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WAR AND PEACE

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CrossCurrents is written by clergy and laypersons of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, with the purpose of aiding parishioners in reflection on the meaning of faith in light of contemporary life. Copies may be obtained at the church, on our website, or by mail on request.

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WAR AND PEACE

Forward

by The Rev. John S. Nieman

A short decade ago most Americans who were not directly involved in international relations or the academic study of the ethical dilemmas of war probably left reflection on the ethics of war on the back burner. The mid-90's was perceived and experienced by many as a time of great wealth creation, peace and stability in our own land, and a relative hopefulness about the state of the world in general. Our primary enemy no longer existed, and our sense of security in the world was high.

Those perceptions, accurate or not, were dashed with the terrorist attacks on the United States on 9/11/01. The attacks jolted many citizens out of complacency regarding the dangers of the world, reminding us that we continue to be challenged to fight. The attacks also sparked a renewed conversation among people of faith about if and when going to war is justified.

This issue of *Crosscurrents* is devoted to that conversation. Three parishioners, Heather Hurlburt, Anthony Bowdler, and Hugh Shirato, offer reflections on the perennial questions of war and peace. All are informed by their Christian commitment. But none engages in "armchair" theology. All have had their thoughts strained through the direct experience of having to make momentous decisions in time of war.

Heather's work at the Department of State in the latter years of the Clinton administration brought her face to face with the kinds of moral quandaries government leaders must face every day about when to and not to intervene in foreign wars. She reminds us that, although the Just War tradition can be a useful tool for helping people of faith discern those circumstances in which going to war might be justified, the decision to go to war can never rest easily within the Christian conscience.

The next piece is an interview with Anthony Bowdler by Margaret Nesse. Parishioner Margaret Nesse is a freelance writer and editor, whose first novel, *The Widow of Branford*, has recently gone to press. In 2002/03, Margaret and her husband (Prof. Randolph Nesse) spent a sabbatical year in England, where she became fascinated with the history of London's ordeal during World War II. Her conversation with Tony tells the story of a boy huddled in a basement shelter with family and friends during the relentless Nazi bombing raids on London. That experience heightened Tony's awareness

of what could be endured, showed him models of ordinary courage, sharpened his perception of good and evil, and shaped his conviction that going to war to eradicate a greater evil is, at times, not simply permissible, but in fact a moral imperative.

Hugh's interview with Linda Shirato tells a different story set in a different time and place. Growing up among Quakers on a farm in rural New Jersey in the 1950's, Hugh graduated from a Quaker college in 1966, just as the Vietnam War was heating up, and was a prime candidate for the draft. His pacifist convictions, shaped by his reading of the New Testament and the people of faith he knew, led him to alternative service and were confirmed by his witness of the fruitlessness of the Vietnam War. Those convictions remain as unequivocal today as they were forty years ago.

As Christians struggling to make sense out of our own participation in the world's violence, I trust these reflections by people close to us will help us clarify our own thoughts and actions.

John Nieman is the Rector of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Ann Arbor, Michigan.



Thinking About Justice and War: A Christian Place to Start

By Heather Hurlburt

In May 1999, my life revolved around two things: at work, at the US Department of State, it was the NATO bombing of Kosovo, and outside work it was my wedding and honeymoon. The two crashed together when, after the ceremony, two close friends told me they felt the bombing was immoral, and if I really had the moral convictions I claimed, I would resign.

This took me aback. I thought they were wrong but I wasn't very articulate in explaining why. I could explain in political terms why the bombing was unavoidable, even the best choice under the circumstances. I could say that my Christian faith was one of the things that made me believe that what we were doing was right. But I lacked the moral vocabulary to draw the line from Christian principles to pragmatic choices in a decidedly imperfect world.

Since 1999, of course, Kosovo has been succeeded by Afghanistan and Iraq, and someone else's faraway ethnic cleansing has given way to terrorism all too close to home. More and more of us are struggling to find in our spiritual heritage both a guide to what we ought to expect of our government and a vocabulary to open dialogue with those whose conclusions are different from our own.

