denominations as valid.

They are:

(1) Just cause;

(2) Competent authority;

(3) Right intention;

(4) Last resort;

(5) Probability of success;

(6) Proportionality of goals;

(7) Proportionality of means; and

(8) Discrimination.

For a war to be "just," all eight criteria must be satisfied. Both President G. H. W. Bush and President Bill Clinton referred to these criteria when ordering American troops into hostilities (both claiming, of course, that they were satisfied). I would now like to discuss each of these criteria in turn.

**(1) JUST CAUSE**

This criterion means that you have to be fighting on the right side. You can't be helping an aggressor gobble up his neighbor. You have to be on the side of the innocent victim (assuming there is one).

This criterion was satisfied for our participation in World War II, our intervention in Haiti, and perhaps for the 1991 Gulf War. It was probably violated in Vietnam and in El Salvador, where we were helping dictators fight against their own people. In many of our exploits, it was not satisfied, because there were no innocent parties.

**(2) COMPETENT AUTHORITY**

This criterion requires that armed conflict be authorized by the appropriate lawful authorities. This rules out vigilante actions even in a just cause. For individual Christians, this criterion is automatically satisfied when they are ordered into combat by the President after a Congressional Declaration of War.

**(3) RIGHT INTENTION**

This criterion is a more restrictive one following on from the first. If a war does not satisfy the first criterion (Just Cause), it cannot possibly satisfy this one. At the same time, not all Just Causes satisfy this criterion. Punishing an aggressor (revenge) or recovering stolen material possessions, for example, do not satisfy this criterion, even though the actions would be taken on behalf of an innocent victim. Even in a just cause, such intentions do not justify the violence of war. Protection of human rights or defense against actual or threatened actions against human life, on the other hand, may justify war. (It should be noted that use of this fact as justification for the killing of abortion doctors is invalid. For one obvious thing, the second criterion, competent authority, is violated.)

In Haiti, this criterion was clearly satisfied by the need to protect the human rights and the lives of the people. (I should point out that the same criterion would have justified us going to war in the 1980s against the Salvadoran government that we were providing with military aid.)

It should go without saying that going to war to protect the financial interests of multinational corporations, or to maintain a national economic advantage, or to otherwise play global power politics can never be just. In retrospect, perhaps Christians should have refused to participate in our wars against Vietnam, Nicaragua, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Afghanistan, Iraq, or in any other exercise of gunboat diplomacy. Why were so many of our churches silent at such times?

**(4) LAST RESORT**

This is usually one of the most difficult criteria to satisfy. It requires that military action not be taken until all peaceful alternatives to deter or reverse aggression have been exhausted.

Many of our military leaders agonized over this criterion with respect to the 1991 Gulf War. Some felt Saddam Hussein was looking for a face-saving way to capitulate, but could not respond to ultimatums and threats. It was clearly violated in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, since international inspections were ongoing, with full Iraqi cooperation.

**(5) PROBABILITY OF SUCCESS**

This criterion requires that there must be a sufficiently clear prospect of success to justify the human and other costs of engaging in war. In other words, it may be noble to sacrifice one's life in a futile attempt to save another's life. But it is not noble to sacrifice the lives of others (including one's enemies) in a war one has little prospect of winning.

It should be noted that this criterion cannot be blindly applied in isolation from the two which follow it. Certainly if one has the possibility of saving millions of lives by risking one life, then trying may be justified even if the odds against success are quite long.

**(6) PROPORTIONALITY OF GOALS**

This criterion requires that the goals to be achieved (good to be secured or evil to be prevented) outweigh the costs of the war. In performing this analysis, all costs are to be considered, including money, resources, human life, suffering, broken relationships, and energy.

One example of a war in violation of this criterion was the British war against Argentina over the Falkland Islands (or Malvinas). The goal was to enable British residents to hold onto their land on the Islands. For the monetary cost of conducting that brief war (never mind the human costs and lives lost), the British government could have resettled every resident of the Falklands. They could have each been given a better piece of land somewhere else, complete with a ten room mansion and a Rolls Royce in the garage. Then the islands could have been given peacefully back to Argentina.

When wars like this, costing more than they gain, are conducted (and then called victories), one suspects that other goals (like national pride and the personal popularity of political leaders) are involved. In that case, of course, the war violates the third criterion, right intention, because it is absolutely immoral to conduct a war for such goals.

**(7) PROPORTIONALITY OF MEANS**

This criterion requires that the bad effects of the military means used in conducting the war be outweighed by the evil prevented.

