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## THE ANGLICAN CHURCH AND WAR

### Supremacy of conscience

The Anglican Church will not specify a single response to war. The reason is that Christ does not expressly reject the vocation of soldier for his disciples.

The gospels do however contain references to love of enemies and give many accounts of Christ healing the suffering. These passages convict some Christians not to fight in any war.

Their decision to obey conscience is always upheld by the Church. Nevertheless the official teaching of the Anglican Church on war, contained in Article thirty-seven, is that it is lawful for Christians to participate in a "just" war. (2)

### Lambeth Conference Resolutions

It is illuminating to examine the changes to the majority position reflected in the Lambeth Conference resolutions on 'war and violence'. These reveal a growing uneasiness about Christian participation in war.

In the 1930 Resolution the Statement reads, 'War, as a method of settling international disputes, is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ.' It continues, 'We do not deny the right of .... a nation to defend itself if attacked, or to resort to force in fulfilment of international obligations.'

This view corresponds with that of International Law which has come to condemn all aggressive wars. Now the only accepted justification for the use of force in international affairs is that of self-defence.

For most people the resort to force in self-defence is reasonable. While the majority teaching in the Church still does not seriously contest this for individual its application to a war situation has become increasingly problematic.

The difficulty arises in the problem of identifying the enemy in certain wars and in deciding who is acting in self-defence. This is especially difficult in civil war situations.

Another factor contributing to the uneasiness of Christians participating in war is the character of modern warfare. This is indiscriminate in its killing of the innocent on both sides.

These reservations are reflected in the 1978 Lambeth Conference Resolution. It reads, '... Christians in the past have differed in their understanding of limits to the rightful use of force in human affairs, and that questions of national relationships and social justice are often complex ones.'

### Pondering the mind of Christ

The different emphases in the two resolutions reveal that at least the Anglican Church is still pondering the mind of Christ on war. While it could be held that the Church continues to speak with a divided voice on war, with the majority voice still accepting Christian participation in a defensive war, the minority voice urging Christian pacifism is becoming increasingly heard.

Every Lambeth Conference the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship petitions the assembled bishops with the slogan, "The Year of Decision", hoping that year the pacific witness of the early Church will be re-instated in the Anglican Communion. The charter of the Fellowship reads :-

"We, communicant members of the Church of England, or of a Church in full communion with it, believing that our membership of the Christian Church involves the complete repudiation of modern war, pledge ourselves to renounce war and all preparation to wage war, and to work for the construction of Christian peace in the world."

#### Ambivalent teaching

Meanwhile the Church finds itself supporting different and sometimes contradictory responses to armed conflict. In South Africa Christians are supported in their decisions of conscience when they are prepared to defend or oppose with violence what the Church condemns as an unjust and discriminatory society. Other Christians are supported in their decision to become conscientious objectors.

In commenting on the ethics supporting decisions taken by Christians in South Africa, Fr. Oswil Magrath (R.C.) states 'All the possible stances .... seem to be capable of reasonable ethical grounding, showing that such a decision is not unreasonable nor demonstrably wrong.' (3)

This allows for all the stances stated above depending on

- (1) whether the individual believes that Christ's teaching will permit his fighting in certain wars, and
- (2) the individual's interpretation of what constitutes a "just war".

For this reason support of a particular stance cannot purport to reflect on the moral decisions of others. This can be put more positively in that the ambivalent teaching of the Church will ensure that Christians will be found occupying many different and opposing roles in armed conflict.

# Enemies of the State

Caesar and Christ have always made conflicting demands on the obedience of Christian citizens. We describe here the example of two individual Christians who saw submission to the claims of the war-making State as a violation of their Christian beliefs and principles.

On March 12th, 295 A.D., having attained the age of 21, Maximilian was called up for military service and in the company of his father reported at Theveste in Numidia before the Proconsul Cassius Dio. The Proconsul began the interrogation by asking Maximilian his name.

**Maximilian:** Why do you ask my name? I cannot be a soldier for I am a Christian.

**Proconsul:** (ignoring the reply and addressing his assistants) Inspect him medically and measure him.

**M.:** I tell you I cannot be a soldier; I cannot do evil; I am a Christian.

**P.:** (to his assistants) Measure him I tell you. (This being done, it was found that Maximilian's height was five feet ten inches)

**P.:** Mark him. (A Roman conscript upon being found acceptable for service was branded with a red hot iron with the initial of the reigning emperor, and a leaden seal carrying the imperial effigy was hung around his neck.)