The Christian tradition of just war theory doesn't offer easy answers, but it does offer Christians a common starting point from which to think about current events.

Many Christians will have heard of the medieval writings of St. Augustine on the law of war, even if we've never read them. In fact, though, our heritage's concern with when and how it is right to fight goes back much further, to the efforts of the author of the book of Deuteronomy to set out a template for what a just society would look like. Deuteronomy (20: 1-20 and 21:10-14) specifies that all wars – for all purposes – are optional, except those against specified threatening neighbors. In optional wars, men who have vineyards they have not yet harvested, or a fiancée they have not yet married, must be exempted from fighting. The life cycle of the community is more important

than the wars it chooses to wage. In sieges, the trees of the enemy may not be cut down — “Are trees of the field human to withdraw before you into the besieged city?” (Deuteronomy 20:19) This is often interpreted more broadly as a call to make sure that enemy civilians do not suffer unduly in wartime.

And, although they do not sound very palatable to us, Deuteronomy’s provisions on treatment of captive women, if followed, still would have been an improvement in the treatment of women in Darfur, Congo and Bosnia in our own time. Soldiers were not permitted to rape women on the battlefield; women captives were to be allowed a year of mourning before their captors could have sex with them. Then, their captors were either to marry them or release them. (This obscure passage attracted considerable interest in the 1990s, when rape camps in Bosnia spurred efforts to declare rape a war crime under existing international law, which did not mention it explicitly.)

The New Testament does not tell us that Jesus spoke directly to the question of when, or how, violence can be just. Early Christians used specifically Matthew 5: 39 and 26: 52 (“All that take the sword shall perish with the sword) to justify absolute pacifism.

It was opposition to Christian pacifism that drove St. Augustine to insist that, since the ruler is God’s representative on earth, the ruler gains from God the power to declare war and compel his subjects to fight.

Thomas Aquinas followed Augustine in his writings and set out what is the core of Christian just war theory:

- a just war must be declared under the authority of the sovereign, not by private entities;
- a just war requires a just cause;
- those who would wage a just war must have good intentions.

Because war so often has effects that are both good and bad, Christian thinkers also insisted that the doctrine of “double effect” be satisfied:

- the act of war itself must be legitimate;
- its direct effect must be morally acceptable;
- those waging the war must not have intended its evil side effects; and
- the good effects must be sufficiently good to compensate for the evil ones (proportionality).

These provisions set off many debates. How many civilian deaths does it take to wipe out the good effect of removing a tyrant? What makes a regime bad enough that a war of choice to remove it is legitimate? Can any such wars be legitimate if we do not attack every vile regime? Why Kosovo and not Burma, why Iraq and not Iran? But they offer us a starting point for discussion.

Later thinkers took these ideas and expanded and secularized them. Writers also become interested in the rights and wrongs of war-fighting itself, and the body of thought about when war is just – *jus ad bellum* – is joined by writing about what treatment is owed to combatants and non-combatants in war – *jus in bello*.

Eventually, ideas about how combatants must be treated were codified in the 1949 and 1977 Geneva Conventions, which were signed by the United States and every other country of any size, and spell out the required treatment for civilians, prisoners and the wounded during war or occupation. (Incidentally, these standards imply an absolute condemnation of all terrorism – because it recognizes no difference between combatants and civilians.)

But there has always been a strand of opposition to the view that war must have generally-agreed limits. From Thucydides to Hobbes and Clausewitz, some thinkers have asserted that the realm of force has different laws from those that govern peacetime. Radical pacifists such as Tolstoy and Gandhi agree and insist that, because war cannot be limited, it is never acceptable.

In our own times, we hear this point of view from those who say that it is naïve or “quaint” to insist on standards of treatment for terrorists who have no country and who respect no treaties themselves; even that it is unnatural or against the order of things to impose limits.