All the foregoing criteria have dealt with the decision to go to war. This one does too. But it also has something to say about the morality of the way you *conduct* the war. It is not permissible to wage war with means which cause more damage than they prevent. And if you cannot wage a successful war without the use of such means, then it is immoral to enter the war in the first place.

At the end of the 1991 Gulf War, American air strikes killed thousands of fleeing Iraqis in the infamous "turkey shoot" on the road to Basra. The only justification for this killing after the war's stated objectives had been met was to deny Saddam Hussein the use of those troops in the future. In retrospect, those air strikes would seem to have violated this criterion. If, however, that action had taken place in the context of the total liberation of Iraq, ensuring freedom and survival (and perhaps independence) for the Shi’ite Muslims in the South and the Kurds in the North, then it might have been justifiable.

So the same military means can be justifiable in one context and not in another. It all depends on the relative good to be achieved or evil to be prevented.

One military means for which it is difficult to conceive any justifying context is the nuclear weapon.

The only military use of nuclear weapons occurred at the end of world War II, when the U.S. bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. According to many historians, the U.S. knew that Japan was attempting to surrender. The only condition they had asked was the personal safety of the Emperor (something they were eventually granted anyway). If this was true, an invasion of Japan was unnecessary, and therefore, so was the bomb. All we had to do was accept the Japanese surrender. It is even possible that the atom bomb prolonged the war. There is some evidence that U.S. leaders had a hard time keeping the war going until the bombs were ready.

If the atomic bombings were necessary to save a million lives, then their use might have satisfied this criterion (but, as we shall see, not the next one). If, on the other hand, their use was really only to impress Joe Stalin with how powerful we were, then they violated not only this criterion, but the third one (right intention) as well.

**(8) DISCRIMINATION**

This oft-violated criterion requires that noncombatant immunity be preserved. The direct targeting of civilian populations has always been held by Christians to be immoral, and it still is.

In World War II, for the first time in history, civilian casualties exceeded those in the military. In each war since, it has gotten even worse. Two developments are primarily responsible for this trend -- aerial bombardment and weapons of mass destruction (nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons).

Aerial bombardment, even with "conventional" high-explosive weapons can be indiscriminate and therefore immoral. The carpet-bombing of cities, the use of incendiary bombs on Dresden and Osaka, and Germany's V-2 "buzz bomb" attacks on London were all indiscriminate and therefore in violation of this criterion. (Of course, the location of armaments factories in residential areas, as Hitler did in Dresden, is also immoral.) Sadly, the churches on neither side chose to speak out.

It goes without saying that the targeting of nuclear weapons against population centers is a clear violation of this criterion.

Because of the difficulties of conducting nuclear war without violating both the "proportionality of means" and "discrimination" criteria, many Christian churches have condemned the use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances. A few have even condemned their possession for the purpose of deterrence.

There are other weapons which run afoul of this criterion. One of them is the land mine. The estimated hundred million anti-personnel mines scattered throughout the world cannot discriminate between a soldier on patrol and an old woman gathering firewood. Their use violates the eighth "Just War" criterion.

**THE "JUST WAR" CRITERIA IN PERSPECTIVE**

We have just completed a brief discussion of the "Just War" theory subscribed to by the vast majority of Christian denominations. It is easy to see that if the above eight criteria were honestly applied by governments, nations would almost never go to war. And if they were honestly applied by our churches, the governments would find few Christians willing to fight in their wars.

In thinking about the "Just War" criteria, we must remember that they were designed as a very restrictive set of conditions defining the rare exception from the general rule. That general rule is that *war is immoral and Christians may not participate in it*. Bishop Lowell O. Erdahl (American Lutheran Church), in his wonderful book Pro-Life/ Pro-Peace, illustrates this point.

It was right for Schindler to lie to save Jews from extermination. It would be right to steal a gun from a would-be murderer. Involuntary servitude is allowable for convicted criminals. Those who survived a plane crash in the Andes were justified in eating the frozen flesh of those who died. But allowing these exceptions from the general rule is not the same as institutionalizing lying, stealing, slavery, and cannibalism as common and accepted practice. As Bishop Erdahl put it:

*"What is permissible, or even required, in exceptional circumstances need not, and often should not, become accepted practice. The exceptions may prove the rule, but they should not become the rule. When this happens, that which should be rare becomes regular, an aberration becomes acceptable, the exceptional becomes established and institutionalized."*

That is what has happened to war, abortion, mercy killing, and capital punishment. Instead of being rare and exceptional, they are becoming accepted as normal, inevitable, and even good. They are not.