**M.:** I cannot be a soldier.

**F.:** Be a soldier or die.

**M.:** I cannot be a soldier. Cut off my head; I cannot be a soldier of this world. I must serve only under my God.

**P.:** Who has given you these ideas?

**M.:** My soul and He who has called me.

**F.:** Accept the seal.

**M.:** I will not accept it. I already have the seal of Christ, my God.

**P.:** You young fool. I will send you straight to your Christ.

**M.:** Do it immediately. It will be my glory.

**F.:** Mark him.

**M.:** I will not receive the seal of the world. If you put it around my neck I will break it, for I put no value on it. I am a Christian...

**P.:** There are Christian soldiers and they are not afraid to fight.

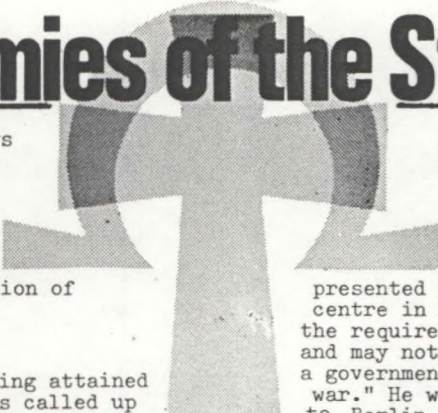
**M.:** They do what they think is right. As far as I am concerned I am a Christian and cannot do evil.

**P.:** Do you say that those who fight in our armies do evil therefore?

**M.:** You know what they do.

The Proconsul Cassius Dio thereupon pronounced sentence, "Maximilian, since with disloyal spirit you have refused military service you will be punished as an example to others, by the sword."

Maximilian's reply was brief, "Deo gratias."



little village of St. Rudegund in Upper Austria, was called to active service in the army of the Third Reich. Jägerstätter left his young wife and three small children on their farm,

presented himself at the induction centre in Linz, and refused to take the required military oath. "I cannot and may not take an oath in favour of a government that is fighting an unjust war." He was imprisoned in Linz, sent to Berlin, tried by a military court and found guilty of seeking to "undermine the military effectiveness of the German people". On August 9th 1943 A.D. Franz Jägerstätter was beheaded as "an enemy of the state".

For Franz was a fervent Catholic who saw his stand as the political implementation of his desire to be a perfect Christian. Yet his views were objected to not only by the army and the state, but also by his fellow Catholics and clergy. When Jägerstätter stood up to be counted, he stood alone, His parish priest, his bishop, and his prison chaplains, all tried to persuade him to drop his protest as "futile". His Church advised him to obey the lawful authority, to which he replied: "I cannot turn the responsibility for my action over to the Fuhrer"; he was reminded of the thousands of Catholics, including many priests, who were fighting in Hitler's armies, and was told not to be "more Catholic than the Church." About these people Jägerstätter said they "have not received the grace" to see things as he did. When told of his responsibilities to his family he simply answered: "I will not co-operate in an unjust war. If I must die, God will certainly take care of my wife and children".

The Bishop of Linz recognises the consistency of Jägerstätter's conclusions, yet calls his example: "a completely exceptional case, one more to be marvelled at than copied." This same bishop several times prevented publication of articles about Jägerstätter on the grounds that it might "create confusion and disturb consciences." His final comment on the matter is: "I consider the greater heroes to be those exemplary young Catholic men, seminarians, priests and heads of families who fought and died in heroic fulfilment of duty and in the firm conviction that they were fulfilling the will of God". "These heroes," the bishop declares, "conducted themselves consistently in the light of a clear and correct conscience."

How many other Germans would have been willing to become enemies of the state, if given a lead by their religious superior?'



In February 1943 A.D., Franz Jägerstätter, a humble peasant from the

**John Careswell**

# Christianity, conscience and country

THE hazards of emotional thinking seem to me particularly evident in the current controversy relating to Christianity, Conscientious Objection, and the defence of our country. Now I do not pretend to have 20:20 vision on this issue, but herewith several Biblical principles to consider.

● **All Men Are Sinners:** The Bible says, and experience confirms, that "all have sinned and, come short of the Glory of God." (Romans 3:23). There is a solidarity in sin which no one dare ignore. The Black man is a sinner, so is the White man. As there is Right Wing sin, so there is Left Wing sin. There is political sin and ecclesiastical sin. All of us need the grace of God, oppressor and oppressed, those

who protest, and those at whom protest is directed.

● **All Men Are Equal in Value:** If as sinners there is an equality of need at the foot of the cross, there is also an equality of stature and value. God has not created some men more valuable than others, let alone White men. Indeed, "In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek." (Galatians 3:23). Systems of discrimination and attitudes of prejudice are, therefore, not only wrong, but dangerous and under the judgment of God.