The contemporary just war theorist Michael Walzer rejects this realist view, writing that its assertion that excesses in war are unavoidable “is a denial of the freedom that makes moral decision possible.” For me, this is the challenging answer that our Judeo-Christian heritage gives us. Jesus did not leave us rules of conduct in wartime; the prophets of the Hebrew Bible did not see fit to ban war completely or encourage conquest unrestrainedly. They tell us, as they so often do, to use the faculties God gave us and choose. For myself, I do not want to choose a world in which no one has rules to live by.

If we give ourselves the freedom to wage total war on others, we can expect them to do likewise. This is, pragmatically, the reason that our uniformed military has been a strong supporter of the Geneva Conventions – soldiers want to know they will be treated decently if taken prisoner. And, as Walzer also writes in his classic *Just and Unjust Wars* (1977), “repression and retaliation are legitimate responses to terrorism only when they are constrained by the same moral principles that rule out terrorism itself.”

I’ve never raised the issue of Kosovo with those friends again. Five years later, I still believe we did the right thing, though the disappointing lack of progress there toward reconciliation ought to be a reminder that war’s noble aims are far harder to achieve than we like to imagine, while war’s evil effects are all too clear and lasting. Now we have Iraq and Afghanistan before us, and the prospect of a long struggle against terrorism. It’s too much to hope that our faith can give us easy answers to the questions raised by unclear motives, civilian casualties, indiscriminate terrorism, and prisoner abuse. But it can give us a place to begin talking.



The Case for Pre-emptive War: A Conversation with Anthony Bowdler

Transcribed by Margaret Nesse

Introduction:

St. Andrew's parishioner Anthony Bowdler is a physician and retired Professor of Medicine who believes that pre-emptive war can be justified. Tony grew up in Leytonstone, England, a town on the outskirts of London, five miles due north of the London Docks. He was ten years old when England and France declared war on Nazi Germany, eleven years old during the German nighttime bombing raids on London. Tony remembers the burning of the Docklands, the thick smoke on the southern horizon, the rim of red flame beneath the smoke.

Tony's father reinforced the basement of the family home and supplied it with beds and food. With the protection of this makeshift shelter, the Bowdlers remained in London for the duration of World War II. Tony went to high school and recalls doing his homework in the basement shelter during the air raids. Among useful skills he learned in Boy Scouts were how to extinguish a firebomb, and how to recognize the various poison gases.

Tony was too young to contribute to England's military effort, but he was both a witness to, and a participant in, the sort of ordinary, daily determination required of London's civilians during that time. The two fascinating conversations I had with Tony about his views and experiences are excerpted below:

MN: I'll begin by asking you to explain your position in support of pre-emptive war.

AB: Much has been made of the pre-emptive war as being undesirable. St. Augustine implicitly supported this position in declaring the "just war" as necessarily defensive.

However, such a position gives the advantage of preparedness to the aggressor, and condemns the potential victim nation to perpetual war-readiness.

Perhaps the best example of the futility of avoiding war until the aggressor makes his choice of means and time is the European aspect of World War II. The Nazi regime proclaimed its need for space and resources for the master race to flourish. It proceeded to satisfy these needs by abrogating the Treaty of Versailles, re-establishing its military, and progressively occupying smaller nations on its borders. British and French efforts to negotiate with Hitler failed to limit these expansionist policies, despite Prime Minister Chamberlain's claim to have "brought peace in our time."

In 1936, Hitler told Admiral Raeder, the head of the German Navy, that he had six years to prepare for the anticipated war. If Raeder had had the promised full six years to prepare, the Germans would have had six additional Bismarck class battleships, 300 submarines, and, by 1944, a complete inventory of military jet aircraft, cruise missiles, and intercontinental missiles.