**JUST WAR VS. NONVIOLENCE**

As Christians, we must decide for ourselves whether we believe in Just War theory or Nonviolent Resistance. (We are going to ignore the two fringe positions. Crusaders can be considered a tiny, intellectually dishonest subset of Just War Adherents, and Pacifists are a small subset of those committed to Nonviolence.)

Unfortunately, most of our churches have not been much help to us. Too often, our institutional churches have gone along with whatever the civil authorities wanted to do, whether it was Constantine's Roman Empire, Hitler's Germany, Lyndon Johnson's America, or even George W. Bush’s Amerika.

Many Christians believe that the faith was corrupted by becoming the official state religion of the Roman Empire. They believe that the "Just War" doctrine was a rationalization inconsistent with the faith of the apostles. Others believe that it was a necessary adjustment to a new reality -- never before had Christians had a government they could even consider fighting for.

It is indisputable that the apostles and all of the leaders of the early church rejected war and preached nonviolence. Justin, put to death in 165, said, "We refrain from making war on our enemies." and "(we) cannot bear to see a man killed — even if killed justly." Origen said, "We Christians no longer take up sword against nations." Clement, Cyprian, Tertullian, all of them rejected killing under any circumstances. If a soldier became a believer, he had to agree to leave the army in order to be baptized. For the first three centuries it was even forbidden to truthfully accuse a criminal of a capital offense. It was called "killing with words."

Just war advocates argue that these early Christians never had to deal with a Hitler. Those who believe in nonviolence counter that they *did* have to put up with the Roman emperors. Even when Jerusalem was destroyed by Rome in AD 70, the Christians in the city refused to fight against the pagan invaders. What’s more, most of Hitler’s followers were Christian. If *they* had practiced nonviolence, Hitler would have been no threat!

There is a strong scriptural basis for nonviolence in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). Psalm 33 says: *"A king is not saved by his mighty army. A warrior is not saved by his great strength. A warhorse is a vain hope for victory, and with its might it cannot save."*

Psalm 37 gives the prescription for national security as follows: *"Trust in the Lord and do good, that you may dwell in the land and have security."*

Indeed, most of the books of the Bible have the same message -- security comes from God, from trusting Him, and from obeying His covenant. The size of your army doesn't matter. Read Deborah, Esther, Daniel, any of them.

"Just War" adherents look at Psalms 33 and 37 and agree that security doesn't come from the size of your army, but from the size of your faith. But at the same time they point out that those in the Hebrew Scriptures who overcame overwhelming odds still had to have *some* army. Otherwise God couldn't have given it victory.

Advocates of nonviolence counter that in the Old Testament, Israel was only allowed to go to war when God told them to through the prophets. Every time one of their kings decided on his own to go to war, they lost. In helping Israel, God used his power to build the faith of his people and prepare them for the Messiah. Once Jesus came, the old relationship between God and his chosen people was superseded by a New Covenant in which the entire world is included.

Before Christ, God commanded his people to isolate themselves from the outside world so as not to be led astray by it. But now, God commands us to go out into the world and convert it — not with the sword, but with the cross.

God doesn’t order us into war any more because all people now share his covenant and because he has equipped us with the power to overcome evil with good, through his Spirit, his Word, and his love.

**A POINT OF AGREEMENT**

Christians of all schools agree that it is immoral to participate in an unjust war. You don't have to be a pacifist to recognize the immorality of going to war in an unjust cause. That's why there have been so many conscientious objectors (C.O.s) who are not pacifists. Yet our government does not recognize the right of individuals to make this judgment. The U.S. government only recognizes *pacifist* C.O.s. To gain official C.O. status, one must claim religious opposition to *all* wars. This is a violation of the religious freedom of Christians who adhere to the "Just War" school of thought. (It is also a violation of the Nuremberg principles developed by this country after World War II.) All Christians must insist on recognition of selective conscientious objector status.

**WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?**

As a career military officer, I find that the "Just War" criteria make a lot of sense. But as a follower of the gentle Jesus of Nazareth, as one trying haltingly to follow in his footsteps, I find it all rather legalistic and unsatisfying.