● **All Men Sow What They Reap:** This principle is articulated both in the Old Testament (Job 4:8; Hosea 8:7) and in the New (Galatians 6:7). If Whites sow injustice, they will later reap at the receiving end of in-

## Window on the Word . . . by Michael Cassidy

justice. If, in retaliation, the Blacks sow violence, they will likewise reap White violence in retaliation. This is what Jacques Ellul calls the law of reciprocity. Those backing armed violence on our borders must not be surprised if they reap armed violence as the countries concerned defend themselves. I believe the

have both the right and duty to do.

● **All Men Must Follow Their Consciences:** Jesus said: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Matthew 22:21). Exactly how this is to be worked out, Jesus seems to have left to the individual conscience. A Christian is to be an obedient citizen within the State (Romans 13:1) without compromising what he considers his duty to God.

While irresponsible encouragement of indiscriminate Conscientious Objection would be deplorable, and if the Church does this it deserves the society's wrath, yet it must also be said that "My country, right or wrong" has never been and never could be of the Christi-

an's creed. Church and State must both protect the individual's right to follow his conscience in integrity, while also encouraging in him a proper patriotism under God.

● **All Men Need Christ's Love and Wisdom:** Those who lead and those who follow need wisdom to grasp Christ's Calvary love as both the message and the method, both the end and the means to the end. He is the way, as well as the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). May we all therefore, leaders and led, work for parity of opportunity and dignity, pray for clarity of vision and thought, and strive for charity of word and deed.

# THE JUST WAR AND CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

## Peter Moll

The intensifying war situation in South Africa poses difficult questions for Christians. Some want to know whether Christians can ever go to war, and if so, how killing can be reconciled with "thou shalt not kill" and "Love one another, as I have loved you". Others want to know where the dividing line is between a war that is permissible for Christians and a war that Christians should obviously not participate in, like Hitler's war of aggression in Western Europe. Just war theory can supply criteria to help us answer these questions.

How did just war theory arise? The early church believed that, in accordance with the New Testament's emphasis on brotherly love and "going the second mile", they should not engage in killing. Of course there were other motives as well for not being in the army, like the practice of idolatrous sacrifice by officers; but in the opinion of many scholars (e.g. Bainton) the primary reason was the desire of the early Christians not to do anyone any harm. Thus Tertullian wrote, "The Lord in disarming Peter, unbelted every soldier". Some were even martyred for their refusal to fight. So when German tribes in the north threatened to destroy the Roman empire and the church with it, the church faced a dilemma. Should Christians stick to their traditional pacifism and leave the Empire in the lurch? or should Christians modify their principles and fight?

St Augustine's solution was as simple as it was revolutionary: to separate motives from actions. Thus one could love one's enemies (motive) while at the same time killing them (action). And so the concept of the just war began. Gradually Christians modified their views about the unacceptability of warfare and became convinced that they should defend the Empire because of its moral superiority over the German hordes that were seeking to overrun it. Indeed it is hard to think that they could adopt any other view of the defence of the Empire once prominent churchman like Eusebius had declared that the Empire was the arrival of the Millennium. And so Anselm and Augustine and other church leaders pro-

ceeded to develop criteria for distinguishing between just wars and unjust, which we shall discuss presently.

The way in which just war theory originated deserves careful reflection. The "original just war question", to use Johnson's phrase, was: How can the Christian justify going to war at all? The early Christians did not try to figure out how to justify conscientious objection. Rather they were anguished about the prior question of how any Christian could justify participation in war in the first place.

Thus when we think about the ethics of war we should before all else answer the "original just war question". Every Christian ought to consider whether he or she can justify killing in war, despite the reconciling and caring ministry of Jesus and the unbroken strand of New Testament teaching about loving all people including one's enemies. If we are unable to justify killing in terms of our principles of loving, caring and reconciling, then we are pacifists and the rest of this essay is irrelevant to us. If we are not pacifists then we owe ourselves a moral justification for our stance. We need to get our priorities straight on this matter. Church history shows that it is not the conscientious objectors or the pacifists who need to justify their position. After all, peace needs no justification. Rather it is the person who kills who needs justification.

It follows that it is in a sense ludicrous that a Christian be required to go before a Board of Religious Objection and there justify his position as a conscientious objector - before other Christians! If anyone needs justification it is those venerable gentlemen who claim the competence to judge the conscience of others.

Even after adopting the principle that some wars may be just, the church was troubled by a bad conscience about killing. For centuries it continued to insist that soldiers who killed - even in a just war - should do penance and abstain from Mass for a period. We are reminded of King David whom God did not allow to build the Temple, because he had "blood on his hands".