However, in September, 1939, the British Empire and France declared war on Nazi Germany, following the Nazi refusal to withdraw from Poland. Though Britain and France acted in *defense* of a country attacked, they were also embarking on a *pre-emptive* attempt to contain and turn back Nazi aggression, and to cut short the Nazi war machine's preparation time. The Western Powers did not, of course, manage to contain Nazi aggression in the short term. But by establishing a war footing in 1939, by forcing Germany to fight, they were able to keep the Nazis from amassing a war-winning reserve of advanced armaments. Had they not done so, the ultimate liberation of Western Europe would not have been practicable.

MN: You've told me that war is *not* the worst thing that can happen to people. What, in your opinion, is worse than war?

AB: Slavery is undoubtedly worse, and in addition I would have to add unprovoked military aggression of the sort we saw with Nazi Germany, and also genocide and tyranny. Such conditions may last indefinitely, each being compounded by the others, perhaps destroying the lives of untold generations, and having little tendency to self-destruct. By contrast, conventional warfare tends to be short-lived and self-limiting, due either to economic collapse or war-weariness.

MN: Do you think that when we see these conditions (slavery, genocide, etc.) elsewhere in the world, we have an obligation to intervene?

AB: Yes, I believe we do, whenever possible. There are few instances, if any, in which such conditions can be terminated without intervention from outside, and by contrast, many in which they were corrected by means of war. It was unforgivable, for example, for (Prime Minister) Neville Chamberlain to describe Czechoslovakia, in 1938, as “a faraway country about which we know very little” and which, therefore, we were not obliged to help. We should have had a sense of responsibility toward other parts of the world, not just our own.

MN: You spoke of tyranny, and I was wondering if you could speculate about what would have happened if Germany had been able to occupy Britain as it occupied France? I’m assuming that would have been a fate worse than war.

AB: It is quite doubtful whether the Nazis had the political will, the reserves of materiel, or the capacity for combined operations to mount a successful invasion of the U.K. But supposing they had, it is most likely that the survivors of the coastal invasion would have been drawn into London, to counteract the blitzkrieg, which was an open-country strategy. Given the concentrations of civilians in the city and the extensive preparations for defense, there would have been a terrible bloodbath on both sides. If the Nazis had prevailed, they would probably have wreaked their vengeance on us, as they later did on the Russians. The fear of such an outcome was a great stimulus to the people – it was said that this was England’s finest hour.

MN: If Prime Minister Chamberlain had been a different kind of leader and taken a tougher stance towards Hitler or acted earlier, do you think that would have been the right thing to do? Also, do you think Britain and France would have been more successful at containing Hitler if they’d acted earlier? Would acting *more* pre-emptively than they did have been a.) right and b.) possible?

AB: Yes, I do think earlier action would have been right. There should have been resistance when Hitler re-occupied the Rhineland (in 1936), which was a direct breach of the Treaty of Versailles. When Hitler’s troops arrived, the French, who were occupying the Rhineland, put up no resistance, even though their troops far outnumbered those of the Germans. Nor did the British come to the aid of the French. The abandonment of the Rhineland made Hitler realize that there was little resolve on the other side. At the time of the invasion of the Rhineland, Hitler had ordered his troops to retreat if they met

opposition from the French. Since they did not, Hitler was encouraged. His prestige was greatly elevated both in Germany, and, surprisingly, across Europe. A lot of people supported him. Many people, including some in England, thought he could provide a line of defense against communism. And so he was able to build on his first success and go on to annex Austria, and then Czechoslovakia, and so on.

MN: How did your actual experiences of being a child in London during the bombing influence the position that you now take on war?

AB: Let's just say that if I hadn't had those experiences, I would feel unqualified to discuss whether war could be justified. I would be talking about the commitment that other people would have to make, of which I would have had no personal experience. In London, the brunt of the civilian cost of the war was shared by everybody, from my seventy-year-old grandfather whose house was bombed out, to the general experience of daily unpleasantness. One knew danger and saw how one could cope with it. I was of a slightly younger generation than the one that bore the heaviest weight of that war, but I still feel that I was part of a generation that had to pay a big price for the ultimately positive outcome. I learned that war can be bearable, and that our sufferings led to a worthwhile end.