Harry Emerson Fosdick put it this way:

*"Christendom marches into war after war, taking Christ along on both sides of the battle line, and the Christians sing with exalted spirit, 'As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free.' In the interest of intellectual clarity, if nothing else, I should like to set the record straight. That typical war song of Christendom, dragging Christ to battle, must read like this: As he died to make men holy, let us kill to make men free. Alas, that spoils the song. We cannot sing it that way. We cannot easily fit Jesus into it."*

Fosdick knew what war was about -- killing. We in the military are often told, "Your job is not to die for your country. Your job is to make the other poor bastard die for *his* country." And that is my problem with war. It is about killing. I take "Thou shalt not kill" a little more literally now. Why? Because I think Jesus does. I have come to judge the rightness of actions by imagining what Jesus would do. And I cannot imagine Jesus doing the killing.

For me, making moral judgments has become more than listening to what the church has taught over the last two thousand years. It is more than searching for scriptural passages supporting a particular view. It is nothing less than getting to know the mind of Jesus by meeting him in the Gospels, by meeting him in the sacraments, and by meeting him in people like Phil Berrigan and Tom Gumbleton.

That's what church is all about. We meet Jesus in each other. The more we imitate Christ, the more we help others meet Jesus through us. That is our real mission -- to be Jesus to each other. For this one Christian, at least, this mission is not consistent with making war.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY**

It should be obvious that if the U.S. government had seriously considered and followed the Just War Criteria (never mind “nonviolence”), we would not have engaged in war at all in at least the last sixty years.

The next question is then, “So what?” The United States is not a “Christian” nation. We are a secular state encompassing people of many faiths and none at all. Why then should it be concerned about a set of criteria developed by the Christian church some 1700 years ago?

Well, in the first place, a majority of our citizens do consider themselves Christian. And in the second place, the concepts in the Just War Criteria are not peculiarly Christian. They have roots in both Judaism and the Muslim faith, echoing basic moral principles from both the Old Testament and the Koran. In addition, most other Americans (Unitarians, Hindus, Buddhists, secular Humanists, Native Americans, Wiccans, etc.) lean more to the nonviolence side than the Just War side. In truth, if American citizens were polled on each of the eight Just War criteria, they would all pass by overwhelming margins based solely on practical considerations. They would vote to put reasonable limits on the war-making ability of the government.

Of course, there are already some reasonable limits in place – those imposed by the Constitution, international law, and the treaties we are signatory to.

**THE CONSTITUTION, INTERNATIONAL LAW, AND TREATIES**

The Constitution does not allow the Executive Branch of government to go to war without a Declaration of War from Congress. Such a Declaration has not happened since World War II. Nevertheless, the United States has bombed, invaded, and otherwise gone to war against the following countries since the end of WW II: China (1945-46), Korea (1950-53), China (1950-53), Guatemala (1954), Indonesia (1958), Cuba (1959-60), Guatemala (1960) Congo (1964), Peru (1965), Laos (1964-73), Vietnam (1961-74), Cambodia (1969-70), Guatemala (1967-69), Libya (1986) Grenada (1983), El Salvador (1980s), Nicaragua (1980s), Panama (1989), Iraq (1991-2009), Sudan (1998), Afghanistan (1998-2009) Yugoslavia (1999). Colman McCarthy asks the following question about this list: In how many of these countries did a democratic government, respectful of human rights, occur as a direct result of the US killing spree? The answer is none, zip, nada, goose-egg. I would ask some additional questions about the nations on this list: How many had attacked the United States? How many posed a credible threat to attack the US? In how many of these cases were even one or two of the Just War criteria satisfied? How many of these military adventures benefited the American people as a whole? Again, the answer in every case is the same: none, zip, nada, goose-egg.

The United Nations Charter allows war only in self-defense. And the UN Charter has Treaty status, meaning that it is equivalent to the Constitution itself. In how many of the above cases was the US acting in self defense? You guessed it: none, zip, nada.

International law prohibits the indiscriminate killing of civilians (such as by land mines, cluster bombs, and depleted uranium), the use or threat of use of weapons of mass destruction (such as nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons), and the mistreatment or torture of prisoners. How many of these prohibitions has the U.S. abided by in its recent conflicts? Not a one.

Does anyone possibly see a pattern here? The truth is that even without enshrining the Just War principles (much less non-violence) into law, we already have a legal framework which should have prevented all these immoral, illegal acts of war from taking place. But they happened anyway. How? Why?

The truth is that our Representatives in Congress looked the other way and allowed rogue presidents to take us to war on behalf of “American interests” around the world. It turns out, of course, that these “interests” are not my interests or your interests. They are the global financial interests of multinational corporations and investors. Our sons and daughters have been turned into hired killers for the United Fruit Company, Folgers, Bechtel, Halliburton, Exxon, Chiquita Banana, David Rockefeller, and the Rothschilds. Such wars, of course, automatically flunk the first four criteria of the Just War Principles, as well as the Constitution and international law. They do not promote the common defense and the general welfare. In fact they damage our reputation, endanger our national security, mortgage our future, sacrifice our children, and should *NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN*!

