

process, we risk turning even more people against us, recruiting more suicide bombers for Al-Qaeda. The one who lives by the sword, will die by the sword.

5: Jesus said “take up your cross and follow me”

In the New Testament, the cross is held as the ultimate triumph over evil and death, the hope of new life, and the model for our lives and for how we respond to our enemies. The cross breaks the cycle of violence, and shows that true peace is achieved not by becoming like our enemies and using their methods, but overcoming them with love. Some people say that, in a violent world, the church must, regrettably, resort to violence as the only way to deal with evil people. This is to deny the core of the Christian faith, and suggest that Jesus’ teachings don’t work in the ‘real world.’ On the contrary, the cross shows us what reality *really* looks like, and that we can overcome evil with goodness, not more evil. Ghandhi (who studied the life of Jesus and tried to apply his teachings) and Martin Luther King dared to take that seriously; the world is in need of that message again today.

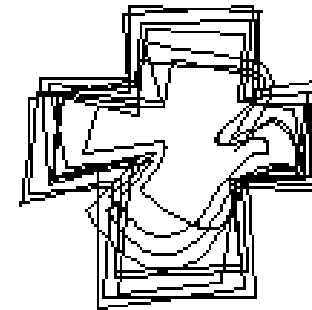
6: Jesus said, “seek first the Kingdom of God”

As citizens of the ‘kingdom of God’, Christians must always identify first with that international ‘kingdom’ of peacemakers, rather than with whichever transient nation-state we happen to be residing in as ‘strangers and pilgrims’. We conclude this pamphlet with the words of American theology professor Gerald Schlabach writing about the Iraq crisis: “If Christians in the United States are confused about who our leader is and whether we ought to close ranks in support of President Bush, it is probably because we are also confused about our citizenship. If our first loyalty is to Christ, the appropriate way to express it is by identifying with the entire body of Christ- the nation called church that spreads across borders and around the globe... Iraqi Christians will die from bombs ostensibly targeted at the Saddam Hussein regime. Pakistani Christians are already under attack because Christianity is identified with U.S. policies. The least that American Christians can do is factor in loyalty to fellow Christians around the globe as we determine our stance to leaders named Bush, Hussein- and Jesus.”

Written by Nick Megoran (nwm20@cam.ac.uk) for Cambridge Christians for Peace.

(You are welcome to copy and distribute this pamphlet)

WHY ARE CHRISTIANS OPPOSING WAR ON IRAQ?



Across the world this evening, Christians are joining people of all faiths and none in silent, candlelit vigils opposing war on Iraq. This has been supported by many Christian leaders including Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Robert Edgar, General Secretary of the US National Council of Churches. The United Methodist Church of the USA, the denomination to which George W. Bush and Dick Cheney belong, has strongly opposed an attack on Iraq, saying that “war is incompatible with the teaching and example of Christ.”

Why is this? Turn the page to find out more...

JUST WAR THEORY (JWT)

The opposition to an Iraq war on the part of many religious leaders is based upon the strict tenets of 'Just War Theory', a body of thought developed by the Catholic Church that establishes criteria by which the rightness of a war may be judged. Chief amongst these are:

(1) Just Cause, 'a defence against violent aggression'. Iraq has neither attacked nor threatened the US or the UK. Many states (including Western allies such as Israel, Morocco, and Turkey) are in breach of far greater and more serious resolutions than Iraq, but have not been threatened with violent retribution by the UN.

(2) Just Intention, 'the only just intention is to restore peace'. Thomas Woodrow, until recently a senior analyst at the US government's Defence Intelligence Agency, openly advocates war on Iraq as a "marvellous opportunity" to control oil supplies. Addressing the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in February, Colin Powell testified that a war with Iraq would "fundamentally reshape that region in a powerful, positive way that will enhance U.S. interests". This is not a 'just intention.'

On the basis of JWT, religious leaders from the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury to Thomas Burns, Bishop of the Armed Forces, have not been convinced that a war on Iraq is just.

NON-VIOLENCE

However, JWT goes uncomfortably with the teaching and life of Jesus. With his country under Roman military occupation, Jesus taught his followers to love, not kill, their enemies. True to this, the early church was, for many centuries, staunchly opposed to war and violence. JWT was a much later idea, grafted onto the church as it attempted to gain more political power- power it went on to shamefully misuse in the Crusades and countless wars since.

Today, Christians from many backgrounds are increasingly concluding that the position of the early church may be a more authentic interpretation of scripture. Indeed, Konrad Raiser, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, recently called on Christians to abandon JWT in favour of the early church's non-violence.

Advocates of this position reject the idea that the teachings of Jesus were intended only for private use, but insist that they can also guide people in living in the real world. But consider how they might be applied to the Iraq crisis:

1: Jesus said, "Let the one without sin cast the first stone"

Before the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the US and the UK backed Saddam Hussein to the hilt, spending billions in taxpayers money to provide him with finance and arms to bolster his unpopular rule. We did this, knowing he had breached the UN charter by invading Iran. We provided him with chemical weapons, knowing he was using them on Iranian forces and his own people, and even shielded him from international criticism. In fact, even though his appalling human rights abuses were known, Donald Rumsfeld personally travelled to Baghdad to promote good relations with Saddam- when it suited our oil interests in the region.

The West currently backs some of the world's most oppressive regimes, from the dictatorships of Turkmenistan and Saudi Arabia, to the war lords and drugs barons of Afghanistan and Colombia. Let the one without sin cast the first stone, and put our own house in order!

2: Jesus said, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him."

In the 1991 Gulf War, the US and Britain targeted water purification plants, destroying the ability of the state to provide clean water for its people. Of course, typhoid and other diseases broke out quickly. However, since 1991, the UK and US have refused to allow Iraq to import the chemicals it needs to purify water. UN estimates say that more than *one million* Iraqis have died as a result of these sanctions. Would Jesus have us do this to our enemies?

3: Jesus said, "love your enemies"

In their ongoing conflicts with Iraq and Al-Qaeda, Britain and America demonise their opponents as irremediably evil, impossible to negotiate with, and worthy only of destruction. Jesus and the Apostles taught us that our enemies (in their case, the Roman army) were not to be hated and killed, but to be loved, and seen as potential members of the 'kingdom'- God's statement to the world about what an alternative society, his new humanity, a global community of peace that transcends ethnic and national boundaries, will look like. He said we should do this, "that we may be children of our father in heaven", who showers his love and mercy on us, even though we have so often made ourselves the enemies of *his* goodness.

4: Jesus said, "the one who lives by the sword, will die by the sword"

Al-Qaeda (the group that attacked the US in September 2001) was a cynical CIA creation in the 1980s, trained and equipped to commit terrorist acts against the Soviet Union during the Afghanistan war. America is terrified of weapons in Iraq that it provided. As we fight monsters of our own making, we reap what we sow, and show no inclination whatever to change policies. On the contrary, as our governments set up and arm new dictators, and cull third world populations in the