MN: Can you be a little more specific?

AB: Well, take the air raids, for example. We found it was important to have things to do, simple responsibilities to occupy one's mind. My job was to switch off the gas supplies and water, because they were a hazard if you were living underground. Another thing that I often did when the family was taking shelter in the basement was to go upstairs and listen to the nightly news bulletins. We were all tied to the radio. Noon, six p.m., nine p.m., eleven p.m., the news bulletins came on. I used to pop upstairs, where a big radio stood in the corner of our dining room. I would crawl under the table, which was a pretty safe place to be, actually, and listen to the nine o'clock news and bring it to the people in the basement.

I remember listening to commentators speculating about whether America would come into the war. Isolationists were a big power in America at the time, and Roosevelt had to do quite a bit of maneuvering to get around them. Then one night Ed Murrow was broadcasting from the roof of the BBC. I could hear aircraft going over, and Murrow spoke of hearing aircraft, and I wondered if we were hearing the same ones, and he gave an extraordinary news commentary called "This Is London." Here was an American journalist who knew what it was all about. His vivid report about the night

bombing had a great effect on us, and also, I believe, on the American public, who had been saying, "Europe is no business of ours," while we in England had been forced to make dealing with the evil of Nazism our business.

MN: What was it like for you, living in the midst of all that danger?

AB: You must realize that none of it was terribly heroic. One did what one could to maximize one's chances of survival. One learned that merely knowing the best thing to do gave one the ability to tolerate the unpleasantness of it. I can't think how many times my father and I stood at the door watching the night sky during a bombing raid. You couldn't always anticipate what was coming. They would drop things from parachutes – bombs carrying enormous explosive power – you could see the searchlights on them – and if they seemed to be coming your way, you would go down to warn those in the shelter. We took a chance, standing there watching, but we weren't unduly bothered by it. I suppose one grew up with a slightly more robust view of what danger is about, and somehow expecting other people to do the same. Danger is relative, and it became a way of life. One learned to tolerate the hazards of the moment. One learned not to be afraid. Most of the time the worst didn't happen, though sometimes it got pretty near. I was within a hundred yards of a 250 lb. bomb that took out a house just beyond the end of our road. Every night, for the first three months, there were two hundred aircraft, carrying up to five tons of bombs. You realized that you could live through this sort of thing. And there were compensations. The night noise would end, and there was always a cup of tea, and you would wake up and see a beautiful dawn outside.

We came to realize, too, how small our burden was compared with that of others. Once, I was playing cricket with some other boys on our school's playing field. We could hear loud engine noise in the sky, and when we looked up, we saw a British fighter plane coming down out of the clouds, flying very low. I could see the pilot standing on the wing, trying to control the plane. Our school was on one side of a square, with houses, a hospital, and another school across from it. The playing field was behind our school, and beyond that was a forest, and then open ground. The pilot was clearly trying to drop his out-of-control aircraft onto this open ground. When he'd gotten beyond our field, we saw him jump off the wing, but his parachute didn't open, and we saw him fall. The authorities found the plane, and his body, in the forest. So one had no illusions about the dangers of what could happen, and one expected to be a part of it. But this pilot had so much more to endure than we did. He was an example to us of how one ought to behave under duress: you don't just let your aircraft crash into a lot

of people and buildings. You CAN DO things, and there is a choice between right and wrong. Even when the danger is major and personal, one can act for the protection of others.

MN: How does your religious faith play into all this? How was it affected by your childhood experiences? How does it affect your views on war now?

AB: We all thought of ourselves as acting for the good against evil. Churches stayed open during the worst of the war, and people attended services. There was a young curate at our church who used to put on a shrapnel helmet and go out looking for people in the shelters who needed comfort and help.