Congress’ power to declare war (or not) should protect us from such corporate wars, but it has not, because its members no longer serve us. They serve themselves and the big money interests they are indebted to.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR “WE THE PEOPLE”**

If a future government tries to do it to us again, we must rise up as one and say, “NO!” And every minister, rabbi, priest, and imam in the country should tell their people that participation in such a war is immoral and a violation of the Nuremberg Principles, the Constitution, the UN Charter, international law, … AND the Just War Principles. Every Chaplain in the Armed Forces should counsel their flock that they are duty-bound to refuse to take up arms in such a venture! Every commander in the military should refuse to carry out orders to engage in battle without a Declaration of War which declares that all eight of the Just War criteria are and will continue to be satisfied. And the Congress should refuse to pass a Declaration of War without such a Just War declaration and without an estimate of the cost of the war and a plan for how to pay for it.

We the People are not just cannon fodder for the wealthy elite and their hirelings in government. We are sovereign! And we should start acting like it. But the probability is that we won’t … UNLESS our churches start doing their duty.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHURCHES**

As the world lurches from crisis to crisis and from war to war, we tend to hold powerful forces -- governments and multinational corporations -- responsible. But for those of us in the Church, it is appropriate for us to examine our own culpability. We have all too often cooperated and colluded with these forces, and have failed our parishioners by diluting and distorting the message of Jesus we are commissioned to preach.

In our secular society, the government doesn’t interfere with the churches, and the churches don’t interfere with government. As long as they maintain 501c(3) status, churches may not speak out for or against specific candidates for office or specific pieces of legislation. But there is no prohibition on churches speaking out on ISSUES. Among the issues churches should be most vocal on is that of making war.

The big thing among Christians these days is WWJD (What Would Jesus Do?). They wear WWJD bracelets, necklaces, you name it. The problem is that many of them don't have a clue what Jesus would really do, because their churches don't teach them about Jesus. Jesus is almost completely missing from much of Christianity. The churches worship an ethereal risen Christ, but ignore the flesh-and-blood Jesus. Jesus was a first-century Jew in Roman-occupied Palestine. With his parables, he challenged the domination system of imperial Rome and its client kings and temple lackeys. He exposed the injustices of the empire/temple system, and made enemies of both the Romans and the Pharisees. In parables he warned of the futility of violent revolution. In the sermon on the mount he gave the people practical ways to employ nonviolent resistance. He taught them to stand upright and defiantly "turn the other cheek" instead of groveling in the dust. He advised them to "go the second mile," knowing that it was illegal for Roman soldiers to conscript someone to carry their pack for more than a mile. And he turned the old ways upside down with his counsel to "love your enemies" and "do good to those who persecute you."

But Jesus didn't just preach nonviolence. He lived it, all the way to the cross. He showed us a nonviolent, all-loving, infinitely-merciful God -- a God not at all like the jealous, scorekeeping, vengeful God too often portrayed in the Jewish scriptures. Yes, Jesus was a revolutionary -- but his revolution wasn't against Roman rule, but against the distorted image of God held by the people. He also drastically altered our understanding of how God wants us to act. God, it turns out, wants us to act like Jesus. He wants us to speak out against and nonviolently resist the exploitative, imperial powers of our day. (That means the oil companies and other global robber barons, as well as their hirelings in the U.S. government.) He wants us to promote the cause of widows and orphans, the poor and the outcast, the alienated and the victims of discrimination. He wants us on the side of single mothers, gays, Arabs -- all the tax collectors, lepers, and Samaritans of today. Above all, He wants us to forego violence even in self-defense.

The early Church understood that. Christians were forbidden to be in the Army, to participate in capital punishment, even to testify against one accused of a capital offense. Their active nonviolent non-cooperation with Caesar resulted in their being persecuted and outlawed. The roots of the early Church were watered with the blood of its martyrs.

Then came Constantine. Christians came out of the catacombs and into the palaces. By so doing, they gave up their nonviolence, their independence, and their way. Instead of following Jesus, they began following Caesar. Oh, they came up with elaborate rationalizations for their actions. They invented the "Just War Theory" to justify taking up the sword for the emperor. And for the last 1600 years or so, most Christian churches and their hierarchies have advised young Christians to go to war for whatever is the latest adventure of Caesar, whether he is called Napoleon, Adolf Hitler, Bill Clinton, or George Bush (with whatever middle initials). Tens of millions of Christians have died in these wars. What's worse, tens of millions have *killed*. Christian chaplains blessed Christian crews as they left to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Is this what Jesus would have done? Of course not!