What constituted a just war? Theologians like Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin, and secular jurists like Grotius put their minds to the question. I shall mention the most important criteria they laid down to justify resort to the ultimate means of terror - war.

First, the war must be waged by a legitimate authority. This was intended to exclude private wars and private armies. After all, an individual can resort to the courts for redress.

Second, the war must have a just cause, e.g. if the state has been done a grave injustice which could not be avenged in any other way. Defence and recovery of property were just causes while the desire for richer land and the desire to rule over other peoples were not.

Third, there should be a reasonable hope of victory. War is so monstrously evil that it would be immoral to wage a war without assurance of victory.

Fourth, all peaceful means should first have been exhausted before going to war. War should thus be the last resort.

Fifth, the war must be waged justly. This implied a rule of proportionality, viz. no more violence should be used than necessary. It also implied discrimination, viz. the army should discriminate between soldiers and noncombatants and not attack the latter. The killing of the innocent was always illicit.

Together these rules were intended to form a basis for the state, the church, and the individual to consider whether a war was just. This did not mean that a 'just war' became a 'good war'. The theologians and jurists were strongly aware of the horror and senselessness of war - that war is in a sense the ultimate form of injustice. Johnson prefers the term "justifiable war" to remind us that war remains evil even when it is justifiable to resort to it in order to avoid yet greater evils.

I am not suggesting that we mechanically take up these five rules of warfare and apply them in the contemporary scene -

*Conscientious objection*

# SACC man's view

Daily News Pietermaritzburg Bureau

**CONSCIENTIOUS** objection was not merely a matter of refusing to defend the borders of South Africa, Mr John Rees, secretary of the South African Council of Churches said here last night.

In reply to questions from many of the more than 200 people at the Metropolitan Methodist Hall Mr Rees said: "The question of conscientious objection is a moral, personal one and immediately raises the questions of why people are coming to the borders, and who they are.

"The answer is not a simplistic, Communist-inspired band of people — though I am aware of their influence. The majority of the men are nationals. At the Ham-manskraal conference ten of the delegates had sons who had left to go to the other side of the border," he said.

"There are many forms of violence. In this country there is an inherent violence in the structures and fabric of our society, as can be seen by those people in Soweto who are eating only once every two days" Mr Rees said.

"When a Black priest

ample, one of them was endorsed out ... that is violence.

"Some of the people on the other side of the border believe that what they are exercising is not the initiative of violence but counter-violence to the structures here which deny the African basic dignity" he said.

As a response as to why the nationals are at the border, Mr Rees said: "We must ask what we are doing in this country, not to build up massive arsenals, but to bring about peaceful change."

# CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION

The Lord will wield authority over the nations and adjudicate between many peoples; these will hammer their swords into ploughshares, their spears into sickles.

Nation will not lift sword against nation, there will be no more training for war.

Isaiah 2.

## Introduction.

Many people completely reject all forms of violence, especially war, because of deep religious or moral beliefs. They see violence and war as destructive and futile, incapable of building peace and understanding among men.

Many other people, also because of deep religious or moral beliefs, are convinced that it is a man's right and duty to defend what is his own, so that they see war and violence as justifiable in certain circumstances.

Without taking sides with either of these two groups, this pamphlet tries to give a factual account of the legal position of conscientious objections in South Africa. It outlines the legal position of conscientious objection in several other countries as a comparison, and concludes by posing some questions which we should ask ourselves.

## The Law in South Africa.

The Defence Act of 1957 says that all male persons between 17 and 65 years of age can be called up to render service in the South African Defence Force. The matter of Conscientious Objection is handled in the following sections:

### Section 67(3) Applicable in Peacetime

"The registering officer shall as far as may be practicable allot any persons who to his knowledge bona fide belongs and adheres to a recognised religious denomination by the tenets whereof its members may not participate in war, to a unit where such person will be able to render service in the defence of the Republic in a non-combatant capacity."

### and Section 97(3) Applicable in Wartime

"a person who bona fide belongs and adheres to a religious denomination, by the tenets whereof its members may not participate in war, may be granted exemption from serving in any combatant capacity, but shall, if called upon to do so, serve in a non-combatant capacity."

Thus no allowance is made for the right of Conscientious Objectors not to serve in the Armed Service.

Section 70, the section dealing with complete exemption from military service, gives the following grounds for exemption:-

- a) In order to prevent the interruption of one's course of educational studies;
- b) - by reason of one's domestic or business or professional situation;
- c) physical defects, ill-health, mental incapacity;
- d) on any other grounds the Exemption Board may deem sufficient.

Hence it is conceivable that religious or moral grounds might fall under (d) but to date, no conscientious objector has been allowed exemption under this section.

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