I've sometimes thought of the "Blitz" as London's Passion. Not that we were Christ-like. In fact, between the wars we had grown rather too comfortable and complacent. We'd neglected our duty toward our allies in continental Europe. But ultimately we stood up against the evil of Nazism, at the cost of great horror and suffering for many. Forty-two thousand civilians died in the first three months of the bombing, and untold numbers were wounded, physically and emotionally. We had neglected our moral duty, and, in the process of being reminded of it, we had to pay a huge price. Many people paid the ultimate price, just as Christ had to pay the ultimate price, at the cost of horrific suffering, in order to bring his mission to the world. And we, too, gave a message to the world about how to resist evil and, eventually, to defeat it.

Human beings are fragile in so many respects. I learned how easy it is for people to be killed, to be injured, or affected emotionally. But I also learned that, despite their fragility, people *can* move from fear to conviction, to a willingness to face dangers and consequences. They don't need to behave like labile corks on top of the ocean, as long as they are clear about their place in the world, why they are here, what missions they need to accomplish.

The world into which Jesus was born was in bondage to Rome under Tiberius Caesar. The command by Jesus, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" was more than an advocate's evasion. It was a direct challenge to the claim that Caesar was a *god*, and had unrestricted power over all his subjects, a power we would now call "malignant narcissism."

We have been born into a world that has generated a sequence of political systems as oppressive as Rome, with leadership that claims similar control over all aspects of

human life, including thought and belief. Tiberius, Hitler, Stalin, and Mao Tse Tung are of one kind and have bred a raft of imitators.

By whatever means necessary, we should preserve and defend the freedom of faith as Paul stated: *Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.* Galatians 5, 1.



The Case for Christian Pacifism: A Conversation with Hugh Shirato

Transcribed by Linda Shirato

Introduction:

St. Andrew's parishioner Hugh Shirato was a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War. He was born in 1944 to Japanese parents in New York City. Since the beginning of the United States' entry into World War II in 1942, they had been cut off from all contact with their families in Japan, and they had no family in the United States. Life in New York City for a young couple with a new baby was lonely and isolated, especially when Masa, Hugh's mother, was declared an "enemy alien." Hugh's father was a U.S. citizen having been born in Denver in 1911 when his father, Hugh's grandfather, was a missionary to a Japanese mining community there. The family had returned to Japan when Hugh's father was very young, however. Hugh's father had returned to the United States to study at Columbia University. Hugh's mother, Masa, a musician and organist, had come to Union Theological Seminary to study church organ. (Masa was a Japanese citizen, and remains one to this day, even though she's lived in New York City for 65 years!) They escaped relocation to the camps only because New York City was not considered a likely Japanese target, and because at that time there were very few people of Japanese descent on the East Coast, unlike the West Coast.

It was in this context that Hugh's family was befriended by several families at Columbia University, and they were very grateful. Partially as a result of these friendships formed during those difficult years, Hugh's family joined a group of Quaker families from the Columbia University community living on a communal farm called Hidden Springs in rural New Jersey when Hugh was about ten years old. Hugh lived in this community for about ten years, until leaving for college in 1962. While the Shirato family never formally joined the Society of Friends (Quakers), Hugh considered himself a Quaker and chose to attend a Quaker college in Indiana.

At this time (1962) the United States still had a draft, but it did not become a big issue among college students until the Vietnam War heated up around 1964-65. By 1966, when Hugh graduated, most young men fresh out of college were likely to be drafted. Realizing this, Hugh applied for conscientious objector status with his New Jersey draft

board and asked that he be allowed to perform alternative service. This usually was granted to Quakers without much problem, particularly by draft boards from areas where Quakers lived. Hugh asked that he be allowed to work for Upward Bound, a War on Poverty program for low income high school students, as his alternative service. While this was fine with the New Jersey draft board, it was not acceptable to the draft board in Indiana where Hugh would be working. Their position seemed to be that alternative service jobs should be menial and unpleasant — perhaps mopping floors at hospitals. Hugh wanted to do something more socially useful. This resulted in a protracted stalemate between the two draft boards. Finally, since nothing seemed to be moving, the New Jersey board suggested that Hugh take the pre-induction physical, suspecting that he would fail it. Since he had very poor eyesight and asthma, he did. Thus the Indiana board's position became moot — but in the meantime Hugh had finished two years of unofficial alternative service working for the Upward Bound program at Earlham College.