As a confused but obedient Roman Catholic, I flew 101 combat missions in Vietnam. Knowing what I know now, I would not do it again. Why was there no chaplain to ask me what Jesus would do? Why was there no bishops' conference to speak out against the war? Why was there no pope to declare participation in all warfare(or at least the Vietnam War) to be sinful? Why even today are the only Catholics truly following Jesus the handful in Pax Christi and Call To Action and the Catholic Worker houses around the country? Why does the Church not speak out against the phony War on Terrorism and its applications in Afghanistan and Iraq? (Actually, Pope John Paul II DID speak out, condemning the war against Iraq as unjust and immoral; but the bishops and clergy ignored him.)

In the United States, only the traditional peace churches are opposing Caesar, and they're small enough to be ignored by the government. But what would happen if a really big and influential church became a peace church? What if the Roman Catholic Church did so? Would the Episcopalians, Lutherans, and Methodists be far behind? (The Baptists might take a little longer.) What if Christians throughout the armed services demanded non-combat service? What if no Christians volunteered or registered for the draft?

What *might* happen is that wars would stop. After all, how many wars can be fought without Christians? Oh, we might lose our tax exemptions and our favored treatment. We might even be persecuted again. If so, so be it. **It's better for us to follow Jesus in the catacombs than to betray him in the halls of power.**

What might also happen is that our government would be unable to protect our property and maintain the affluence gap between us and the developing world. They might not be able to protect our right as Americans to consume eight times our share of the world's resources. Giving up violence means giving up the fruits of violence. We must be prepared for that. (What would Jesus do?)

In the early 80s a Roman Catholic bishop said, "Just war? What just war? No such thing exists. But we must not tell this to the people." The late John L. McKenzie said, "The statement of the renunciation of violence is clear enough. Christians have never questioned either that Jesus said it or that it admits no qualification. Christians have simply decided they cannot live according to these sayings of Jesus. … If the Roman Catholic Church were to decide to join the Mennonites in refusing violence, I doubt whether our harmonious relations with the government would endure the day after the decision."

In one of his many essays against the Church's support for warfare, Emmanuel Charles McCarthy said, "There are just some activities that there are no Christ-like ways of doing. A house of prostitution can be filled with statues, icons, incense, bells, piped in Gregorian chant, a theological library and a chapel but that does not make prostitution an act in conformity with the teachings of Jesus Christ. Nor would the presence of a chaplain. … The ultimate norm of Christian life has to be Jesus, His words and deeds -- and if He is not the standard … who or what is? Plato? Aristotle? Hugh Hefner? NBC? FOX?" He went on to conclude, "All attempts today to justify violence from the life of Jesus or His teachings are devoid of spiritual and intellectual merit. … If a person does not wish to truthfully tell the story of Jesus, then why be ordained? Are the allurements of a secure income, status, power, and social acceptance so magnetic that they can seduce a Christian leader into falsifying a teaching of Jesus in order to obtain them or retain them?"

The conclusion we must reach is that when we emerged from the catacombs and embraced Constantine's offer of secular power, prestige, and protection, we Christians prostituted ourselves. Fortunately, we can still go back! We can rescue the nonviolent Jesus from obscurity and restore the heritage of the early Church -- the “pre-Roman” Catholic Church, if you will. We can spread the true message of the real Jesus through today's equivalent of the catacombs -- the internet and NCR. I call on pastors of *all* denominations to declare their parishes to be "peace churches" and to email me at [bob@thepatriots.us](mailto:bob@thepatriots.us) and tell me you’ve done so. I call on bishops to start preaching the nonviolent Jesus and do the same for their dioceses. I plead with conferences of bishops to have the backbone to oppose Caesar. And I pray that the current Pope, whose predecessors have spoken so eloquently (but quietly) about peace, takes that one final step to sever the Church's dependence on secular powers. Back to the catacombs!

To those Christian pastors who just cannot accept nonviolence, *AT LEAST* explain the Just War principles to your people and tell them that participation in any war not satisfying them is sinful and immoral. Any shot fired in such a conflict is another nail driven into the Body of Jesus! If you can’t honestly and forcefully tell your people that, please ***put down your Bible, take off your collar, and get an honest job!*** Do I hear an Amen??

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