Hugh's experience was not unlike that of many young men we knew who were pacifists or war resisters. Many struggled with the appropriate response to the draft. To this day, Hugh remains a pacifist. While accepting that Vietnam was a very different war from World War II, he believes that one should not participate in the military under any circumstances.

LS: Can you define what you mean by pacifism? It means different things to different people. You must have spent some time thinking about it.

HS: What I mean is very simple: not killing people. The finer points are not too relevant to me.

LS: You know, however, that the finer points were important to some people. They defined how much one cooperated with the military or the war effort. Some would accept any alternative service assigned, some actually served in the military as non-combatants, usually medics, and some refused all cooperation and went to jail. Do you have any thoughts on those issues?

HS: Well, those are individual decisions. I was interested in doing some form of alternative service that would benefit society but which would not aid the war effort. So to some extent, it was a middle-of-the-road position for a Quaker.

LS: How much do you think the community you lived in influenced your decisions? Do you think you would have come to the same conclusions if you had not lived among Quakers?

HS: It's possible. If I had not known those people (Quakers), I still would have been a religious person. All, or at least most, major religions that I know of take the position that taking human life is not permissible. The New Testament especially says this. It was not one specific person's influence that made me think this way.

The origins of pacifism in Quakerism are quite scriptural. In both Matthew and Luke, Jesus says that one should turn the other cheek. That's always been hard — but that's what the scriptures say. Jesus says, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, 'Do not resist one who is evil. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well.'" Matthew 5:38-40. Jesus said love your enemies. He did not say kill your enemies, or even protect yourself. In fact, he says exactly the opposite.

The story of his trial and crucifixion also illustrates this. Jesus made no effort to defend himself when he was taken prisoner, nor did he allow any of his followers to defend him. If you really want to know what Jesus would do, there's your answer. Actually, people who think the Bible doesn't err or who take it absolutely literally should all be pacifists — I don't see how you can avoid it. But they seem to ignore those passages, even though they are among Jesus most important and impressive utterances.

LS: When was the first time you remember considering these issues or thinking this way?

HS: I can't remember a time when I didn't. I thought about it at the time of the Korean War, before we moved to Hidden Springs. My parents talked about World War II atrocities. They were very critical of Japan's actions towards Koreans and the Chinese. They were very specific in their belief that just because the majority believes in an action — like Japan's militarism — that does not make it right. One of my grandfathers in Japan had also been influenced by Quaker thought, so the attitude had been in the family for a long time, at least on my mother's side.

LS: What do you say to the argument that pacifism is just too idealistic — not practical in the kind of world we live in? That sometimes wars have to be fought? That some wars are just?

HS: Just because something has always been done in human history does not mean that it is right or practical. The status quo is not practical — it is ridiculous! All war represents a breakdown, on the part of the aggressors and on the part of those who respond. We can't say that a defective way of living is practical. War is a cop-out — it is a fantasy that we are solving anything. Talk to those who have actually fought in an allegedly “just war”. Very few I've talked to are happy with it just because it was considered just. They are not generally uplifted or improved by the experience.

Anyway, living like a devout Christian is not supposed to be practical or realistic. The shelter program and the breakfast program are not practical. That's not why we do them. The movements led by Gandhi and Martin Luther King were also not done because they were practical.

My basic position is to ask what Jesus would do. The answer is very simple and clear. Rescuing Jesus from crucifixion through armed intervention would have been totally justified (as in just war theory), but Jesus rejected it. Augustine may have believed in just war, but Jesus didn't. Just war is just a rationalization.



Comments? Reactions?

Please write to the editors at:
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Next issue of **CrossCurrents**:

IN MEMORIAM:
DIETRICH BONHOEFFER
1906-1945

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